AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY IN GUESSING THE MEANING OF UNFAMILIAR WORDS THROUGH CONTEXT CLUES AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to describe the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta Universityin guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues. The design of this research was descriptive in nature. The population of this research was 58 second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University. In selecting the sample, the researcher used clusterrandom sampling technique. The number of sample was 28 students from Aclass. The researcher found the reliability of the test by using split-half method. It was found that the coefficient correlation was high (.76). It means that the test was reliable. The result of the data analysis showed that the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues was moderate and it was proved by the fact that 64.29%students had moderate ability. Then, the ability of the students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through definition clues was moderate (57.14%). Then, the ability of students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through example clues was moderate (89.29%). In addition, the ability of students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast clues was moderate (35.72%).Furthermore, the ability of students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference clues was moderate (71.43%). Based on the result of the research, it could be concluded that the students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues could be categorized into moderate ability.

Key words: *Students' Ability, Unfamiliar Words, and Context Clues*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of important language skills. According to Martin (1991:1), reading comprehension requires motivation, mental frameworks for holding ideas, concentration and good study techniques. According to Kheirzadeh and Tavakoli (2012:1), reading is not a single-factor process; it is a multivariate skill involving a complex combination and integration of a variety of cognitive, linguistic and non-linguistic skills ranging from low-level processing abilities to high-order knowledge of text representation and integration of ideas with global knowledge. Without reading, we cannot get knowledge. It means that reading is important. In a word, we can conclude that

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reading is important in our live. So, everybody should possess this skill well

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According to Burgess and Head (2005: 33), one way in which the readers understand text organization is by looking such relationship at the level of individual word or phrases. This may involve understanding the meanings of pronoun. Or, it can involve that the use of a definite article or demonstrative adjectives, or that there is a relationship between lexical items, i.e. that they are synonym, opposite, part of a whole, and so on. It means that they being able to work out the meaning of unfamiliar word from context. The student can try to analyze the information or structure of the unfamiliar words to guess their meaning. In addition, using the word around the difficult word (context clues), can help them to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Unfamiliar word or difficult English word is capable of stretching its (semantic) meaning based on the relationship, it has with other sentence.In a word, clues that are available in the context can be used as basis to draw a logic guessing of the meaning of the unfamiliar word.According to Thornbury (2002:148), guessing from the context is probably one of the most useful skills learners can acquire and apply both inside and outside the classroom.

Context clue is a source of information about a word that helps readers to understand the word. According McWhorther (1986:4), there are some types of context clues that can be used to guess the meaning of word.

Thewriter limits the students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues. They are definition clues, example clues, contrast clues and inference clues.

Dealing with the description above, formulationof the problem as follows, "How is the secondyearstudents' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context cluesat English Department of Bung Hatta University?"

The general purpose of this research is to find out the second year students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. In specific, the purposes of this study are;

1. To find outthe secondyear students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through definition cluesat English Department of Bung Hatta University.

2. To find out the secondyear students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through example

cluesat English Department of Bung Hatta University.

3. To find out the secondyear students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast cluesat English Department of Bung Hatta University.

4. To find out the secondyear students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference cluesat English Department of Bung Hatta University.

The writer hopes the result of this study gives contribution to English teachers, and the students. The teachers are expected toget information about the students' ability, and they can improve students' ability, if their students' abilityis not good. To the students, it is hoped that this research gives valuable contribution by knowing their ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a kind of descriptive design. According to Gay (1987:189), descriptive research is an activity to collect data of the subject of the study in order to test hyphotesis or to answer the questions that concerns with the current status of subject of study. The writer conducted this research to analyze the students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues.

According to Gay (1987:102), population is the group to which a researcher would like the result of the study to be generalized. The population of this research was the second year students of English Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Bung Hatta University who register in academic 2014/2015.The reason why the writer chooses them as the subject in this research was they have studied about the lessons.

In this research, the writer used cluster random sampling technique. Gay (1987:110) states that cluster random sampling technique is the sampling in which groups, not individuals, are randomly selected. The total population was 2 classes that consisted of 58 students. The researcher took 1 class of the population to be sample. They were 28 students.

The instrument that used in this study was reading test in form of multiple choices. This test was aimed at finding out students' ability in guessing unfamiliar of word through context clues. Before giving the real test, the researcher gave try out

test to the students. The sample of try out was out of sample for real test. The selected class for tryout was class B.

Test given should be valid and reliable. A test is valid if it is able to measure what it is supposed to be measured (Arikunto: 2012: 80). The writer used content validity. Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures what it is supposed to measure (Gay,1987:135). The writer used split-half method. To find out the reliability of the test, the reseracher used Pearson Product Moment, and it can be seen as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x^2)][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)]}}$$

Where:

r_{xy} = the correlation coefficient variable x and y variable

N = the numbers of the students who followed the test

$\sum x$ = the total score from the odd items

$\sum y$ = the total score from the even items

$\sum xy$ = the total score cross product of xy

To know the reliability of the whole test, the result of the test was analyzed by using Spearman-Brown formula (Gay, 1987:139) as follows:

$$r_{ii} \frac{2r_{xy}}{1 + r_{xy}}$$

Where:

r_{ii} = the reliability coefficient for the total test.

r_{xy} = the coefficient between odd and even items

To classify the coefficient correlation of the test, it was categorized as follows (Arikunto, 2012:89):

.81 – 1.00	= very high correlation
.61 – .80	= high correlation
.41 – .60	= moderate correlation
.21 – .40	= low correlation
.00 – .20	= very low correlation

The result of data analysis showed reliability of the test was .76, and it was categorized into high correlation based on Arikunto's idea. It means that the test was reliable and could be used as instrument of this research.

To find out whether the test was good or not, the writer analyzed the item difficulty and item discrimination. The item difficulty was analyzed to know whether the items were easy or difficult.

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Item Difficulty

The item difficulty analysis was conducted to know whether the items were

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easy or difficult. To do that, the writer used the following formula:

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

Where:

P = Item difficulties

B = Total number of students who answered correctly

JS = Total number of students

The result of difficulty index is classified into the following (Arikunto, 2012:225).

P = .00 – .30 is difficult

P = .31 – .70 is moderate

P = .71 – 1.00 is easy

The writer decided to take easy, moderate and difficult for real test. Based on the difficulties analysis, there were 13 numbers of easy items, 17 numbers of moderate items, and 6 numbers of difficult items.

Item Discrimination

Item discrimination analysis was to find out whether the items can differentiate between bright and low students. The writer used the following formula:

$$D = \frac{BA}{JA} - \frac{BB}{JB}$$

Where:

D = item discrimination

BA = sum of students in the high group who answered the item correctly

BB = sum of students in the low group who answered the item correctly

JA = sum of students in the high group

JB = sum of students in the low group

The result of item discrimination analysis is classified into the following (Arikunto, 2012:232).

D = .00 – .20 is poor

D = .21 – .40 is satisfactory

D = .41 – .70 is good

D = .71 – 1.00 is excellent

The researcher discarded and revised the items which were in poor category (the item which its value of discrimination was under .20). Then based on the discrimination analysis, there were 16 numbers of poor items, 8 numbers of satisfactory items, 11 numbers of good items, and 1 number of excellent item.

So, based on combination of difficulty analysis and discrimination analysis, there were 12 items that were discarded, 4 items that were revised, 20 items that were OK.

However, to have a balance number of item for each aspect, the number of items used for real test was 24 items.

In gathering data, the researcher used the procedures as follow:

1. The researcher administered the test to the students.
2. The researcher collected the answersheet of the test.
3. The researcher checked the students' answer and give the score. The highest possible score was 24 and the lowest one is 0.
4. The researcher counted the total score for each student.

The procedures of analyzing the data were as follows:

a. The researcher presented the raw scores of each student.
b. The researcher calculated Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) by using the following formula (Gay, 1987:361)

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{n} \quad \text{and} \quad SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N} - (\frac{\sum x}{N})^2}$$

Where:

M   = Mean
SD   = Standard Deviation
$\sum x$ = Sum of all scores
$\sum x^2$ = The total of x
N   = Number of students

c. The researcher classified the students' ability into high, moderate and low by using the criteria below;

$>M + SD$ = High

$(M - SD) \rightarrow (M + SD)$ = Moderate

$< M - SD$ = Low

d. And then, the researchercounted the percentage of students' who have high, moderate and low in ability by using the following formula ;

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P   = Percentage of the students who had high, moderate and low ability
F   = The sum of the students who had high, moderate and low ability
N   = The sum of the students

Findings

The result of data analysis showed that there were 5 students (17.86%) who had high ability, 18 students (64.29%) who had moderate ability and 5 students (17.86%) who had low ability (see Appendix 12). It means that the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through context clues was categorized moderate.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Context Clues
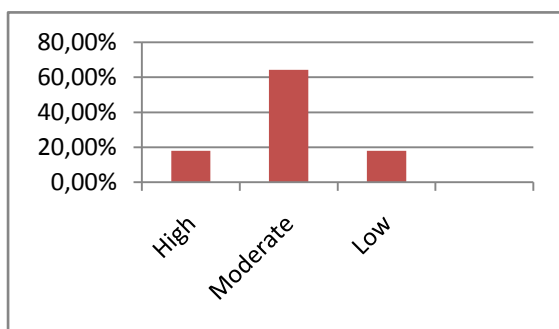
Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Definition Clues

In this part, it was found that the students' ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through definition clues was moderate. The result of the study presented that there were 4 students (14.29%) who had high ability, 16 students (57.14%) who had moderate ability, and 8 students (28.57%) who had low ability.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Example Clues

In this part, it was found that the students' ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through example clues was moderate. The result of the study presented that there were 2 students (7.14%) who had high ability, 25 students (89.29%) who had moderate ability, and 1 student (3.57%) who had low ability.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Contrast Clues

In this part, it was found that the students' ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast clues was moderate. The result of the study presented that there were 10 students (35.72%) who had high ability, 10 students (35.72%) who had moderate ability, and 8 students (28.57%) who had low ability.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Inference Clues

In this part, the students' ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference clues was moderate. The result of the study presented that there were 4 students (14.29%) who had high ability, 20 students (71.43%) who had moderate ability, and 4 students (14.29%) who had low ability.

Students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through context clues according to each aspect

Aspect	Students' Ability		
	High	**Moderate**	**Low**
Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through definition clues	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%
Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through example clues	7.14%	89.29%	3.57%
Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through contrast clues	35.72%	35.72%	28.57%
Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through inference clues	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%

Discussions

The purpose of this section is to identify students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word through context clues. According to Chesla(2001: 5), readers need to know what the words mean to understand what someone is saying. Based on the result of the research, in general, the students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues was moderate. It means that the students were still difficult to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues. It was probably caused by some factors which could be identified through the students' answer sheet.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Definition Clues

The students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through definition clues was categorized into moderate (57.14%). It meant that some students could not comprehend unfamiliar words finely. It was probably caused by their lack of vocabulary and they also could not differentiate between unfamiliar words and familiar words. For example the question, *Hypochondria*, excessive worry over one's health, is common among senior citizens.

a. senior citizens

b. excessive worry over one's health

c. bacteria

Most of students could not figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues. Most of the students answered C but the correct one is B.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Example Clues

The students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through example clues was categorized into moderate (89.29%). It meant that some students did not understand how to find the example clues. They did not understand what the subject matter was discussed. In fact, some students still had errors in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words.

For example in questions, The Chinese government provides *incentives* for married couples to have only one child. For example, couples with one child get financial help and free medical care.

a. warnings

b. penalties

c. encouragements

The correct answer was C but most of the students choose A and B.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Contrast Clues

The students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast clues was categorized into moderate (35.72%). . It meant that some students had errors in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast clues. As the result, in some cases, they guessed the meaning without paying attention to the contrast word.

For example in question, The mayor was very *dogmatic* about governmental policy while the assistant mayor was more lenient and flexible in his interpretation.

a. authoritarian

b. authoritative

c. not assertive

The correct answer was B but most of them answered A and C.

Students' Ability in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words through Inference Clues

The students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference clues was categorized into moderate (71.43%). It meant that some students had errors in guessing the

meaning of unfamiliar words. They could not figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. As the matter of fact, they guessed the meaning that did not indicate the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference clues.

For example in question, Police *interrogation*, or questioning, can be frightening experience.

   a. asking question
   b. answered
   c. questioner

The correct answer was A, but most of them answered C.

Conclusion

In general, the finding of this research can be concluded that the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues was moderate.

The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through definition clues was moderate. It was indicated by the fact that there were 18 students (64.29%) who had moderate ability.

The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through example clues was moderate. It was indicated by the fact that there were 18 students (64.29%) who had moderate ability.

The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through contrast clues was moderate. It was indicated by the fact that there were 12 students (42.86%) who had moderate ability.

The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through inference clues was moderate. It was indicated by the fact that there were 21 students (75.00%) who had moderate ability.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher gives proposed suggestions:

- For the lecturer, she/he can give more exercises about the context clues. It is also suggested to the lecturer to give more vocabulary and also give more explanation about the definition clues, give more explanation to the students how to find the clues of a word from the example clues, for the contrast

clues, give more explanation and exercise to the students to find out the contrast words such as but, while, etc. to find the meaning of unfamiliar words, and give explanation about the ways of figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar word through inference clues.

- For the students, they are expected to do more exercises to guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues such as, definition clues, example clues, contrast clues, and inference clues. They are also suggested to have more vocabulary.

- For next researcher, it is suggested to do the research on other aspects like the difficulty faced by students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues.

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