

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' MASTERY IN VOCABULARY AND THEIR ABILITY IN COMPREHENDING AN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) TEXT.

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is one of the important things in English learning that can't be conveyed by people. For gaining a good ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, people need to have good vocabulary mastery. That's the reason why this part becomes the basic need in language learning and when the researcher found that some of her students with good vocabulary mastery or poor vocabulary mastery find difficulty in comprehending a text especially an ESP text, then the correlation between vocabulary mastery and comprehending text was chosen to be the theme.

The research was purposed to find out whether there was any significant correlation or not between students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Text. The sample of this research was the first semester students. As the instrument of the research, the objective vocabulary test and comprehension test were used. To analyze the data, it used the Product Moment Correlation of Pearson formulae.

The result showed that the students' mean score in vocabulary mastery test was 26.25 while the comprehension test mean score was 41.05. The result also showed that there was a significant relation with the significant level of 0.7. So, the hypothesis proposed in this research was accepted. In conclusion, it can be said that there was a significant correlation between students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending an ESP text.

Keywords : Vocabulary Mastery, Comprehending, an English for Specific Purpose text.

INTRODUCTION

Language is very beneficial in our life. It plays an important role in all aspects of human life. Without language, human has no culture at all for it is an important mean in the developing of culture and knowledge. Language is also as a social behavior that can be learned as a second or foreign language besides the mother tongue or native language. And if we talk about language, we cannot deny the fact that the most popular language in the world nowadays is English.

Fishman and Conrad (1977:6) said that English is one of the international languages which is more dominant than the others. It is almost two third of the people all over the world use English in their daily life to deliver their messages to others and to get message from others. They use English to take part and participate in the development of the world. Knowledge and technology need English to be transferred to the people need them. Machinery and many kinds of products are written in English. Good positions, good jobs in many areas of work need persons who master English, at least, passive English. It means, like or not, English should become something important in people's lives if they want to have good work to gain better life in the brighter future. Realizing this fact, people are wanting or being required to learn English in order to face the magnificent future, the era of high technology, and in order to participate in the world development where English is used as a medium of transferring information.

As the time goes by, the important of English as a world language continues to increase as more and more. The growth of business and increased occupational mobility is resulting in need for English as medium of communication, and access to

much scientific and technical literature. All these demands and requirements have required people to know English not in general sense only, but further in specific one. People need English for specific purpose such as English for health and nursing that is given to the students who study in the nursing academy.

Indonesian Government by the Ministry of National Education has put English as a compulsory subject at school and in higher education, including in the nursing academy. English is put in the first semester to the forth semester with the aims that the students are able to listen, speak, read and write English as well as they have knowledge about grammar and structure in order to get good score in the kinds of some tests like TOEFL test, IELTS, or TOEIC. The students are hoped to be passively or actively use English in their lives; they are hoped to read English books as reference in their study; they can read English reference to enrich their knowledge, and especially they are hoped to communicate in English in giving nursing treatments so that they can work not only in Indonesia but more they can work in other countries and especially in the era of Asian economy community. Knowing and mastering English opens a very wide chance to get good work with good salary in many countries like in Asian countries, Europe, Arabian and even though in America. The curriculum designed for English is based on competence in order to let the students exercise their skills in language learning. Method of teaching used is no longer Grammar Translation Method, but instead is Communicative Language Teaching which its goal is to develop a communicative competence of the learners. The materials given are set to be suitable to the needs, in the form of texts.

However, there is still found many of the students are not able to take benefit of the texts studied because of their lack in comprehending the texts. They cannot understand the texts, and even they are not able just to grasp the messages in the texts. This is so because of their lack of vocabulary meaning as well as sentence structure. For some who have knowledge about sentence structure and the meaning of the vocabulary, still find it rather difficult to comprehend the text because it is an

ESP text that is a text for specific purpose which has used specific terms.

Thus, this study has objectives to find out the students' mastery in vocabulary, their ability in comprehending ESP text, and to find out the significant correlation between their mastery in vocabulary and the ability in comprehending an ESP text, with the significance that the students will get knowledge about the mastery in vocabulary that is important to help them comprehend ESP text and to suggest and encourage the teachers to prepare themselves and develop materials as well in teaching for their students' knowledge varied.

Some definitions have been given to vocabulary. Linse (2005:121) stated vocabulary as the collection of words that individual knows. Another said that vocabulary is a list of words for a particular language or a list or set of word that individual speaker of language might use (Hatch and Brown: 1995.1). Hornby in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary says that vocabulary is the total number of words which with rules for combining them make up a language. This means that vocabulary is a list of words combined to do the language function and when they are used, there are rules to be applied, that is the forms and the relation of the words besides the organization of specialist words in some specific texts. There are three main forms or word building or word formation which is characteristic of English: *Affixation*, *Compounding* and *Conversion*. **Affixation** is the process of adding prefixes and suffixes to the base item, in this way, items can be modified in meaning and/or changed from one part of speech to another, e.g.: forget (v), *forgetful* (adj), *forgetfulness*(n), *unforgettable*(adj). It sometimes produces changes in stress and sounds, e.g.: democrat / 'deməkraet /, democratic/ demə'kræetik /, democracy/ di'mokrəsi /. And since many items of specialized vocabulary, both technical and semi technical are made up of a root of plus a suffix or prefix deriving from Greek and Latin, such as *mono-*, *neo-*, *hyper-*, *-logy*, *-meter*, etc, it can be useful for a student to be able to guess at the meaning of a word by using his knowledge of the meaning of prefix or suffix.

Compounding is the formation of words from two or more separate words which can stand independently in other circumstances. There are three different types of compound: adjective compounds (e.g. hard – working, time – consuming), verb compounds (e.g. to babysit, to sightsee) and noun compounds which consist of three main patterns:

- base noun + noun; *a coffee jar, a table tennis*, etc,
- possessive noun + noun; *my girlfriend's father, his sister's husband*, etc,
- prepositional structures; *a look of fear, the end of the time*, etc.

Conversion, also known as zero affixation, is the process by which an item may be used in different parts of speech, yet does not change its form.

e.g.: We've just had a love *swim*.
(noun)

I can't *swim* very well.

(verb)

Dealing with word relation, Kennedy (1990:62) says : "Words do not exist in isolation. A number of complex relations exist between them which go to make up the semantic structure of any language". The semantic structure of the words proposes varieties of meaning namely: **Conceptual Meaning** is the logical, cognitive, or denotative content, e.g. the word woman = + human, - male, + adult compare with the word boy = + human, + male, - adult. **Affective Meaning** covers the attitudinal and emotional factors of the speaker/writer towards his/her interlocutor, e.g. I'm terribly sorry to interrupt, but I wonder if you would be so kind to lower your voices a little. **Social Meaning** is what being communicated of the social circumstance of language use. This covers the *style* (includes slang, colloquial or formal, neutral, formal, frozen as well as styles such as humorous, ironic, poetic, literary), *register* (varieties of language defined by their topic and context of use, such as the language of medicine, education, law, computers, etc.) and *dialect* (describe differences in geographical variation as well as variation according to social class) of a language.

The meaning of a word can only be understood and learnt in terms of its relationship with other words in the language. Including in term of sense relations are as follows:

- a. **Synonyms** are words which sound different, but have the same or nearly the same meaning, e.g. flat = apartment, kid = child, happy = glad, etc.
- b. **Hyponymy**, i.e. words related to one another by its classification, e.g. fruit ≠ orange, but the meaning of 'fruit' is included in the meaning of 'orange' as it is in the meaning of 'apple' and 'plum'. The sense relation is expressed by saying that orange, apple, and plum are classified into or hyponyms of fruit.
- c. **Antonyms** are words or expressions which are opposite in meaning. There are several kinds of antonyms:
 1. **Complementary pairs/mutually exclusive pairs**; i.e. forms of antonyms which truly represent oppositeness of meaning, e.g. alive × dead, married × single, man × woman, boy × girl ,etc.
 2. **Gradable pairs**; i.e. the negative of one word is not synonymous with the other, e.g. not happy is not necessarily equal to sad. It is also true of gradable antonyms that more of one is less of another, e.g. more bigness is less smallness, wider is less narrow.
 3. **Relational/Converse ness pairs**; i.e. the relationship between the pairs are reciprocal and display symmetry in their meaning, e.g. give × receive, buy × sell, wife × husband, speaker× listener, etc.
 - d. **Another relations** between words are known as *Cause and effect* and *Translation equivalents*.

The other things that should be taken into account in vocabulary learning are *Idiom* and *Collocation*. An idiom is a sequence of words which operates as a single semantics unit and the meaning of the whole cannot be deduced from an understanding of the part, e.g. never mind, hang on, under the weather, etc. When two or more words frequently occur together they make what is known as a collocation, e.g. intense heat, dense

system, earth revolves, heavy traffic, badly dressed, etc.

ESP (English for Specific Purpose) is a particular case of general category of specific-purpose language teaching. ESP courses are those where the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learners. A definition of ESP needs to distinguish between four absolute and two variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics of ESP is that ESP consists of ELT which is designed to meet specified needs of the learners; related in context, i.e. its themes and topics to particular disciplines, occupations and activities; centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc; and in contrast with EGP. Two main branches which help to distinguish ESP situation : English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EAP is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing English in their studies. The language taught may be based in particular disciplines at higher levels of education when the students is specializing (in-study) or intends to specialize (pre-study) in a particular subject. EOP is taught in a situation in which learners need to use English as part of their work or profession.

According to linguistic theory, a text is an instance or example of language in use. In Oxford Learners Dictionary of Current English, a text is mentioned as being so much concerned with written language. However, in Discourse Analysis, text can be spoken or written language or which forms a fairly complete unit. From the definitions above we can conclude that a text refers to any passage, spoken or written or whatever length which forms a fairly complete unit. The unity of meaning has the tool not only sentences but also clauses, phrases, words and phonemes.

Comprehension is a process in which information from the text and the knowledge possessed by the reader act together to construct meaning. Comprehending an ESP text in this research means to comprehend a text of English for Nursing in written form given to the students as an instrument of test in order to evaluate the students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending the text.

RESEARCH METODOLOGY

The population of this research is the first semester students of Malahayati Nursing Academy Medan in the Academic Year of 2015/2016. The total student is 20 students, and all population was taken as samples. Two variables in this research are the students' mastery in vocabulary as an independent variable, and the ability of the students in comprehending an ESP text as a dependent variable. The indicator is the mean of scores by test of vocabulary and comprehension. To acquire data and as a tool of evaluation, objective test and essay test were conducted to the students. Two set of questions were administrated, one for vocabulary test and another for comprehension test. The tests were presented in multiple choice questions (20), true-false questions (5), match questions (10), and essay (5). All together was 40 items with variety of scores 1 – 5. The time allocated to answer all the questions in the test was 60 minutes. The highest score for vocabulary was 40 and for the comprehension was 60 with the lowest score is 0. If the student could answer the test correctly he would get score 100, but if he could not do all the items the score of him was 0. The test was the lecturer-made test. In Calculating the Coefficient Correlation, the Product Moment Correlation formulae (Arikunto: 2002), was used, while determining the students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending an ESP text using the criteria proposed by the National Education Department (Diknas, 2004) which is said that the minimal requirement for students' achievement in level mastery and ability of a certain material is 75% of all tests.

RESULT

After the data of the students' vocabulary mastery were collected, corrected, and analyzed, it can be said that there were 6 students of 20 have achieved the level mastery with the highest score of 38 and the lowest score 11. Based on the result of the students' ability in comprehending an ESP text, it showed that 7 students of 20 have been able to understand the ESP text well with

the highest score was 55 and the lowest was 19.

THE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SCORES

No	Vocabulary Scores (X)	Comprehension Scores (Y)
1.	38	55
2.	21	33
3.	19	36
4.	26	51
5.	29	46
6.	24	39
7.	17	35
8.	19	42
9.	24	41
10.	32	50
11.	33	53
12.	29	47
13.	29	44
14.	31	44
15.	30	34
16.	29	41
17.	28	30
18.	26	29
19.	30	52
20.	11	19

This research proved that most of the students' scores in mastery vocabulary and comprehension ability scores were not so far from the requirements point, it means the lecturer is needed to work a little more harder and give a little more attention to encourage the students to study and motivate them in order to get at

least the minimum point. This research also proved that there is a positive and significant correlation between the students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending an ESP text with $r = 0,826$, which was interpreted into the table by Suharsimi in his book (2002).

'r' value	Interpretation
0,800 – 1,00	High
0,600 – 0,800	Fair
0,400 – 0,600	Almost poor
0,200 – 0,400	Poor
0,000 – 0,200	Very poor (uncorrelated)

Seeing the fact that vocabulary mastery and ability in comprehending a text, written or spoken, has a significant correlation, method and approach of teaching vocabulary and comprehension is needed to develop well. Moreover, In the era of high technology where communication has become the main factor to get success, the communicative approach is considered to be the most appropriate approach of teaching vocabulary and comprehension especially in teaching English for Specific Purpose such as English for Nursing. Through this

approach, students are given chance to communicate actively, expressing as well as improving the knowledge about their field in English. Again, this communication will not run well if the students do not master vocabulary nor have ability in comprehending a text.

Thus, the high correlation between students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending a text of English for Nursing directly answer the hypothesis made for this research.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion got from this research is the vocabulary mastery of the students of Malahayati Nursing Academy as well as their ability in comprehending An English for Specific Purpose (ESP) text that is a text of English for Nursing can be said not quite good because there was only 6 students who could answer 75 % of the vocabulary test correctly and 7 students for the comprehension ability test while the rest could only do the test correctly below the point.

However, talking about the correlation of the vocabulary mastery and the ability in comprehending a text which to be focused of this research , it can be concluded that the direction of correlation goes to positive, means there is an equal direction. There is correlation between variable X and variable Y, in which the scores of X and Y goes to the same direction as well as the correlation between X and Y is very high that is 0,826 as has been shown in the table of 'r' value interpretation by Suharsimi.

This high correlation directly answers the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between the students' mastery in vocabulary and their ability in comprehending an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Text.

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