

THE INFLUENCE OF VOCABULARY MASTERY AND GRAMMAR ON STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF NARRATIVE TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of vocabulary mastery and grammar on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts among 12th-grade students in Bandung. Using a quantitative approach and ex-post facto design, data were collected through vocabulary tests and grammar surveys from a sample of 60 students selected via stratified proportionate random sampling. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between the independent variables (vocabulary and grammar mastery) and the dependent variable (reading comprehension). The correlation coefficient was 0.864, and the regression equation obtained was $Y = -14.070 + 0.135X_1 + 0.129X_2$. The findings indicated that vocabulary mastery contributed 48.2% to reading comprehension, while grammar mastery contributed 33.73%. These results suggest that students with higher levels of vocabulary and grammar proficiency have better comprehension of narrative texts. The study highlights the importance of both vocabulary and grammar in reading comprehension and suggests that educational stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, and parents, should emphasize the development of these skills. Providing a supportive learning environment, enhancing teaching methods, and supplying appropriate resources can further improve students' language proficiency, leading to better academic outcomes. The research contributes to the understanding of how language skills, specifically vocabulary and grammar, are crucial for reading comprehension in the context of English as a foreign language.

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Introduction

English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia, taught formally from elementary school to university. As a result, students are expected to master the language, which encompasses four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. English has been incorporated into the school curriculum, and students are required to learn it, whether they like it or not. As Harmer (2001:21) notes, "probably the greatest number of language students in the world do it because it is on the school curriculum." English is established as a general subject across all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education.

Today, proficiency in understanding English is essential for millions of people. By mastering English, individuals can communicate in the language and read various

types of English texts. Reading in English is particularly important in contemporary society, where people encounter many English texts, from holiday brochures to academic books, newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, directions, advertisements, and more. Therefore, students' ability to read English texts in any form will provide numerous benefits in their lives. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the basic language skills, especially in teaching English as a foreign language in schools, courses, or other formal and informal educational settings. Among these, reading is considered the most important language skill. As stated by Harry in *Lia Journal* (2014:18), "Reading is the most important single skill in study."

However, in Indonesia, English is a foreign language, and most students face challenges in understanding English texts, particularly narrative texts. This issue arises at almost all educational levels. Many research findings (Syatriana, 1998; Hamra, 1993 and 1996; Mardiana, 1993, Kweldju, 2001) indicate that Indonesian students' ability to read English texts is quite low. Even university graduates often struggle to read English with full comprehension. Moreover, reading is one of the skills tested in national exams. It should be noted that entrance exams contain at least one or more sections requiring students to understand a text. Descriptive, narrative, and report texts are the types of texts taught and tested in high schools.

Referring to the author's experience in teaching English in public schools and informal institutions, narrative texts often pose a significant barrier to completing tests. This is due to the extensive vocabulary and the length of the text, which require considerable time to process. This observation has led the author to question how students can struggle with understanding narrative texts when, in fact, these texts can be seen as easier and more engaging, given their storytelling nature. Understanding English texts, particularly narratives, is not easy, especially for middle school students in Indonesia. Reading English as a foreign language is more complex than reading in Indonesian, as Smith (2007:5) explains: "Reading in a foreign language involves at least four components of knowledge such as, knowledge of Vocabulary, knowledge of language, background knowledge of the reader, and the context of the reading."

One major factor that contributes to students' difficulties in understanding descriptive and narrative texts is their vocabulary knowledge. Richard (2002:2) notes that "vocabulary is a central and core component of language acquisition and it provides much of the basis for how well the learners speak, listen, read, and write." Benhart (2005:14) further emphasizes that "vocabulary is the stock of words used by a person, class of people, profession, etc." Thus, it can be concluded that vocabulary is crucial for language proficiency, as it is related to all aspects of English language learning, helping learners to speak, learn, write, and read effectively.

In addition to vocabulary, grammar also plays a critical role in language learning. According to Richard (2005:10), "English has elements, which can be taught interactively with the language skills. All those aspects cannot be separated from one component of English, that is grammar." Smith (2003:11) adds, "Grammar has an important role in language." When students read English texts, they must consider grammatical structures to comprehend the text's meaning, as grammar influences all four language skills. Therefore, understanding and mastering English grammar is essential for reading and interpreting texts accurately. If students grasp and master grammatical rules, they are more likely to understand reading materials and effectively convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Grammar is not just about formal learning; it is also a tool for solving problems in specific situations. Guskey (2014:74) states, "In mastering the concepts and principles

of grammar using this way, students will develop ways of thinking and at the same time they will build vocabulary, terminology, and principles that are useful in reading comprehension." Different experts have varying views on the scope of grammar. Some believe it encompasses only language structure and syntax, while others, like Verhaar (1996:12), argue that "the structure of language includes phonology, morphology, and syntax, but phonology is not significant; it serves as distinctive meaning." Lyons (1995:167) adds that "traditional grammar works with two basic units of grammatical description, i.e., words and sentences, or in other words, the grammar consists of morphology and syntax."

Understanding grammatical structures involves mastering the system of language rules, including morphology, syntax (sentence structure), and understanding the relationships between linguistic units and sentence components such as words, phrases, and sentences according to the applicable grammar system. A person with strong grammar skills will find written language comprehension easier. Thus, a solid understanding of grammar makes it easier for students to understand texts. Therefore, grammar plays a vital role in reading and writing activities. It can be assumed that someone with a good grasp of vocabulary and grammar will have a strong ability to comprehend reading materials. However, this study will focus on specific factors, namely vocabulary and grammar mastery, due to time constraints and research scope. Based on this, the researcher intends to explore these aspects through this study titled "The Influence of Vocabulary Mastery and Grammar on Students' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts: A Survey of 11th Grade Students in Bandung."

Research Method

This research employs a quantitative approach as defined by Creswell (2012), focusing on the analysis of numerical data using statistical procedures, specifically utilizing SPSS for systematic data processing. The study follows an ex-post facto design, collecting data through vocabulary tests and grammar surveys distributed among students to assess the influence of vocabulary mastery and grammar on reading comprehension of narrative texts. The study involves two independent variables vocabulary mastery and grammar and one dependent variable reading comprehension. The sample, drawn from a population of 600 students from two high schools in Bandung, is selected using stratified proportionate random sampling, with data collected through questionnaires and tests. The analysis involves both descriptive and inferential statistics, including normality tests, multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity, and hypothesis testing using partial and multiple regression analyses to determine the significance of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Result and Discussion

The following author presents a description of the data on Vocabulary Mastery of State High School Students in the city of Bandung. The data can be seen in the following table:

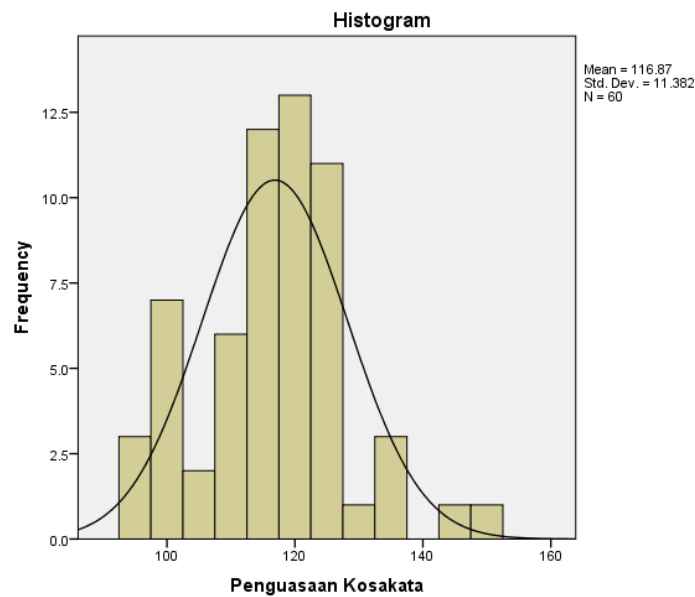
Table 4.1 Vocabulary Mastery Data

Statistics

Penguasaan Kosakata

N	Valid	60
	Missing	1
Mean		116.87
Median		117.50
Mode		100
Std. Deviation		11.382
Minimum		95
Maximum		148

From the table above, it can be interpreted that the number of respondents in this study is 60 students. The Vocabulary Mastery Score obtained from the respondents had an average score of 116.87, a minimum score of 95, and a maximum score of 148. In this study, the author presents an instrument in the form of a Vocabulary Mastery test. The number of question items in the vocabulary mastery instrument is 30 items. Respondents will get a score of 1 in answering the question correctly, and a score of 0 (zero) if they



answer the question incorrectly. The author also presents vocabulary mastery data in the form of a histogram of the data, which can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 4.1 Histogram of Vocabulary Mastery Data

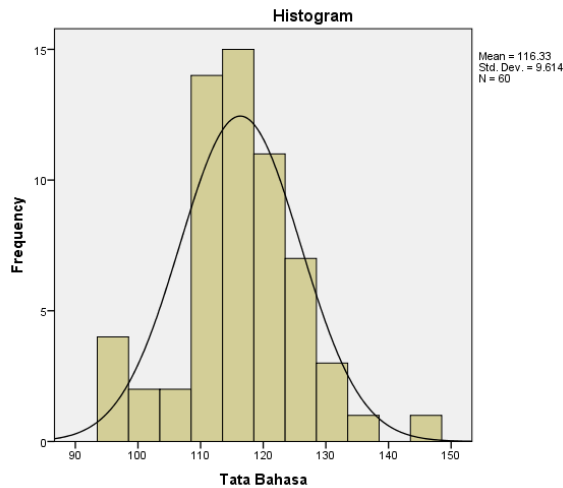
From the distribution table and histogram of the vocabulary mastery data, it can be concluded that the vocabulary mastery score data in this study has a normal distribution of data. The following author presents a description of the Grammar data of State High School Students in the city of Bandung. The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 4.2 Grammar Data Statistics

Tata Bahasa		
N	Valid	60
	Missing	1
Mean		116.33
Median		115.00
Mode		111
Std. Deviation		9.614
Minimum		96
Maximum		148

From the table above, it can be interpreted that the number of respondents in this study is 60 students. The Grammar score obtained from the respondents had an average score of 116.33, with a median of 115.00, a mode of 111, a standard deviation of 9.614, a minimum score of 96, and a maximum score of 148. In this study, the author presents a research instrument in the form of a Grammar test. The number of question items in the Grammar instrument is 30 items. Respondents will get a score of 1 in answering the question correctly, and a score of 0 (zero) if they answer the question incorrectly. The author also presents Grammatical data in the form of a histogram of the data, which can be seen in the image below:

Figure 4.2 Histogram of Grammar Data



From the distribution table and histogram of Grammar data, it can be concluded that the Grammar score data in this study has a normal distribution of data. The following author presents a description of the data on Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts at State High Schools in the city of Bandung. The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 4.3 Data on Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts

Statistics

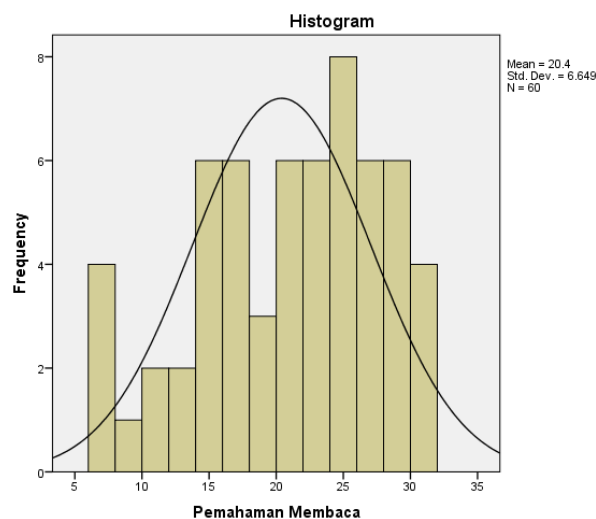
Pemahaman Membaca

N	Valid	60
	Missing	1
Mean		20.40
Median		21.50
Mode		25 ^a
Std. Deviation		6.649
Minimum		7
Maximum		30

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

From the table above, it can be interpreted that the number of respondents in this study is 60 students. The Reading Comprehension Score obtained from the respondents had an average score of 20.40, with a median of 21.50, a mode of 25, a standard deviation of 6.649, a minimum score of 7, and a maximum score of 30. In this study, the author presents a research instrument in the form of a Reading Comprehension test. The number of questions in the Reading Comprehension instrument is 30 questions. Respondents will get a score of 1 in answering the question correctly, and a score of 0 (zero) if they answer the question incorrectly. The author also presents Student Reading Comprehension data in the form of a histogram. The histogram of the data can be seen in the image below:

Gambar 4.3 Histogram Data Pemahaman Membaca Teks Narasi



From the distribution table and histogram of the Narrative Text Reading Comprehension data, it can be concluded that the score data for the Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts in this study has a normal distribution of data. From the data analysis and subsequent correlation analysis, a correlation coefficient of 0.864 was obtained, and after testing with SPSS 22, this correlation coefficient was found to be significant. This indicates that there is a significant effect of the independent variables X1 (Vocabulary Mastery) and X2 (Grammar Mastery) on the dependent variable Y (Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts).

The regression coefficients of 0.135 and 0.129 indicate a positive influence of the independent variables X1 (Vocabulary Mastery) and X2 (Grammar Mastery) on the dependent variable Y (Reading Comprehension). The significance of the regression coefficients, tested using SPSS, showed a significant result with a Sig value of 0.001 (<0.05) and an F value of 150.500, confirming the positive impact of Vocabulary Mastery and Grammar Mastery on students' narrative text comprehension. The contribution of Vocabulary Mastery and Grammar Mastery to students' narrative text comprehension is 82.15%. Teachers should pay attention to students' reading comprehension skills, particularly their vocabulary and grammar mastery, to achieve better outcomes.

The hypothesis testing revealed a Sig value of 0.001 (<0.05) and a t-value of 8.510, leading to the rejection of H₀. This indicates a significant impact of the independent variable X1 (Vocabulary Mastery) on the dependent variable Y (Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts), with a partial contribution of 48.42%. Vocabulary mastery often poses a challenge in writing, as it determines how skilled a person is in composing texts. Vocabulary mastery is not a simple skill, as it involves recognition, selection, and application. It is not a spontaneous process but a gradual journey toward proficient vocabulary usage. As vocabulary mastery develops, it significantly contributes to the ability to write narrative texts. Vocabulary is indeed crucial in the writing process, as good vocabulary mastery facilitates the creation of well-structured texts. This means that vocabulary mastery positively influences narrative text comprehension. To communicate effectively with others (in this case, the readers), it is essential to develop a robust vocabulary and to know as many words as possible in the language.

Further hypothesis testing showed a Sig value of 0.003 (<0.05) and a t-value of 6.059, leading to the rejection of H₀. This signifies a significant effect of the independent variable X2 (Grammar Mastery) on the dependent variable Y (Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts), with a partial contribution of 33.73%. Grammar refers to a set of linguistic rules used to arrange words and sentences correctly according to the applicable norms. The survey results indicate that grammar is challenging for students, and they face difficulties in understanding texts due to this. Grammar is a critical aspect that must be mastered to comprehend narrative texts effectively. Grammar and reading comprehension play significant roles in modern society. Students often struggle with narrative text comprehension during reading assignments, highlighting the importance of a solid grammatical foundation before progressing to higher education. Therefore, it is crucial for students to master these skills.

Reading comprehension is a vital skill that every student must possess. In the 11th grade, students learn various reading skills, including narrative text comprehension. When reading narrative texts, students must be able to select and combine words to form coherent sentences and must have a good understanding of grammar to comprehend the text effectively. This is why students need to master both vocabulary and grammar. Reading comprehension involves understanding ideas in written form, and students must not read haphazardly; they need a solid grasp of grammar. A good reader requires the ability to comprehend ideas in written form and understand grammar. Proper vocabulary selection helps writers grasp the meaning of what they read, and a strong vocabulary facilitates narrative text comprehension. The more vocabulary students have, the more varied their word choices, making it easier for them to understand narrative texts. This process is further supported by strong grammar skills, guiding the reader to adhere to the appropriate rules and resulting in a clear and accurate understanding of the text. Grammar outlines the rules for varied sentence structures, ensuring clarity and avoiding ambiguity. With good grammar mastery, individuals can comprehend texts effectively.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion in Chapter IV, it is concluded that there is a significant combined influence of vocabulary mastery and grammar on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts, with a correlation coefficient of 0.864 and a regression equation of $Y = -14.070 + 0.135X_1 + 0.129X_2$, indicating that both vocabulary and grammar have a positive impact on reading comprehension. The analysis further reveals that vocabulary mastery contributes 48.2% to reading comprehension, while grammar mastery contributes 33.73%. This underscores the importance of both vocabulary and grammar in enhancing students' understanding of narrative texts. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers, educational administrators, and parents continuously motivate and encourage students to master vocabulary and grammar. Schools should also provide conducive learning environments, adequate resources, and support from competent teachers to foster students' learning and improve their academic performance through mastery of these essential language components.

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