AN ANALYSIS ON THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY IN GUESSING THE MEANING OF UNFAMILIAR WORDS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out the problems faced by the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. The design of this research was descriptive. The number of population was 54 students. To select the sample, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique. The data were collected by giving a vocabulary test. To know the reliability of the test, the researcher used split half method. The reliability index of this test was .94 and it was categorized into very high. The result of data analysis revealed that the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. It was indicated by the fact that there were 19 students (63.33%) had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues and there were 11 students (36.67%) who had no problems. Many students had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using definition clues. It can be shown by the data that 18 students (60%) had problems and 12 students (40%) had no problems. The result of data analysis also demonstrated that most students had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using example clues. It was indicated by the fact that 21 students (70%) had problems and 9 students (30%) had no problems. The result of study also showed the students had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contrast clues. It was indicated by the data that 22 students (73.33%) had problems and 8 students (26.67%) had no problems. The result of data analysis also demonstrated that most students had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using inference clues. It was indicated by the fact that 23 students (73.33%) had problems and 7 students (26.67%) had no problems.

Keywords: Problems, Guessing the Meaning, Unfamiliar Words.

Introduction

In learning English as a foreign language, there are four skills that should be mastered by the students; that is listening and reading as receptive skills and speaking and writing as productive skills. Reading is one of important skills in learning a foreign language. By reading the students can get information or can improve knowledge. It is the way by which you can get a new information. More we read more we get. In addition, it helps us to find a good way to change our mood. By reading we can get

information, learn something or entertainment us.

Thompson and Vaughn (2007:157) state that reading is a process of transforming printed or written into meaning. In addition, Johnson (2008: 5) adds that reading is the practice of using text to create meaning of the text. Futherly, Nunan (2003: 68) says that reading is a fluent process of combining information from a text and reader's own background knowledge to build meaning. It means that during reading process the students need to have background knowledge to get the meaning of the text.

The unsufficient storage of words or vocabulary in mind becomes one of factors which cause difficulties in comprehending the text. In addition, according to Huang and Eslami (2013: 1), second language learners preceive vocabulary acquisition as one of their greates diffulties. In other words, word is a vital factor to understand reading text. In reading, the readers can not comprehend the text because of the difficult words in the text. It means that if the readers cannot guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words, they will get difficulty to comprehend the text.

There are several ways to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. Wang(2011)

states that advanced readers who want to be succesful learners should learn differetnt strategy for dealing with unknown word while reading. Three common strategies of guessing meaning of unfamiliar words are; context clues, structural clues, and word formation analysis (McWorther,1986:1). He also state there are four types of context clues to look for : (1) Definition clues, (2) Example clues, (3) Contrast clues, and (4) Inference clues. According to Zainil (2008) context clues are hints found within sentence,paragraph, or passage that a reader can use to understand the meaning of unfamiliar word.

Based on the interview the researcher did toward the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University that have studied context clues, it was assumed that many students were unable to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. They said that they need to look up the dictionary every time they faced the unfamiliar words.

Based on the phenomena above, the researcher was interested in conducting a study on problems faced by second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to guees the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues.

In general, the purpose of this research was to describe the problems faced to guess meaning of the unfamiliar words based on context clues. The specific purposes of this research were as follows:

(a) To find out whether the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have problems in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words by using definition clues.

(b) To find out whether the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have problems in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words by using example clues.

(c) To find out whether the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have problems in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words by using contrast clues.

(d) To find out wheter the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have problems in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words by using inference clues.

This research is expected to give scientific information to the students, the English lecturers, and the researcher. For the students, they will know their own problems in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar word based on context clues and it can be an input for them to overcome the problems that they have. For English lecturers, it gives information about problems that their students have in guessing meaning of the unfamiliar word based on context clues, and it can be considered as input for them to find out the better way of teaching their students to guess meaning based on context clues. For the researcher, this research is useful to increase his knowledge in doing a research and report it for the future.

Research Design

This research used descriptive design. Gay (1987:189) says that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The population of this research was the second year student of English Department of Bung Hatta University who registered in academic year 2014/2015. The number of population was 54 students distributed into 2 classes. To select the sample, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique. Gay (1987:110) states that cluster random sampling is sampling in which groups are randomly selected.

In this research, the researcher used vocabulary test to collect the data. The

researcher used vocabulary test to find out students' problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. He constructed the test in the form of multiple-choices. The multiple choices test was a test which provides some choices as alternative answers but only one is the right answer. Before giving the test, the researcher tried out to the students.

The citeria of good test are validity and reliability. Validity should be achieved in order to have a good test. In this research, the researcher used content validity. Gay (1987:129) states content validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended content area. It means that the test is valid if it fixes with the materials that given to the students. In this case, the material of the test was based on curriculum, syllabus and consulted with English lecturer at Bung Hatta University.

Reliability is the degree to which a test constistenly measures whatever it measures (Gay, 1987:135). To have a reliable and good test, the researcher tried out the test to students out of sample. For reliability the researcher used split half method. It means the researcher divided the test items into odd and even items. To find reliability of the test, the researcher calculated the coefficient correlation between odd item scores and event item scores by using Pearson Product Moment Formula, (Arikunto, 2009:72) as follows:

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

Where:

r_{xy} = the correlation coefficient between variable X and Y

n = the number of students who follow the test.

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

$\sum x$ = the sum of odd item score

$\sum y$ = the sum of even item score

$\sum x^2$ = the sum square of x

$\sum y^2$ = the sum square of y

Furthermore, to know the reliability coefficient for total test, the researcher used Spearman Brown Formula Gay (1987:139):

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

Where:

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

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

According to Arikunto (2009:75) the degree of coefficient corelation of the test can be categorized as follows:

.80 - 1.00 = very high

.61 – .80 = high correlation

.41 – .60 = enough

.21 – .40 = low

.00 – .20 = very low

According to Gay (1987:139) a good item of test is an item that has coefficient correlation between .81-1.00. The result of data analysis showed reliability coefficient of the test was .94 and it was categorized into very high correlation. It means that the test was reliable and could be used as instrument of this research.

To analyze item difficulty in order to know whether it is easy or difficult, the researcher used the following formula (Arikunto, 2009:208):

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

Where:

P = item difficulty

B = total number of students who answered correctly

JS = total number of students

The item difficulty ranges between .00 – 1.00 and it is symbolized as "P" that refers to "proportion" in the evaluation item. The classification of item difficulties suggested by Arikunto (2009:210) is as follows:

P = .00 – .30 is difficult

P = .30 – .70 is moderate

P = .70 – 1.00 is easy

Based on the result of analysis of item difficulties, the researcher found that 28 items were moderate (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38), 6 items were difficult (4, 12, 18, 20, 25, 31) and 4 items were easy (14, 22, 30, 33).

Among these items, the researcher took all moderate items. So, the total items used in the instrument was 28.

Item discrimination is the ability of items to diferentiate students that have high achievement and low acheivement. To do this analysis, the researcher divided the students into two groups; upper and lower

group (Arikunto, 2009:211). The student who got score half above were classified as high group and the student who got score half below were classified as lower group. To analyze the item discrimination, the researcher used the following formula (Arikunto, 2009:213)

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

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 classification of item discrimination is as follows:

D = .00-.20   = poor

D = .21-.40   = satisfactory

D = .41-.70   = good

D = 71-1.00   = excellent

Arikunto (2009:218) states that the good item of the test is an item that has discrimination index between .40 – .70.

Based on the result analysis of item discrimination, the researcher found that 28 items were good (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38), and 10 items were poor (4, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 25, 30, 31, 33). Relating to both of analysis above the acccepted items were 28 items good (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38), and the discarded items were 10 (4, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 25, 30, 31, 33). However, to have a balance number of items for each aspect, the number of items used for real test was 20 items. 1-5 for definition clues, 6-10 for example clues, 11-15 for contrast clues, 16-20 for inference clues.

As already discussed previously, the researcher gathered the data by using Vocabulary test. There are several steps in collecting data from test as follow:

1. The researcher gave the test to the students.

2. The researcher asked the students to do the test it in 60 minutes.

3. The researcher collected the students' answer sheets.

4. The researcher gave score on students' answer sheet, the researcher gives one score if the answer is correct and zero if the answer is false. So, the possible maximum score is 20 and minimum one is zero.

5. The researcher counted the total score of each students.

The researcher analyzed the data of this study by using the following technique :

1. The researcher calculated Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) by using the following formula (Arikunto,2009:264):

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = mean

x = sum of x

N = number of students

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N} - \left(\frac{\sum x}{N}\right)^2}$$

Where:

SD = standard deviation

x = total of X

x^2 = total of x^2

N = number of students

2. The researcher classified the students into group who had problems and group who had no problems. To do this, the researcher used formula as shown in Table 1

Table 1
Criteria For Classifying Students Into Having Problems Or Having No Problems

Category	Classification
> M + .5 SD	Have no problem
M + .5 SD	Have problem

3. The researcher counted the percentage of the students who had no problems and had problems by using the following formulla:

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

Where:

P= percentage of the students who had or had no problems

F= frequency of students who had or had no problems

N= total of students

Findings and Discussions

a. Findings

Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the highest score which was achieved by the students was 17 and the lowest score was 9. The mean was 13.2 and the standard deviation was 2.36. The result of analyzing data also showed that the students had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using the context clues. As a matter of fact, 11 students (36.67%) had no problem and 19 students (63.33%) had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using context clues. To make it clear, the frequencies of students who had problem and had no problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using context clues.

Table 2
The Frequencies of Students Who Had and Had No Problems in Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words by Using Context clues

Categories	Number of Students	Percentage
Have no Problems	11	36.67%
Have problems	19	63.33%
Total	**30**	**100%**

The highest score that was achieved by students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using definition clues was 5 and the lowest score was 1. The mean was 3.43 and the standard deviation was 1.09. Based on the result of analyzing the data, the researcher found that 12 students (40%) had no problem and 18 students (60%) had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using definition clues.

Table 3
The Frequencies of Students Who Had and Had No Problems in Guessing The Meaning of Unfamiliar Words By Using Definition Clues

Categories	Number of Students	Percentage
Have no Problems	12	40%
Have problems	18	60%
Total	**30**	**100%**

The result of data analysis demonstrated that the highest score that was achieved by students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using example clues text was 5 and the lowest score was 1. The mean was 3.43 and the standard deviation was 1.26. It was also found that 9 students (30%) had no problem and 21 students (70%) had problem

in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using example clues.

Table 4
The Frequencies of Students Who Have and Have No Problems in Guessing The Meaning Of Unfamiliar Words By Using Example Clues

Categories	Number of Students	Percentage
Have no Problems	9	30%
Have problems	21	70%
Total	**30**	**100%**

The result of data analysis showed that the highest score that was achieved by students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using contrast clues text was 5 and the lowest score was 2. The mean was 3.1 and the standard deviation was .83. It was also found that 8 students (26.67%) had no problem and 22 students (73.33%) had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using contrast clues.

Table 5
The Frequencies of Students Who Have and Have No Problems in Guessing The Meaning Of Unfamiliar Words By Using Contrast Clues

Categories	Number of Students	percentage
Have no Problems	8	26.67%

Have problems	22	73.33%
Total	**30**	**100%**

The result of data analysis demonstrated that the highest score that was achieved by students in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using inference clues text was 5 and the lowest score was 1. The mean was 3.23 and the standard deviation was 1.01. It was also found that 7 students (23.33%) had no problem and 23 students (76.67%) had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using inference clues.

Table 6
The Frequencies of Students Who Have and Have No Problems in Guessing The Meaning Of Unfamiliar Words By Using inference clues

Categories	Number of Students	Percentage
Have no Problems	7	23.33%
Have problems	23	76.67%
Total	**30**	**100%**

b. Discussions

The result of data analysis demonstrated that most of the second year students had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using context clues. As a matter of fact, there were 19 students

9

(63.33%) who had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using context clues. It might be caused by the students' limited knowledge on what the context clues tell about. That is why they got difficulties in identifying and comprehending each part of context clues. It is assumed that they were not familiar with words or phrase which are used to introduce the context clues; definition clues, examples clues, contrast clues, and inference clues.

As already discussed previously, many students (60%) had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using definition clues. It means the students still got difficulty in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using definition clues.

As already discussed before, another finding of this study was that the more than half students (70%) still had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using examples clues. They did not

understand what the subject matter was disscused. In fact, some students had error in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using examples clues.

As already brought up previously, the finding of this study was that most students (73.33%) had problem in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contrast clues. As you know, to be able to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contrast clues, the readers should have knowledge on words or phrase used to introduced the contrast clues. The students could not answer the question number 13, only 26.67% could answer the question correctly.

As already talked previously, the next finding of this study was that students still had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using inference clues (76.67%). Based on the data, many students had error in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using inference clues.

Conclusions and Suggestions

a. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this research, in general the researcher concluded that the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. It was supported by data that percentage of the students who had problems was 63.33% and who had no problems was 36.67%.

The second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using definition clues. It was proved by the fact that 60% students had problems and 40% students had no problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using defintion clues.

The second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using example clues. It was supported by the data showing that 70% students had problems and 30% had no problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using example clues.

The second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had

problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contrast clues. It was proved by the fact that 73.33% students had problems and 26.67% students had no problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contrast clues.

The second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using inference clues. It was proved by the fact that 76.67% students had problems and 23.33% students had no problems in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using inference clues.

Based on the conclusions of this research as already discussed previously, the researcher derived several suggestions:

(1) The researcher suggests the lecturers to give the students more explanation or review about context clues, defintion clues, examples clues, contrast clues, and inference clues. In other words, the English teachers are expected to discuss in more detail about them and the to give more exercises to the students to make them have more knowledge about it.

(2) The students are suggested to learn more about context clues and to do more exercise in order to improve their ability in guessing meaning by using context clues.

(3) The researcher suggests to the next researcher to find out the ability of the

students' in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar by using the context clues. Beause the researcher had done to find out the problem made by the students.

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