

VOCABULARY LEVEL AND READING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDENTS OF SMAN 1 BINUANG

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Abstract

This study is about the vocabulary level and reading achievement of the students of SMA N 1 Binuang. English National Examination of senior high school in Indonesia only consists of reading and listening tests, and reading takes up 70% of the question items. Mustafa (2019) found that the reading test in the National Examination of senior high school in Indonesia consists of 3000-word level vocabulary. Therefore, this study aimed to find out the students' vocabulary level and reading achievement and whether their results passed the threshold for reading and National Examination. The research used a descriptive design and quantitative approach. The subjects of this research were the eighth grade students of senior high school in SMA N 1 Binuang. To collect the data, the instruments used were vocabulary level test and reading test. The findings were (1) that the students' vocabulary level was still far below the threshold to both reading skill by Nation or the threshold used in National Examination with the highest vocabulary level was 733-estimated word level; (2) the majority of the students' reading achievement was more than 60 score, with the lowest reading score was 45 and the highest reading score was 80. Based on the findings, the students' vocabulary level and reading achievement were related, students with low vocabulary level tend to achieve low score in reading achievement. To conclude, the result of this study shows that students' vocabulary level were far below threshold to be considered mastering the vocabulary level and their reading achievement score were in average score. Generally, the students' vocabulary level were below 1000-estimated word level and their reading achievement only fell into average. It is suggested to teachers using an effective teaching strategy and material according to students' needs and their English levels. In this case focusing on the materials of 2000 word-level is necessary to increase students' knowledge on vocabulary and more reading materials about finding references and implicit information. For other researchers, it is suggested to use a preliminary study to conduct further researches related to vocabulary level and other language skills.

Keywords: Vocabulary level, reading achievement, senior high-school

INTRODUCTION

Study Background

Vocabulary has an important role in English language learning. Students or English language learners who want to be good at delivering or understanding messages in English should have adequate vocabulary proficiencies. English vocabulary itself has hundreds of thousands of words and has many purposes; for communication, casual reading, and even academic purposes. Based on that explanation, it can be concluded that casual communication has fewer needs for vocabulary compared to academic purposes and still holds a very huge role on regular basis.

With vocabulary holds an important role in learning a language, one more aspect that can be highly related to it is reading skill. Reading is one of the main skills in language learning, and it is the receptive language process that involves students' ability on the skill and their background knowledge. One of the reading purposes is to comprehend reading material. According to McWorther (2012), vocabulary is considered as an important aspect in reading comprehension along with the main idea, specific information, implicit information, and reference. This information brings interest in finding out students' weaknesses by diagnosing what aspect does need to be focused for students.

According to Mustafa (2019), in Indonesia, reading is the focus of English language teaching. The national examination for senior high school in Indonesia only consists of two skills, listening and reading, and reading constitutes 70% of the test in the national examination. Related to the previous explanation that vocabulary is one of the important aspects of reading

comprehension, it means vocabulary also takes a big role in students' performance in the national examination. Thus, students should have an adequate number of vocabularies or pass the threshold for understanding and passing the most reading test in the national examination.

With texts in senior high school shows that 3000 word-level is most frequently used, recent research shows that most students in high school only reach 72% score in 1000 word-level (Mustafa, 2019). This means that student's vocabulary levels are still far from the threshold. With this information, fresh senior high school is expected to learn the 2000 word-level vocabulary and in the second-grade teacher is expected to gradually teach them the 3000 word-level vocabulary. This is in line with Okamoto (2015) who states that vocabulary selection for teaching should be well considered and planned. No study has addressed this importance of vocabulary selection for senior high school students in Indonesia. Thus, vocabulary that has been learned and should be learned remain unclear.

To sum up, vocabulary and reading are important elements of the English language. The purpose of learning vocabulary is to help students to enhance their English language skills, especially in their reading comprehension. Their ability in reading comprehension hoped to be well-translated when they are facing national examination with 70% of the test is in reading. This study aims to diagnoses the weaknesses on students' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in hope that it will be useful for teacher when planning teaching material.

Study Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research problem that can be formulated here is "How are the vocabulary level and the reading achievement of the students of SMA N 1 Binuang?"

Study Objective

Based upon the study problem above, this study was carried out to find out the vocabulary levels and the reading achievements of the students of the SMA N 1 Binuang.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vocabulary

There are some definitions of vocabulary, one of them is the number of words known to a person or a language student, but some experts have different definitions of the vocabulary. Kamil and Hiebert (2005:3) stated that vocabulary is words earned by exposing the students to a foreign language. By this definition, the writer concludes that a vocabulary is a number of words that have meaning and earned by exposing the students to a new language. Based on that, In the process of learning and exposing themselves to a new language, students might encounter the language in two different forms: oral and written, and knowledge of those words comes in also two forms: receptive and productive. These forms and knowledge of those words can also be earned by exposing themselves to a new language.

Another thought to the cause of vocabulary growth is by exposing the student to the language in a context which is called incidental learning. It has traditionally been assumed to be the cause of vocabulary growth. The writer concludes this as that students would be easier if they learn language by learning the language through some context to be able to receive the vocabulary easier for them. On the other hand, many also claim that teaching vocabulary by using context is not the most effective way to teach vocabulary.

Hence, learning vocabulary by exposing the students to a new language, or what we can call as incidental learning as well, can be the most effective way to earn many vocabularies. This vocabulary is an essential component in further achieving more in language acquisition.

Vocabulary Level

Vocabulary level is connected to the frequency level of words. It means that each word is included in a frequency level. This frequency means that each word can occur in a susceptible amount according to the classification of the word.

It can be summed up that students who learn another language need to know very large numbers of words. While this might be useful for a long term goal, it is not useful as a short term goal since student learns vocabulary by constantly reading new thing in their lifetime. This is leading to the vocabulary being an important aspect to be learned immediately to students, yet to learn a very large number of vocabulary is difficult and should be a long term goal for them instead. Frequency-based studies show that some words are much more useful than others. It means that some words are repeatedly used in language and having an important role in the language.

The Importance of Learning Vocabulary

The importance itself can be seen in and out of the school where the language is being used for communication. Researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1999) and Maximo (2000), realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is important for successful second and language use and being an important role in the good spoken and written texts. In brief, when students want to be able to do a good spoken and written, they have to be adequate on vocabulary first. This being said is the first and most crucial factor in learning another language especially for foreign language.

Reading Comprehension

In reading comprehension, Broek and Kremer (2000) cited in Nees (2011) stated that comprehension involves the ability to recall information, extracting themes, engaging in higher-order thinking skills, constructing a mental picture, and understanding the structure of the text. Based on that, the importance of constructing meaning from the text makes comprehension becomes the most important thing about reading. This is due to comprehension is a complex process of reading and being the ultimate goal of reading.

Based on the explanation above, we can conclude that reading comprehension becomes a complex skill because it involves the reader's thinking skill, teaching, experience, and background knowledge of a person. The importance of comprehension itself in reading makes reading comprehension becomes the most important thing in the reading activity.

Reading Achievement

Reading achievement is a term used to describe the level of reading comprehension in which students of the school population got in the learning activity. Purbo, Sutarsyah, and Simanjuntak (2013) stated that vocabulary might be one of the possibilities that affect students' reading achievements. Besides vocabulary, others main possibilities in students' reading achievement is their knowledge about the main idea, specific information, reference, and implicit information. In the students' process to achieve better reading achievement, their teacher also becomes a great factor to ensure they could answer the question they encountered.

STUDY METHOD

Study Design

This research uses a descriptive study and applies a quantitative approach. By using this approach, the data collected are purely descriptive so it does not intend to seek explanations, test hypotheses, make predictions, or study implications. The presentation of the result is in the form of frequencies and percentages, which uses frequency tables and graphs to provide clarity and

understanding of the data presented (Azwar, 2001:126). Here, this study is trying to describe and to find out students' vocabulary level and reading achievement in SMA N 1 Binuang.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted at SMA N 1 Binuang.

Study Subject

In this research, to decide the samples, the researcher used Simple Random Sampling Technique. According to Gay (2012: 131). Every individual has the same probability of being selected, and the selection of one individual in no way affects the selection of another individual. There are 173 students, the researcher chooses randomly 35 students for collecting data.

Study Instrument

In line with the study that is to describe vocabulary levels and reading achievement of the 11th-grade students of senior high school, the writer used two instruments: Vocabulary Level Test and Reading Test.

Data Collection Technique

Vocabulary Level Test

The test was conducted from the 4th of January until the 14th of January by assigning 35 students the vocabulary level test. During the test, the researcher watch carefully to make sure students answer their test by their own. The test was collected and analysed by the researcher using Nation's formula of analysing Vocabulary Level Test.

Reading Test

The reading test was also conducted from the 4th of January until the 14th of January by assigning 35 students the reading test. During the test, the researcher watch carefully to make sure students answer their test by their own. The test was collected and analysed by the researcher.

STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Description

The data were collected from the 4th of January until the 14th of January.

Students' Vocabulary Level Test and Reading Achievement Result

Table 1. Vocabulary Level Test and Reading Achievement Result

Subject	VLT Score on 2000-Word Level	The score of Reading Achievement	Main Idea	Specific Info	Reference	Implicit Idea	Classification
17	733	70	70	80	60	50	Good
20	667	65	80	70	60	70	Average
8	667	65	60	50	80	50	Average
21	600	75	90	80	80	70	Good
16	600	70	70	70	60	80	Good
24	600	60	60	40	80	60	Average

6	533	65	60	80	80	80	Average
2	533	65	60	60	80	60	Average
12	533	65	60	60	80	60	Average
19	533	65	70	80	60	50	Average
22	533	60	80	60	40	60	Average
33	533	60	70	70	60	40	Average
34	533	60	70	70	60	40	Average
35	466	55	80	80	80	60	Average
7	466	65	60	80	60	80	Average
1	466	55	80	60	60	60	Average
27	466	65	90	70	60	40	Average
15	466	60	60	70	50	60	Average
9	466	55	50	40	70	60	Poor
23	466	55	80	50	40	50	Poor
18	466	50	50	60	50	40	Poor
5	400	55	80	80	60	80	Average
10	400	70	60	80	60	80	Good
25	400	70	90	80	60	50	Good
26	400	65	80	60	60	60	Average
28	400	60	70	60	70	40	Average
29	400	60	70	80	40	50	Average
3	400	55	40	60	60	60	Poor
14	400	50	60	40	60	40	Poor
11	333	70	60	80	60	80	Good
13	333	65	80	70	70	40	Average
32	333	50	60	70	40	30	Poor
4	333	45	40	50	40	50	Poor
30	266	55	90	90	50	70	Poor
31	266	50	60	60	40	40	Poor

From the data above, students' VLT scores did not reflect their reading achievement as can be seen from the lowest VLT score being 266 estimated word level with 50 scores in reading achievement, at VLT score of 466 estimated word-level some students received 70 and 50, and

the highest VLT score which was 733 estimated word level with 65 scores in reading achievement.

Vocabulary Level Test Result

Based on the result analysis, only student number 17 got 733 estimated word level. Where this was not the minimum threshold of the VLT test, it was the best on the overall result of the VLT test score. Followed by student number 20 and 8 with 667 estimated word level. Next, there were student number 21, 16, and 24 with 600 estimated word level with only 1 difference in the correct answer from 667 estimated word level. Then, there were student number 6, 2, 12, 19, 22, 33, and 34 with 533 estimated word level. After that, there were students number 35, 7, 1, 27, 15, 9, 23, and 18 with 466 estimated word-level.. More, there were student number 5, 10, 25, 26, 28, 29, 3, and 14 with 400 estimated word level. After that, there were student number 11, 13, 32, and 4 with 333 estimated word level. Lastly, there were student number 30 and 31 with 266 estimated word level.

Further, the distribution of data frequency on students' Vocabulary Level Test can be seen as following;

Table 2. Distribution of a Data Frequency on Students' Vocabulary Level Test

VLT Score on 2000-word level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
266	2	5.71
333	4	11.42
400	8	22.85
466	8	22.85
533	7	20
600	3	8.57
667	2	5.71
733	1	2.85
Total	35	100

Based on the result analysis of students' VLT score on a 2000-word level, it shows that two students got 266 (5.71%), four students got 333 (11.42%), eight students got 400 (22.85%), eight students got 466 (22.85%), seven students got 533 (20%), three students got 600 (8.57%), two students got 667 (5.71%), and one student got 733 (2.85%).

Reading Achievement Result

Table 3. Reading Achievement Score Classifications

The Range of Score	Reading Comprehension Categories
80 – 100	Excellent
70 – 79	Good
60 – 69	Average
< 59	Poor

Based on the result analysis, only student number 21 got a 80 reading achievement score and considered as in excellent category with 90 in main ideas, 80 in specific information, 80 in referents, and 70 in implicit information.

Next, there were students number 6, 35, 5, and 30 who got 75 reading achievement scores and in the good category with sequentially 60, 80, 80, and 90 in main ideas, 80, 80, 80, and 90 in specific information, 80, 80, 60, and 50 in referents, and 80, 60, 80, and 70 in implicit information. In the same good category but with different reading score were students number 20, 16, 7, 10, 25, and 11 with 70 reading achievement scores with sequentially 80, 70, 60, 60, 90, and 60 in main ideas, 70, 70, 80, 80, 80, and 80 in specific information, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, and 60 in referents, and 70, 80, 80, 80, 50, and 80 in implicit information.

Then, there were students number 17, 2, 12, 19, 1, 27, 26, and 13 who got 65 reading achievement scores and in average category with sequentially 70, 60, 60, 70, 80, 90, 80, and 80 in main ideas, 80, 60, 60, 80, 60, 70, 60, and 70 in specific information, 60, 80, 80, 60, 60, 60, 60, and 70 in referents, and 50, 60, 60, 50, 60, 40, 60, and 40 in implicit information. In the same average category but with different reading score were students number 8, 24, 22, 33, 34, 15, 28, and 29 with 60 reading achievement scores with sequentially 60, 60, 80, 70, 70, 60, 70, and 70 in main ideas, 50, 40, 60, 70, 70, 70, 60, and 80 in specific information, 80, 80, 40, 60, 60, 50, 70, and 40 in referents, and 50, 60, 60, 40, 40, 60, 40, and 50 in implicit information.

Last, there were students number 9, 23, and 3 who got 55 scores in reading achievement and in the poor category with sequentially 50, 80, and 40 in main ideas, 40, 50, and 60 in specific information, 70, 40, and 60 in referents, and 60, 50, and 60 in implicit information. In the same poor category but with different reading score were students number 18, 14, 32, 31, and 4 with 50 and 45 reading achievement scores with sequentially 50, 60, 60, 60, and 40 in main ideas, 60, 40, 70, 60 and 50 in specific information, 50, 60, 40, 40, and 40 in referents, and 40, 40, 30, 40, and 50 in implicit information.

Table 4. Distribution of Data Frequency on Students' Reading Achievement

The Range of Score	Number of Students	Percentage	Reading Comprehension Categories
80 – 100	1	2.85%	Excellent
70 – 79	8	22.85%	Good

60 – 69	18	51.42%	Average
< 59	8	22.85%	Poor
Total	35	100%	

Based on the table above, it shows that the total number of the sample was 35 students. there were 1 student (2.85%) in the excellent category, eight students (22.85%) in the good category, eighteenth students (51.42%) in the average category, and eight students (22.85%) in the poor category, it can be concluded that the students dominant in the average category.

Table 5. Distribution of Data Frequency on Students' Reading Achievement Based on each Indicator

No	Category	Reading Comprehension Ability							
		Main Idea		Specific Info		Reference		Implicit	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Excellent	12	34.28	12	34.28	7	20	6	17.14
2.	Good	7	20	8	22.85	3	8.57	3	8.57
4.	Average	12	34.28	9	25.71	16	45.71	10	28.57
6.	Poor	4	11.42	6	17.14	9	25.71	7	20
T		35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

The table reports the scoring frequency and score classification of the reading test on each indicator. The indicator is the focus of the question which is the main idea, specific information, reference, and implicit information.

The first one is finding the main ideas. Based on the analysis result, there were 12 (34.28%) students who had excellent scores. Second, there were 7 (20%) students who had good scores. Third, there were 12 (34.28%) students who had average scores. However, there were 4 (11.42%) students who had a poor score.

The second one is specific information. Based on the analysis result, there were 12 (34.28%) students who had excellent scores. Second, there were 8 (22.85%) students who had good scores. Third, there were 9 (25.71%) students who had average scores. However, there were 6 (17.14%) students who had poor scores.

The third one is the reference. Based on the analysis result, there were 7 (20%) students who had excellent scores. Second, there were 3 (8.57%) students who had good scores. Third, there were 16 (45.71%) students who had average scores. However, there were 9 (25.71%) students who had poor scores.

The last one is implicit information. Based on the analysis result, there were 6 (17.14%) students who had excellent scores. Second, there were 3 (8.57%) students who had good scores. Third, there were 10 (28.57%) students who had average scores. However, there were 16 (45.71%) students who had poor scores.

Discussions

The problem of this research was “How are the vocabulary level and the reading achievement of the students of SMA N 1 Binuang?”. Based on the result of the data analysis, none of the students pass the threshold set by Nation (2008) or Mustafa (2019), and for students’ reading achievement, students generally fell into average classification. It showed that students’ vocabulary level highly related to their reading achievement.

Based on the result of the data analysis, all of the students were falling below 1000-estimated word level. It was found that the highest score in all of the students’ vocabulary level was 733-estimated word level (2.85%). Then, the lowest score in vocabulary level was 266-estimated word level (5.71%). The highest frequency of all vocabulary level were 400 and 466-estimated word level with each having 8 students falling in that category (22.85%). This shows similar result to research done by Mustafa (2019), his research shows that Indonesian high school fresh graduate are generally only achieve 72% of the 1000-word frequency. In his research, he also states about the vocabulary level threshold for senior high school to understand English texts in National Examination, which is 3000-word frequency level. Based on that threshold, the result of the students’ vocabulary level in this study were still far from that and in need of improvement.

In line with students’ vocabulary level falling below 1000-estimated word level, their reading achievements were also showed high relation to their vocabulary levels. A student with 733-estimated word level achieve 65 in reading achievement and only fell to average. Then, it was followed by students with 667-estimated word level achieve 65 in reading achievement and fell to good average scores. Next, it was followed by students with 466-estimated word level with reading achievement scores varied from 50 to 65 and fell to poor to average scores. Next, the lowest vocabulary level which is 266-estimated word level achieve 55 in reading achievement and fell to poor score.

Next, based on the result of the data analysis, it was found that among 4 aspects in the reading comprehension test, the highest achievement and highest frequency were finding the main idea and specific information comprehension with twelve students (34.28%) for both aspects on excellent classification. There are only four students (11.42%) who cannot appropriately identify the main idea and only six students (17.14%) who cannot appropriately identify the specific information. This may be due to the English teacher done a great job in teaching students to identify the main idea and specific information. According to McWorther (2012), the main idea is the topic of the sentence that tells the content of the paragraph. In other words, it is the important ideas throughout the paragraph and sometimes is explicitly stated in the text. The fact that the main idea and specific information found mostly in the initial paragraph or stated repeatedly throughout the paragraph, made it easier for students to comprehend the main idea and specific information to answer them quite easily.

Next, the highest frequency with the lowest achievement is reference comprehension with nine students in poor classification (25.71%). In contrast with the main idea and specific information, reference needs an understanding of the other word that is used in the text that refers to the initial word to evade repetition. This might be quite difficult for the students because they might do not understand what the second word refers to

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusions

From the research conducted, the conclusion of students’ vocabulary level and reading achievement of SMA N 1 Binuang is as follow:

First, based on the finding, the researcher concludes that all students' vocabulary levels were still below 2000 estimated word-level. To compare it with the threshold of what vocabulary level mostly used in senior high school reading text, students result was still far from it. This is even before considering that the test used was the 2000-word level and the most frequently used in senior high school reading text is 3000-word level. This result means that students need more practice in reading to enrich their vocabulary knowledge.

Second, from the result of data analysis of the tests, the researcher discovers that students' reading achievement was generally fell in the average category suggested by the teacher. Some of them were having difficulties in reading but it is something that needs to be considered in the teaching activity by teacher and students later on. From 4 aspects of reading comprehension, students were having difficulties in identifying reference and implicit information from the texts. Therefore, the English teacher should help students increase their reading comprehension by giving more exercises and maybe implement different stimulating teaching method to students in the class to improve their reading achievement.

In this research, students' vocabulary level were related to their reading achievement. It means that the higher the vocabulary level also the higher their reading achievement. According to Schmitt (2000), students' limited knowledge of the language could make them difficult in producing and receiving any message they encountered. That fact might be the reason their vocabulary level was in line with their reading achievement.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions are recommended for English teachers and future researchers.

1. For English teacher, the researcher would like to suggest the English teacher to teach students material that constitutes of 2000-word level vocabulary. Then they can start learning advance level, 3000-word level. For reading, students need to be able to identify reference and implicit information questions and how to answer them.
2. For future researcher, the researcher would like to suggest to investigate more on the vocabulary level and achievement of other skills.

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