STUDENTS' INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION AND READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The study was conducted to find out whether or not there was any significant correlation between inferential comprehension and reading comprehension of the students of English Education Study Program FKIP Sriwijaya University Indralaya, whether or not there is a contribution of inferential comprehension to the reading comprehension, whether or not there is any significant difference between male and female students and whether or not there is any significant difference among students of different semesters in terms of their inferential comprehension and their reading comprehension. The researcher used population sampling in which the total number of the students was 126 students. It consisted of 18 male students and 108 female students. To collect the data, the researcher used 2 kinds of tests, namely inferential comprehension test and reading comprehension test. The results of the tests were analyzed by using the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 21.0, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, t-Test, and ANOVA. The results showed that the correlation between inferential comprehension and reading comprehension was 0.627 in which inferential comprehension contributed 39.4% to the reading comprehension. It was also found that there was a significant difference between male and female students and also a significant difference among students of different semesters in terms of inferential comprehension and reading comprehension. Based on the findings, it could be concluded that there was a significant   correlation   between   inferential   comprehension   and   reading comprehension.

Key words: *inferential comprehension, reading comprehension, English Education Studi Program students*

The mastery of English involves four skills that must be acquired by Indonesian students in order to communicate well and access knowledge. Those are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Reading is one of the skills that should be mastered. According to Hornby (2005), "reading is defined as the activity of somebody who reads" (p. 1225). Reading is the window of the world. Everybody needs to read not only for the students or the people in formal education, but also for all the people in all ages, status, professions, and so on that they can

increase their knowledge through reading. By reading, students can develop their ideas and access knowledge by the text books. By reading, students can acquire a valuable source of information that can improve their thinking to generate ideas and solve problems (Wood as cited in Ade, 2005, p. 1).

Reading is not simply seeing the words or translating them. The reader must comprehend what is seen and deciphered on the text. In other words, the main purpose of reading is definitely to get the meaning, information, or even entertainment. One of very important reading purposes is to get meaning from a text (Nuttal as cited in Antoni, 2010, p. 41).

However, reading is not easy to be mastered, we need to read a lot of books and do many reading exercises to expand our reading comprehension. Luh (2010) states, "a reading exercise should become a vehicle for the students to expand their knowledge and experience with the language in addition to comprehension" (p. 3). Meanwhile, there are many factors that affect students' ability to comprehend the text. These factors include cognitive experience, reading rate, purpose of reading, linguistic experience, and interest (Cheek et. al., as cited in Ade, 2005, p. 1).

A majority of students do not like to read a reading passage, recall it and answer its questions. Hutagalung (2012) states, "there are many reasons why people do not like reading. First, they think reading is a boring activity. Second, they can not find interesting book. Third, they do not have time to read. Fourth, they prefer other entertainment sources to spend their spare time" (p. 1). Furthermore, due to the nature of school textbooks, the passages students are asked to read are often of little interest to them. Meanwhile the objective of teaching

reading, as one of the four major skills, in learning English as foreign language in junior high school is to develop the students' ability to read and to get the message comprehensively from particular reading texts (BSNP, 2006). At English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University itself, reading has been taught since the students are in the first semester up to fifth semester. Although, reading has been taught intensively from the first semester, not all the students are successful in learning this subject. It can be seen from the variation of their reading scores. This variation may be caused by many factors.

There are two main factors that affect the students' success in learning language (English, especially reading without exception): physical and psychological (Neyers as cited in Handayani, 2007, p. 1). Teaching aids and circumstances of the classroom are examples of the physical factors, while motivation and attitudes are examples of the psychological ones. In other words, the reading techniques used in reading class affects the students' reading achievement.

Cheek, Flippo, and Lindsey (1989) states, "inferential comprehension is one of the three primary aspects of reading comprehension. Those are literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical comprehension" (p. 157-159). Inferential comprehension often is described simply as the ability to *read between the lines*. Pennell (2002) states, "inferential comprehension skill requires a reader to blend the literal content of a selection with prior knowledge, intuition, and imagination for conjecture or to make hypotheses" (p. 1).

Teaching students to *read inferentially* helps them learn how to read more strategically. Inferences are

the conclusions we draw based on what one already knows and judgments we make based on given information.

Inference helps students make connections between their personal experiences and their comprehension of a text. Rather than stopping students during the reading process to comment on specific points, this strategy focuses on their thinking and how new information reshapes their prior knowledge. Hirsch (2003) states, "prior knowledge about the topic speeds up basic comprehension and leaves working memory free to make connections between the new material and previously learned information, to draw inferences, and to ponder implications" (p. 13).

Technique is useful for the students in answering reading questions. Because not all of the answers are covered (explicitly) in the text, sometimes to find out the answers, we must interpret the information in the text (implicitly). This is one of the difficulties in reading test because students are not accustomed to implicit meaning in the text. Inferential reading can be taught using a variety of reading material beyond assigned textbooks.

There are kinds of inferential comprehension.Tollefson as cited in Triwinarto (1998) identifies different kinds of inference as adopted below.

a. Inferring supporting details requires the readers to conjecture about information that might have been included in the text.
b. Inferring main idea requires the readers to conjecture the central idea the writer wants to talk.
c. Inferring sequence requires the readers to conjecture about what might have occurred in addition to explicitly stated events; including to conjecture about extending events beyond the completion of the text.
d. Inferring comparison requires the readers to see things are alike or different.
e. Inferring cause-effect relationship requires the readers to conjecture about isolating causes and explaining their effect relationship.
f. Inferring character traits requires the readers to conjecture the author's feeling, attitude, and values.
g. Inferring author's organization requires the readers to conjecture about the way of the writer describes, parents, and organizes his or her ideas in the text.
h. Predicting outcome requires the readers to conjecture the outcome of the text.
i. Interpreting figurative language requires the readers to conjecture the author's intended meaning or real meaning of the text. (p. 9)

Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL test (2001) mentions that there are 14 TOEFL reading skills that appears in TOEFL reading test such as:
1. Answer main idea questions correctly
2. Recognize the organization of the ideas
3. Answer stated detail questions correctly
4. Find "unstated" details
5. Find pronoun referents
6. Answer implied detail questions correctly
7. Answer transition questions correctly
8. Find definitions for structural clues
9. Determine meanings from word parts

10. Use context to determine meanings of difficult words
11. Use context to determine meanings of simple words
12. Determine where specific information is found
13. Determine tone, purpose, or course
14. Determine where to insert a piece of information

METHODOLOGY

A correlation study was selected as the design of this study. In this study, the researcher defined inferential comprehension as the predictor variable and the reading comprehension as the criterion variable. In this study, researcher used population sampling. The researcher chose the second, fourth and sixth semester students of English Education Study Program Sriwijaya University Indralaya in Academic year 2013/2014 and the total number of sample is 126 students.

To collect the data, the researcher gave two kinds of tests, named inferential comprehension test and reading comprehension test. These tests were presented in 25 items of multiple choice of each test. The researcher took TOEFL IBT, some books and handouts as her references.

The researcher used the Flesh Reading Ease Readability to measure whether reading passages of reading comprehension and inferential comprehension tests were suitable for college students. The researcher assumed that the appropriate range for 17 to 22 years old is between 30 and 60.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was applied to find out the correlation between inferential comprehension and reading comprehension. Multiple Linear Regression was conducted to find out the contribution of inferential comprehension to reading

comprehension, t-Test to find out the difference result between male and female students and used ANOVA to find out the difference among students of different semesters.

FINDINGS

The findings showed that there was a positive significant correlation between those variables, because p value $(0.00) <$ Alpha (0.05). The result of the analysis is shown as the Table 1 below:

Table 1
Result of CorrelationAnalysis between Inferential Comprehension and Reading Comprehension

		inference
reading	Pearson Correlation	.627**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	126

The Determination Coefficient Analysis (R^2) showed the contribution of inferential comprehension to the reading comprehension was 0.394 or in other word, the effective contribution given by inferential comprehension was 39.4%.

Table 2
Contribution of Inferential to the Reading Comprehension

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Inferential comprehension	.627	.394	.389

As had been stated before, this study aimed to investigate the difference of male and female students in terms of inferential comprehension and reading comprehension. It can be seen as Table 3.

Table 3
Inferential Comprehension based on Gender

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev
inference	1	18	62.22	9.124

| | 2 | 108 | 55.89 | 12.271 |

*Group 1 as male students' group
*Group 2 as female students' group

Table 4
Reading Comprehension based on Gender

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev
reading	1	18	69.56	9.218
	2	108	60.22	15.876

Based on the result presented in Table 4, it could be said that there was a significant difference between male students and female students if t-obtained > t-table or $p < 0.05$. Since t-table for 124 was 1.980 and p value was 0.038, the researcher found out that there was a significant difference between those groups because t-obtained (2.093) > t-table (1.980) and p (0.038) < 0.05.The result of the analysis is shown as the following Table.

Table 5
Independent Sample t-Test of Inferential Comprehension

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	SSig.	Mean Diff
inference	Male	2.105	.149	6.333
	Female			

The researcher also found out that there was a significant difference between those groups in terms of reading comprehension because t-table for 124 was 1.980 and p value was 0.017, the researcher found out that there was a significant difference between those groups because t-obtained (2.422) > t-table (1.980) and p (0.017)< 0.05. The result of the analysis is shown as in Table 7 and 8.

Table 7
Inferential Comprehension based on Semester

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
2	45	51.82	15.159	12	76
4	40	64.40	6.328	44	72
6	41	54.83	8.497	36	64
Total	126	56.79	12.048	12	76

Table 8
Reading Comprehension based on Semester

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
2	45	65.07	18.259	16	88
4	40	66.40	9.705	40	80
6	41	52.98	13.139	24	72
Total	126	61.56	15.430	16	88

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, it could be concluded that there was a significant correlation between inferential comprehension and reading comprehension of the students of English Education Study Program FKIP Sriwijaya University. The result of the correlation was 0.627. In other words, the correlation between two variables was strong. The contribution of inferential comprehension to reading comprehension was 39.4%.

In this research, the researcher found that there was a significant difference between male students and female students in terms of inferential comprehension and reading comprehension. Male students got higher mean on both inferential and comprehension tests than female

students. This result broke the statements that state that female had better reading comprehension than male.

The researcher also found out that there was a difference among students of different semester. The sixth semester students as the highest level of semester in this research did not get the highest mean on both inferential comprehension tests. Meanwhile, the fourth semester students got highest mean on both inferential and comprehension tests. It can be concluded that level of semesters and gender were not the factors that influenced the result of inferential comprehension and reading comprehension tests.

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