

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES
IN UNDERSTANDING REFERENCES IN READING TEXT
AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY**

Febrina Dewi Rahma Sari¹, Lely Refnita¹, Khairul¹

¹English Department, The Faculty of Teacher Training And Education, Bung Hatta University
E-mail: dewi_febrinarahmasari@ymail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study was to describe the students' difficulties in understanding references. Relating to this, the researcher used descriptive method. The population of this research was the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The total population was 56 students. To get the sample, the researcher used cluster random sampling. The number of sample was 27 students. The data of this research were gathered by using reading test in the form of short answer items. Before the researcher gave the real test, she tried it out since the instrument was categorized as nonstandardized test. The result of the try out test was used to know the reliability of the test. It was found that the reliability of the test was very high (.91). Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the students had difficulties in understanding references. Specifically, it was found that less than half of students got difficulties in identifying personal reference. It was indicated by the fact that there were 8 out of 27 students (29.63%) got difficulties in identifying personal reference. It was also found that most of students got difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. It was indicated by the fact that there were 15 out of 27 students (55.56%) got difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University had difficulties in understanding references. Relating to this conclusion, the lecturers are suggested to explain more comprehensively about personal references and demonstrative references and give more exercises to the students and the students are also suggested to learn and do more exercises to improve their ability in understanding references.

Key Words : students' difficulties, personal reference, demonstrative reference, understanding references.

Introduction

Reading is one of language skills which is an important part in English. Reading is also a process to get the information and share the ideas. According to Seyler (2008:3), reading is the process of obtaining or constructing meaning from a word or cluster of words. Therefore, reading is an important skill to learn.

In addition, reading is one of the most important parts of language especially English. It is widely used as something to connect the people with the information they need. Moreover, the people in most of the countries increase their knowledge through reading, and reading has become a routine activity in their daily life. Realizing these roles of reading skill, most people in the world learn reading as an important skill to support the other skills.

One of the problems that is faced in reading is improving the reading skill. To be successful in reading activity, students should have some skills in comprehending a reading text. Thus, the students who have less skill in comprehending the content of the reading text cannot catch the meaning and information of the text. How they use the skill in reading will

have significant influences to their comprehension in reading. Moreover, Seyler (2008:5) states that in the reading process the reader is an active participant, the reader brings knowledge and experience, as well as values, beliefs, and biases to the reading experience.

In learning reading especially the skills in reading, the reader is also learning about the text. The text refers to the original words of something written, printed, or spoken in contrast to a summary or paraphrase (Nordquist, 2014:1). A text may be spoken or written, prose or verse, dialogue or monologue. Also, text is a unit of language in use, and it is not a grammatical unit like a clause or sentence.

Learning the reading text is connected to learning about reference. Reference is used to indicate the information that is retrieved from the same things which is stated in the text a second time. As a technical skill, reference should be comprehended by the students because understanding reference can improve the students understanding in reading. In addition, reference is referring words that 'point' to something in a text (Droga and

Humphrey, 2005:104). There are three types of reference in English, and they are personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. Reference can be used in exophoric or endophoric use. Exophora reference is the reference that does not exist in the language/text. Meanwhile, endophora reference is the reference that exist in the text.

Based on the researcher's result of the informal interview toward the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University on December 2014, most of the students have been studying reading for years, but they still found the difficulties to

Research Method

This research was descriptive in nature. The purpose of descriptive method is to investigate and find the answer to the question of the research. Gay (1987:10) says that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions, concerning the current status of the subject of the study.

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 registered in academic

understand or comprehend the text. The researcher also found that the students have faced difficulty to identify the reference in reading text. The researcher got some information from the second year students that there are some factors that make most of them get difficulty in reference and to catch the meaning of the text. They are lack of motivation to read a lot, lack of vocabulary, and lack of background knowledge of the text.

Because of these reasons, the researcher was interested in doing the research on the second year student's difficulties of English Department at Bung Hatta University in understanding reference in reading text.

year 2014/2015. The total number of population members was 56 students that were distributed into two classes; class A and class B.

The members of population were distributed in groups or classes, thus the researcher used the cluster random sampling technique. Gay (2009:129) states that cluster random sampling maybe the only feasible method of selecting a sample when the researcher is unable to obtain a list of all members of the population. In addition, the reason for choosing

random technique because the members of population are homogenous. It means that they have same syllabus, material and lecturer.

Before giving the real test on March 24, 2015, the researcher did the try out first on March 20, 2015. The purpose was to know whether the students could understand the instruction or not and whether the time allocation was enough or not, and to identify the reliability of the test.

The validity of the reading test

The researcher used content validity. Arikunto (2010:211) states, a test is valid if it measures what is supposed to measure.

The reliability of the reading test

To find out the reliability of reading test, the researcher used split-half method by using Pearson Product Moment formula as suggested by Arikunto (2010:213) :

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

According to Gay (1987:139), to know the coefficient of correlation of

the whole test, the result is analyzed by using Spearman Brown formula:

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

The degree of coefficient correlation of the test can be categorized as follows (Arikunto, 2010: 319) :

1. .80 – 1.00 = very high correlation
2. .60 – .80 = high correlation
3. .40-- .60= enough correlation
4. .20 – .40 = low correlation
5. .00– .20 = very low correlation

After the researcher counted the reliability of the test by using Pearson Product Moment Formula, she found that r counted was .91. It was categorized into very high correlation. In other words, the test was reliable; therefore, it could be used as instrument to gather the data.

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

- (1) The researcher administered the test to the students.
- (2) The researcher collected the result of the test.
- (3) The researcher checked the students' answer and classified the types of difficulties made by

the students based on the criteria as follow:

- a. Students had difficulty in identifying personal reference if they could not identify the related items to personal reference.
 - b. Students had difficulty in identifying demonstrative reference if they could not identify the related items to demonstrative reference.
- (4) The researcher gave the checklist (✓) on no difficulties (ND), on

To analyze the data, the researcher did the procedures as follows:

1. The researcher checked table of students who had difficulties and who had no difficulties in understanding references that indicates the number of students who had difficulties in understanding reference.
2. The researcher counted the number of students who had difficulties in understanding reference.

difficulties (D) by using table of checklist on students' difficulties in understanding references.

- (5) The researcher classified a student into the group of having difficulty if he or she had more than 50% difficulty in each aspect. In contrast, the researcher classified him or her into the group of having no difficulties if he or she had less than or same with 50% difficulty.
- (6) The researcher put the result of step 5 into a table.

3. The researcher used the formula below in counting the percentage of students who had difficulties in each components (personal reference, and demonstrative reference) :

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

4. The students were said to have difficulties if the percentage was above 50% and they have no difficulties if the percentage was less than or same with 50%.

Findings and Discussions

1. Findings

1.1 Students Who Had Difficulties in Identifying Personal Reference

Based on the result of the data analysis, it was found that less than half of students got difficulties in identifying personal reference. It was indicated by the fact that there were 8 out of 27 students (29.63%) got difficulties in identifying personal reference.

1.2 Students Who Had Difficulties in Identifying Demonstrative Reference

Based on the result of the data analysis, it was found that most of students got difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. It was indicated by the fact that there were 15 out of 27 students (55.56%) got difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference.

2. Discussions

As it is already discussed in the findings of this research, the researcher found students' difficulties in identifying personal reference and demonstrative reference. The data also described that many students faced difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. Students' difficulties in each

component of understanding reference will be discussed below.

2.1 Students' Difficulties in Identifying Personal Reference

As already discussed before, it was found that less than half of students (29.63%) had difficulties in identifying personal reference. It was indicated that less than half of students were still confused about personal reference. To be able to identify the personal reference, the students should know that references in the form of possessive adjective and possessive pronouns in the text do not only refer to person, but also refer to things. The following are the examples of students' difficulties in identifying personal reference.

1. Question number 20

The explorers knew that their journey would not be easy since it was very dangerous. They had to be very careful in the forest because savages and wild animals lived there. Their guide told them not to worry as he knew all about these dangers and how to overcome them. He said that he had lived there for many years.

them (in line 5) refers to _____
Students' answer: The explorers

For example above, the correct answer is *dangers*. There were 26 out of 27 students (96.30%) had difficulties in identifying personal reference. They stated that personal reference (them) in the text refers to *The explorers* instead of *dangers*; *dangers* also can be stated in personal reference, and *dangers* in the text refers to *them*.

2. Question number 11

Another example of a different kind of animal that has recently moved to another continent is the zebra mussel. This small shellfish was first discovered in the Great Lakes of North America in 1986. It may have come over from Russia on a cargo ship. They have grown into thick masses, covering many areas of lakes or river bottoms. They have also covered and closed up pipes of power stations and water treatment centers...

they(in line 6) refers to _____

Students' answer: small shellfish

For example above, the correct answer is *the zebra mussels*. It showed that 18 out of 27 students (66.67%) had difficulties in identifying personal reference (they). They stated that personal

reference (they) refers to *Small shellfish* instead of *the zebra mussels*. *The zebra mussels* can be stated in personal reference. Besides, the text tells about *the zebra mussels*, and *they* refers to *the zebra mussels*.

2.2 Students' Difficulties in Identifying Demonstrative Reference

As already discussed before, it was found that most of students (55.56%) had difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. It means that most of students were still confused about demonstrative reference. To be able to identify demonstrative reference, the students should know that references in the form of demonstrative refer to pronouns and adverbs. The following are the examples of students' difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference.

1. Question number 27

Equatorial climates are found in some regions of the Equator. They have high temperatures and heavy rainfall. Many plants live there. Daytime temperatures are about 260° C all the year. At night, they may be 60° C below this. In most of these areas, rainfall is about 50 inches a year. In some, it is more than 200 inches.

these(in line 4) refers to _____

Students' answer : Equatorial climates

For example above, the correct answer is *some regions of the Equator*. It showed that 25 out of 27 students (92.59%) had difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference (*these*). *Equatorial climates* instead of *some regions of the Equator*. Besides, the question is about demonstrative which points to the location or adverb, and *these* refers to *some regions of the Equator*.

2. Question number 19

The explorers knew that their journey would not be easy since it was very dangerous. They had to be very careful in the forest because savages and wild animals lived there. Their guide told them not to worry as he knew all about these dangers and how to overcome them. He said that he had lived there for many years.

these (in line 4) refers to _____

Students' answer : journey

For example above, the correct answer is *savages and wild animals*. It showed that 24 out of 27 students (88.89%) had difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference (*these*). Besides, *these* is demonstrative

reference, and it is plural. Thus, *these* refers to *savages and wild animals*.

Conclusions and Suggestions

1. Conclusions

Based on the findings, in general it can be concluded that second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had difficulties in understanding references. The more specific conclusions were drawn as follows.

1. Some second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had little difficulties in identifying personal reference. It was supported by the data, 29.63% students faced difficulties in identifying personal reference.

2. Many second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University had serious difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference. It was indicated by the fact that 55.56% students had difficulties in identifying demonstrative reference.

2. Suggestions

Related to the findings, there are several suggestions proposed in this research.

1. Since many students faced difficulties in identifying personal reference (29.63%) and identifying demonstrative reference (55.56%), the researcher suggests the lecturers to give the students comprehensive information and more exercises about identifying personal reference, and identifying demonstrative reference and it is also suggested to the lecturers to pay more attention on identifying demonstrative reference.
2. The students are suggested to study harder and do more exercises about personal reference and demonstrative reference which are found in reading text and the students are suggested to be more focus on identifying demonstrative reference.
3. Further researchers are suggested to find the cause of students' difficulties.

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