THE EFFECT OF VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE ON READING COMPREHENSION TO SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTS MIFTAHUL ULUM

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Abstract: One of the difficulties commonly encountered by students in comprehending reading text is lack of vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the researcher in this study decides to organize research that focuses on the effect of vocabulary knowledge toward students reading comprehension ability. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the students who experience the vocabulary knowledge treatment achieve better than those who do not experience it. The research design of this study was quantitative quasi- experimental study. While, the population of the study was the seven grade students of MTs Miftahul Ulum. From that population, the samples were 43 students of MTs Miftahul Ulum. The instruments of the research were pretest and posttest questions focusing on descriptive text. The scores of the test were collected and analyzed using IBM SPSS version 24. Wilcoxon test and Mann Whitney test were used to analyze the data. The result of the study shows that students' score of experimental group is significantly higher than students' score of control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge is a suitable treatment in helping students to improve their reading comprehension.

Keywords: vocabulary knowledge, students, and reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity that commonly carried out by most of people. In understanding a text most of people might assume that reading is the easiest way because reading is an activity that is very common among ordinary people

(Nguyen, 2007). It cannot be denied that reading might help students in enhancing their language proficiency. In increasing the mastery of language, reading comprehension is one of the most preferrred skills (Naeemeh and Behzad, 2015). Furthermore, reading is very prominent for students. Because of reading, students can achieve their academic purposes. To gain their academic goals and their careers in the future, students have to be able to read and understand English text (Chou, 2011). Next, reading comprehension can help people in gaining much information about anything; we just need to read books, articles, journals, etc. to get the information. Comprehending reading text makes people have a lot of knowledge, know much information, and also free from deception (Fidinillah, 2011). In understanding the material of reading text, the students can be helped by understanding the meaning of words in the text (Bakti, 2018). Sulistyo (2011) in his book about reading and meaning also stated that reading also entails that conclude the meaning of the text, people have to explore and evaluate the information in the text. On another hand, to know much information when reading a text, reader must understand the meaning of the text. To understand the meaning of a text, readers can apply various theories of reading. Many changes occured in reading theory throughout the development of general learning theory (Nguyen, 2007).

In understanding the meaning of a text, the students may find some difficulties. In doing a comprehension test of reading comprehension, students have a variety of difficulties they found relating to their mastery level (Nurjanah, 2018). One of the difficulties commonly encountered by students is lack of vocabulary mastery because it is really not possible that students can comprehend a text without understanding the vocabulary of the reading text. The readers of second language may not obtain comprehension adequately if they cannot pass the vocabulary threshold (Chen, 2011). Nurjanah (2018) in her research about analysis on students' difficulties in reading comprehension found that mastery of vocabulary and lack of knowledge are all of students' problems in reading comprehension. Jayanti (2016) stated that there are six factors that make students feel difficult in reading: knowledge of vocabulary, text analysis of syntactic and semantic,

creating the inferential meaning, the application of strategy, and the feeling of the students throughout the reading activity. From the results of the research above, it can be concluded that students' problem in reading comprehension is almost about vocabulary.

The lack of vocabulary mastery becomes the most populer problem for students in reading comprehension. Later on, we should find out a solution that can increase students' vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary knowledge becomes very important in reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge has a very prominent part in comprehension of reading text (Anjomshoa and Zamanian, 2014). It has been recognized that vocabulary knowledge also very important for the students first and second language. Vocabulary knowledge has been confirmed to have an important part in reading performance both in first language (L1) and second language (L2) (Djuarsa, 2017). The difficulties in understanding the meaning of a text, in deciding the meaning of unpopular words, and in answering the questions of the text are because of the lack of vocabulary knowledge (Fidinillah, 2011). Then, the vocabulary knowledge also helps students in understanding the meaning of spoken and written texts. Vocabulary knowledge assists in catching the material of written and spoken text; it is considered as prominent device in understanding all of language skills (Viera, 2017). Considering the above explanation, it can be said that vocabulary knowledge has a very big impact on students' comprehension of reading texts.

Based on the problems encountered by the students above stated we know that it can be overcome by giving the students vocabulary knowledge. Then, students' success in reading comprehension is because of the reading strategy used by teacher and students in reading the texts. Because of this reason, the researcher decides to conduct a research that employed vocabulay knowledge to students' reading comprehension skill. Unlike other previous studies that used students of elementary school, senior high school, and college as the participants, in this study the participants were junior high school students. In addition, the material of the reading comprehension test of this research used descriptive text's questions. Then, the location of this study is in MTs Miftahul Ulum,

Sumbermanjing Wetan. The researcher formulated the research question of this study "Do the students who get the vocabulary knowledge treatment achieve better score in reading comprehension than those students who get conventional treatment?" Based on the research problem, the purpose of this study is to identifies how significant the effectiveness of vocabulary knowledge treatment toward students' reading comprehension of seventh grade students of MTs Miftahul Ulum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many theories that discuss about the definition of reading comprehension. Reading is a kind of complicated process that needs many dissimilar skills (Chou, 2011). In comprehending reading texts, readers may face some complex processes such as, understanding the vocabulary; catching the meaning of the content of the text, catching the purpose of the text, and also being able in answer the questions that related to the text. Fidinillah (2011) stated that reading comprehension is when the readers catch what they read. It means that when a reader can catch the meaning, understanding the vocabularies used, and knowing the purpose of the text that they read can be called as reading comprehension. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading comprehension can be confirmed as an activity that has complex process with the purpose in finding the better ways to improve students' ability in understanding the vocabularies of the texts and comprehending the meaning of the texts.

Vocabulary knowledge is very important in comprehending a text because it is the instrument of reading comprehension. The readers should have the knowledge of the vocabulary before reading the text to help them understand the text easier. There are some definitions of vocabulary knowledge that defined by some experts. Knowing the meaning of words and vocabularies can be defined as a simple understanding of vocabulary knowledge (Djuarsa, 2017). If we know many words and vocabularies, it means that we have many vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, Mehrpour, Razmjoo, and Kian (2011) stated the definition of vocabulary knowledge simply as a piece of the structure of

knowledge that has a role in reading comprehension. It can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge has a role in reading comprehension, and this role will be very useful for the reader who wants to comprehend a reading text.

Vocabulary knowledge is very crucial for students of second language in comprehending their reading text. As the result of other researcher (Chou, 2011), in helping second language learner increase their reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge is over important than background knowledge. "Students with high levels of vocabulary knowledge will be able to decode and understand the reading passage better than students with low levels of vocabulary" (Nation, Clarke, Marshall, & Durand, 2004, as cited in Chou, 2011). For EFL learners, vocabulary knowledge gives effect directly in the language competence (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and in the language use (Viera, 2016).

METHOD

The researcher used quantitative research, especially quasi-experimental research. It is impossible in educational settings to choose the sample of the research from the population and divided into different classes (Latief, 2017). Because of this impossibility the researchers can apply quasi-experimental as their research design; researchers can choose two classes and determine the experimental and the control group. Next, by this design the resarcher gave a pretest, treatment, and posttest.

The population of this study were all seventh grade students of MTs Miftahul Ulum which consists of sixty five students. While the subjects of the study were students from two classes, class A and B. The number of the subjects were fourty three students. One class was the experimental group, and the other class was the control group. The students of experimental group have been given a treatment about vocabulary knolwedge, in which they had to memorize as many vocabulary as possible given by the researcher. Then, the students of the control were not given any treatment. In another words, the teaching and learning process have been conducted conventionally.

To collect the data, the researcher gave the students two tests, namely a pretest and posttest. The researcher administered a pretest to the experimental group and the control group to measure their prior knowledge. The pretest consisted of ten true or false questions, and it uses two descriptive texts about public figure and tourist atraction. The questions were based on the text given to the students, and it is scored as correct and incorrect. Furthermore, the posttest was administered to know the result of student's reading comprehension after receiving the vocabulary knowledge treatment for the experimental group and receiving conventional treatment for the control group in six meetings. The posttest consisted of ten multiple-choice descriptive text questions with four options, and it used three descriptive text. Moreover, the researcher in this study have tested the readability of all three texts using *Readability Test Pro*. The researcher scored it as correct and incorrect.

This research has been conducted in six meetings. In the first meeting the researcher gave a pretest to the experimental and control group to know the students' background knowledge, and the researcher also gave a treatment in the first meeting to the experimental group. Meanwile, for the control group the researcher only give a conventional treatment. In the next meeting until the sixth meeting, the researcher still gave the treatment to the experimental group. Meanwhile, for the control group the researcher gave conventional treatment. Therefore, the researcher only conveys learning material about descriptive text, students were not asked to memorize vocabularies and the students were not given any treatment that tends to build students' vocabulary knowledge. Next, the treatment given to the experimental group was a treatment that tends to build students' vocabulary knowledge by drilling them to memorize as many vocabulary as possible, and also the researcher also drilled the students of experimental group. Both group took a posttest in the sixth meeting.

To know the effectiveness of vocabulary knowledge on students' reading comprehension, the researcher analyzed the scores of the posttest multiple choice questions by using IBM SPSS software 24 version.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The researcher decided to use IBM SPSS software 24 version to analyzed the data. To know whether the data was normally distributed or not, the researcher did normality test. Because the number of the subjects of this research were less than fifty students, the researcher used the result of Shapiro-wilk IBM SPSS. The significance value in 0.207 for the pretest experimental test and 0.074 for the posttest experimental group. Next, the significant value is 0.21 for the pretest of control group and 0.261 for the posttest of control group. The significance value must be higher than 0.05 to be categorized that the data is normally distributed. So, it can be summarized that the data are not normally distributed.

To continue this study the researcher implemented non parametrical analysis in collecting the data. Because the result of normality test that were not normally distributed, to contine this study the researcher used non parametrical analysis. The table of the Wilcoxon test of the experimental group explains whether the result of experimental group test is significant. The score of Assymp. Sig of the table above is 0.027 which means that it is less than 0.05. It can be concluded that the difference in the mean score in the pretest and posttest of experimental group is significantly different. Next, the result of Wilcoxon test of control group shows the Z shows -1.216 and the significance value is 0.224 and it is higher than 0.05, which means the mean score of pretest an posttest of the control group are not significantly different.

After conducting normality test, the researcher also did homogeneity to know whether the data was homogen or not. The result homogeneity test the number of significance value based on mean is 0.320, which means higher than 0.05. It can be concluded that the data is homogen.

Next, the researcher also did Mann-Whitney test to the significance value is 0.001 which means less than 0.05. So, it can be concluded that the score of reading comprehension of students who received vocabulary knowledge treatment

is significantly higher than students who do not received vocabulary knowledge treatment.

DISCUSSION

      Based on the results that have been stated by the researcher leads to believe that the posttest scores of both group are higher than the pretest score. The table 2 and the table 5 show the evidences. The mean scores of experimental group were 73.64 for the pretest and 80.45 for the posttest, and the mean scores of control group were 63.33 for pretest and 66.67 for the posttest. However, the significance value of wilcoxon text from both group show 0.027 for experimental group, which means there is significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. While, the siginificance value of control group shows 0.224, which means there is no significant difference between pretest and posttest of control group. Furthermore, the result of the Mann-Whitney test shows that the significance value is less than 0,05 which means that the students' score of experimental group is significanly higher than students' score of control group. This result also answers the research problem of this study.

      A study by Chou (2011) supports the result of this research. The participants of this study were 159 students from Southern Taiwan University of Science and Technology. The result shows that vocabulary knowledge significant in helping students comprehend the reading text, and the score of vocabulary knowledge group was significantly higher than control and background knowledge group. From the result of Chou's study and also the result of this study it can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge is a very good treatment in comprehending a reading text.

      Another study stated by Fidinillah (2011) also supports the result s of this research. The participants of this study were students of elementary school at Jakarta. The results showed that there is significant correlation between vocabulary knowledge and learning motivation toward the reading comprehension. The thing of this previous study that same as this research is the instrument of this study. Reading comprehension was one of two instruments used

in the previous study, which was also applied in this study. Therefore, it clearly claims that vocabulary knowledge is an appropriate treatment that should use for reading comprehension activity.

From those explanations above, it can be concluded that the use of vocabulary knowledge treatment can help students memorize many vocabularies which can facilitate students in understanding reading comprehension text more easily.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The focus of this study was the effect of vocabulary knowledge treatment toward student's reading comprehension. The research design of this study was quantitative quasi experimental design. The study was conducted at MTs Miftahul Ulum at seventh grade students. Two classes were selected as the participants of this study, twenty one students for the control group and twenty two students for the experimental group. The instruments of the research were in the form of true or false questions for the pretest and multiple choice questions about decription text designed by the researcher and corrected by the expert for the posttest. Furthermore, the posttest qestions have been tested to twenty two students of class C.

The treatment was conducted in six times; pretest was conducted in the first meeting, and the posttest was conducted in in the last time. The data were analyzed using SPSS Wilcoxon test 24, and the results of data anlysis showed that the results of the experimental group test are higher than the control group. Moreover, the significance value showed that there is significantly different between the significance of both group. To sum up, the use of vocabulary knowledge treatment is more effective to improve students reading comprehension ability than conventional treatment, and this is proven by the scores gained by the students who experienced vocabulary knowledge treatment get higher score than the students who get conventional treatment. The implication of this study is found that the students of class A and class B of

seventh grade of MTs Miftahul Ulum that become the subjects of this research can start apply vocabulary knowledge as a new habbit in reading activity in their class

In this study, description was the only material used in vocabulary knowledge treatment and conventional treatment to check the students reading comprehension. Adding more material might be better in further research.

The number of the questions given to the students were only ten questions. While, to reach a good reliability the researcher should used at least thirty questions. So, the next researcher should add the number of the questions test to get reliable result of the study.

The last suggestion is the next researcher might be able to conduct a research about vocabulary knowledge treatment toward listening comprehension or writing activity.

Based on the research results, the English teacher should adopt vocabulary knowledge treatment as their teaching strategies to help them improve their students reading comprehension. The researcher highly expects that the use of vocabulary knowledge treatment can be relied as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension text by all English teachers, especially in Indonesia.

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