STUDY ON CORRELATION BETWEEN SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' MASTERY IN PAST TENSE AND THEIR ABILITY TO COMPREHEND NARRATIVE TEXT AT SMPN 31 PADANG

Yuni Cendra Sari[1], Ernati [2], Khairul [2]

[1]The Student of English Department, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Bung HattaUniversity

E- mail: yunicendrasari@yahoo.com

[2]The Lecturers of English Department, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Bung HattaUniversity

Abstract

This research was aimed at finding out the correlation between mastery in past tense to the ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang. Population of this research was second year students at SMPN 31Padang. The members of population were 157 students. The researcher took a class as the class sample by using cluster random sampling and all the member of the class became the sample of this research. The class selected as sample class was VIII.5, and the sample members were 30 students. The hypothesis in this research was there is a significant correlation between second year students' mastery in past tense and their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang. To test the hypothesis, a statistical analysis was used. In collecting the data, the researcher used the multiple choice test to measure both grammar mastery and reading comprehension. In analyzing the data, the researcher used Pearson's coefficient correlation to known the correlation between past tense mastery and reading comprehension ability by using SPSS program ver. 15 for windows. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that, the value of coefficient correlation was 0.404 and it was significant correlation. The coefficient correlation was categorized as having low correlation. It means past tense had low influenced toward comprehending narrative text. In other word, the increasing score on past tense connected with an increase score in comprehending narrative text. Dealing with the conclusion of this research the researcher has suggestion for the teacher should consider the complexity of grammar of text in relation to the students' grammar mastery. In order to improve the students' reading ability, they should make efforts to increase their mastery in grammar since complexity of texts is partially caused by the grammatical structure used to construct the texts.

Keywords: Students' Mastery In Past Tense, Narrative Text

A. Introduction

In learning a foreign language such as English, the learners should master the four basic of language skills as well as the components of language. The language skills of English are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skill is the act of hearing attentively. Speaking skill is

an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Writing skills deal with a process through which meaning is created.

As discussed above reading is one of the language skills that should be mastered by the learners in learning English. According to Brassel and Rasinski (2008:15), reading refers to ability to comprehend or make meaning from written text. Next, McWhorter (2005:5), reading is a thinking process, in which the students interact with textual material, evaluate, and reacts to its organization and content. So, Reading comprehension ability is important because reading comprehension needs the ability to think, conceptualization, and reasoning.

To possess those language skills, the learners should master the language components as well as possible, and one of them is grammatical structure or grammar of language. Grammar is the rules in a language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences (Hornby.2010: 651).

Based on the discussion above, it can be stated that grammar plays a very important role in acquiring language skills. Without the correct usage of grammar, the written text will not be understood by the readers because in written language the readers do not have direct interaction with writer like the listener usually do in spoken or oral language.

Grammar has some aspects, one of the aspects in grammar deals with tense. According to Hornby (2010: 1540), tense is a situation, an event, a period of time, etc. In English language, tense can be categorized into present tense, past tense and future tense.

Based on the researchers' experience in doing practice teaching at SMPN 31 Padang, most of the students still got difficulties in grammar including past tense and reading comprehension in narrative text. Narrative text is a story that is created in a constructive format that describes a sequence of functional or non- fictional events. According to Al-Mekhlafi (2011: 74), there are difficulties faced by students and teachers with grammar instruction. Next, children with SLI often demonstrate poor understanding of grammatical meaning, such as word order or inflectional endings (Dev. 2011:1).

In addition, New South Wales Department of education and training (2006: 2) states that students have difficulties in reading comprehension like, following instruction of the task, poor retrieval of

information perhaps due to problem with memory and have poor literacy in their first language. According to Mwanamukubi (2013: 60), teachers have their own perceptions about the causes of reading difficulties and their own way of assessing learners with reading difficulties, and she adds that boys are more susceptible to reading difficulties as compared to girls hence.

Because of the problem, the researcher was interested in doing a research about the correlation between second year students' mastery in past tense and their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang.

The ability in comprehending narrative text has related to the mastery of grammar, generic structure and language features of narrative text. According to Leech (2006: 2), grammar is a mechanism for putting word together, but we have said little about sound of meaning. Grammar has tenses one of them is past tense. Past tense is the form of language used to refer to an event, transaction that did happen or has happened or an object existed, at point in time before now. Past tense describes actions or activities that began and ended in the past. The forms of past tense are simple past tense, past continuous tense and past perfect tense.

According to Urquhart & Weir in Liu (2010: 153), a reading skill can be described as "a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with texts. Mt. San Antonio College Learning Assistance Center (2010: 1), states that reading comprehension can be classified into four levels. The first is literal comprehension. Literal comprehension relates to stated information, the reader understands the basic facts. The second is inferential comprehension. Inferential comprehension deals with what is implied or meant, rather than what is actually stated. The third is critical comprehension. Critical comprehension takes what is said (literal) and then what is meant by what is said (interpretive) and then extend (apply) the concepts or ideas beyond the situation. The fourth is creative comprehension. Creative comprehension is where the reader takes information and the ideas, and then creates new ideas from them.

At the second year of junior high school, there are many kinds of text that students learn such as descriptive text, narrative text and recount. Narrative text is to amuse or entertain the readers with actual or imaginary experience in different ways such

as passage, short story, long story, legend, fables and fairy tales.

Narrative text relates to generic structure and language feature. The generic structures of narrative text are orientation, complication and resolution. Narrative text uses past tense, using verb, participation and using times connection.

Due to the large scope of the problem of this study as identified previously, the researcher limited her research to the correlation between past tense mastery of the second year students of SMPN 31 Padang and their reading comprehension. Further, she focused on literal comprehension, past tense consist of simple past and past continuous, because in the second year students of junior high school syllabus they just study about simple past, past continuous tense and literal comprehension.

In accordance with the limitation of the problem above, the researcher formulated the problem as followed: "what is the correlation between second year students' past tense mastery toward their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang?

The purpose of this research was to find out the correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability to comprehend narrative text.

- To find out the students' grammar mastery of past tense.
- To find out the students' reading ability of narrative text.

In other words, it was aimed to answer or to prove whether the hypothesis starting that there is a correlation between students' past tense mastery and their reading comprehension was accepted or not.

The researcher expected that the result of this research can give some benefits for English teacher and students. For English teacher, the result of this research gave information about the correlation between students' past tense mastery toward their ability in comprehending narrative text. So, it could be considered as an input for English teacher in teaching the students about past tense and reading narrative text. For Students, the result of this research gave information to the students about how their past tense mastery related with their ability in comprehending narrative text

B. Research Method

To do this research, the researcher uses is correlational design. According to Gay (1987: 230) correlation research involves

collecting data in order to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables.

This research tried to find out the correlation between second year students' past tense mastery and their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang. There were two variables in this research, they were students' ability to comprehend narrative text and students' mastery in past tense. According to Gay (2009: 124), population is the group of interest to researcher, the group in which she or he would like the result of the research to be generalized. The population of this study was second year students of SMPN 31 Padang. The total number of population members was 157 students. The population of this research was distributed into 5 classes: VIII.1, VIII.2, VIII.3, VIII.4, VII.5. The researcher chose this population to be investigated because they had learnt about past tense especially simple past and past continuous tense and also narrative text.

Because the number of population was too large, the researcher took sample. Gay (2009:196) suggests that 30 subjects are generally considered to minimally acceptable sample size for correlation research. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to select the sample. Gay (2009: 129) states cluster random sampling is technique in which the sample is in group and do not individuals are randomly selected. The researcher chose the sample randomly because they had same teaching materials syllabus, time, allocated. So, all of the members of population had the same chance to be sample.

In selecting sample, the researcher chose one class to be sample. She followed the following procedures in selecting sample. She chose one of classes as sample by putting the name of classes (VIII.1, VIII.2, VIII.3, VIII.4, VII.5) on the small papers. The selected class as sample was class VIII.5 members of the class were 30 students.

C. Instrumentation

Grammar test was used to collect the data on students' past tense mastery. The kind of grammar test that research used in collecting the data was multiple choice test. The test consists of 20 items or questions and the time allocation is 20 minutes.

The reading test was used to collect the data on students' ability to comprehend narrative text. The kind of the test that researcher used was multiple choice test.

Test consists or 30 items of questions and the time allocation is 40 minutes.

D. Findings and Discussions

As already discussed previously, the instruments used to collect data for the two variables were a grammar test and reading test. Both instruments were given to 30 students chosen as sample of this research. There were 22 item of grammar test and 20 items of reading test. The highest possible score for grammar test is 22 and the lowest one is 0.It was found that the lowest score of grammar test was 8 and the highest possible score was 19.

The highest possible score for reading test is 20 and the lowest one is 0. Based on result of correlation the students' answer that reading test, it was found that the lowest score of reading test was 5 and the higher score was 19.

To find out the correlation between second year students' mastery in past tense toward their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang, the researcher used SPSS program ver. 15 for Windows. Based on this analysis, It was found the value of *r* counted between grammar and reading was .404 (see Appendix 15).

The result of the data analysis showed there was a positive and significant correlation between past tense mastery and reading comprehension. Its index coefficient correlation was .404. In relation to the classification of correlation elaborated by Arikunto (2006), the relation of the two variables (past tense and reading comprehension) could be classified as low. In other word, the increasing of score in past tense connected with an increasing score in comprehending narrative text. r^2= .163 it means past tense give contribution 16 % toward ability to comprehend narrative text.

E. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on finding as already discussed in the previous chapter, the researcher pointed out following conclusions:

1. There was a positive and significant correlation between second year students' mastery in past tense and their ability to comprehend narrative text at SMPN 31 Padang. It was proved by the value of *r* counted which are bigger that *r*- table, at the level of significant α=.05, and df=n-2 (.404 > .306).

2. The relation between second year students' mastery in past tense toward their ability to comprehend narrative text was categorized as low

correlation. It was proved by the value of *r* counted was .404 and $r^{2=}$ .163 it means past tense give contribution 16 % toward reading narrative text.

Based on the conclusions above, some suggestions can be presented as follows:

1. In selecting teaching material for reading, the teacher should consider the sentence pattern of the text, since the result of the research showed that grammar had low correlation toward reading comprehension of narrative text.

2. For the students, in order to improve their reading ability, they should make efforts to increase their mastery in grammar since complexity of texts is partially caused by the grammatical structured used to construct the text.

REFERENCES

Al- Mekhlafi, Abu Mohammed. 2011. *Difficulties in Teaching and Learning Grammar in an EFL Context*. Oman: International Journal of Instruction

Brassel,Danny and Rasinski,Timothy. (2008). *Comprehension That Works*. Huntington Beach: shell Education.

Dev, Hum. 2011. *Grammatical Difficulties in Children with Specific Language Impairment*. Europe

Gay, L.R. 2009. *Educational Research*. New York: Merril Publishing Company.

Hornby, AS. 2010. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.* 8th Edition. New York. Oxford University Press.

Leech, Geoffrey. 2006. *A Glossary of English Grammar*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Liu, Feng. 2010. *Reading Abilities and Strategies: A Short Introduction.* China: School of Foreign Language University.

McWhorter. K.T. (2005). Efficient and Flexibel Reading. 7th Edition. New York: Niagara County Community College.

Mt. San Antonio College Learning Assistance Center. (2010). Available online: www.mtsac.edu/instruction/learning/lac/pdf/reading/4level.pdf (Accessed on August 15th 2014, 13:20)