THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKIMMING ABILITY IN READING COMPREHENSION OF SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENT AT STAIN JURAI SIWO METRO

M. Sayid Wijaya
IAIN Raden Intan Lampung
sayidwijaya@gmail.com

Abstract: Prior knowledge is believed to be one of the factors related to students' reading comprehension. In reading, a student brings their experience about the topic to the act of reading to ease them comprehend the text. In this case, selection of reading techniques is very crucial. Among reading technique which depends on prior knowledge is skimming. When students are to skim the text, their prior knowledge will help them catch the gist of the text easily because they are familiar with the topic of the text.Therefore, this research tried to investigate the correlation between prior knowledge and skimming ability in reading comprehension.

Keywords: prior knowledge, skimming, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Mastering English language means acquiring four basic skills of language. These four basic skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The skills are intercorrelated one to another. In other words, they are the critical requirements for students to communicate well in English.

In relation to the teaching of English as a foreign language, most teachers of English language find it difficult to teach these four skills altogether. They have to determine whether the materials are suitable, the allocated time is enough, the students are interested in learning process, or the techniques used work well in the class. This will help them analyze the lack of their students' mastery of those skills and the problems surround it. One of the problems that rise is that the students are not familiar with the materials. This is caused by their lack of prior knowledge.

Prior knowledge or background knowledge is more than a crucial factor that helps students build their understanding of a material. Yet, it is a basis for students to begin mastering the skills. Their experiences of language and world will determine their capability in receiving the material, especially which is in a text form. This is why prior knowledge is closely related to the fours skills, especially in reading.

In addition, prior knowledge is included in reading process to gain

information containing in the text. It means that the information is gained when students have prior knowledge which is related to the text assisted by their experiences in linguistics knowledge, content and rhetorical. Consequently, this condition will impact their interaction with a particular text and the interaction will vary across students based on prior knowledge they have. Therefore, prior knowledge has an important role in determining the students' reading comprehension.

In general, prior knowledge may be defined as all the information an individual has in her or his long term-memory (Harris and Sipay, 1984:480). It means that all the information that exists in long-term memory is called prior knowledge. In addition, Haynes (2007:145) states that prior knowledge (also called background knowledge) refers to the background experience and knowledge that students bring to classroom learning.

In reading context, prior knowledge is what one already knows or has experienced directly or vicariously, that he brings to the act of reading. He can somehow relate what he reads to his prior knowledge he understands and remembers more clearly (Gillet and Tample, 1994:219). In this case, background knowledge was a more important factor than grammatical complexity in the ability of readers to comprehend the cohesive relationship in the texts (Gillet and Tample, 1994:260). In this case, what students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content (Marzano, 2004:1).

Concerning reading comprehension, Tankersley (2003:9) pointed out that reading comprehension is dependent on three factors. The first factor is that the reader has command of the linguistics structures of the text. The second is that the reader is able to exercise metacognitive control over the content being read. This means that the reader is able to monitor and reflect on his or her own level of understanding while reading the material. The third and most important criterion influence comprehension is that the reader has adequate background in the content and vocabulary being presented. In this case, prior knowledge is the most dependent factor which influences a reader's success in comprehending readings.

In line with Tankersley (2003), Parris and Stahl (2004:84) explained that the reader's background knowledge and motivation are further factors in comprehension. Comprehension is easy when the domain knowledge is high. In this case, comprehension will be achieved better when the readers have more knowledge of the materials.

Further, Adams and Bruce (1980, as cited in Harris and Sipay, 1984:480) said that comprehension is the use of prior knowledge to create new knowledge; for without prior knowledge, written material would be meaningless. The more knowledge the reader can bring to bear, the more likely that material will be understood.

In comprehending the text, there are some reading technique needed to employ, one of which is skimming for the gist. By skimming, we mean glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist.(Nuttal, 1982:34). Skimming consists of quickly running one's eyes across a whole text, such as an essay, article, or chapter, for its gist. Skimming gives reader the advantage of being able to predict the purpose of the passage, the main topic, or message, and possibly some of the developing or supporting ideas. This gives them a head start as they embark on more focused reading (Brown, 2007:368).

Additionally, Farrel (2002:29) said that skimming is a reading strategy involving students looking through the text rapidly for the general meaning. Skimming is getting the main point or gist before reading the detail. It is obvious that skimming is to read a whole text quickly for its main idea. In this case, the readers do not need to spend much time to gain the information needed in comprehending the text.

In conjunction with prior knowledge, the readers do not only need vocabulary and grammar mastery in skimming to comprehend the text at glance, but also prior knowledge as a device to interpret a text or a reading material by associating the knowledge and the text. The knowledge the students possess will determine the degree of his comprehension, especially when they are to skim the text.

In addition, when the reader skims a text, he only has a short time to comprehend almost the whole text. It means that he must be independent to the focus of vocabulary or grammar. The one he must be relied on is his knowledge of the related text. In short, prior knowledge helps students to comprehend a text easily; especially when they skim the text for that skimming requires a short amount of time to comprehend the text. Therefore, if the more prior knowledge students possess, the higher their skimming reading comprehension ability has. Therefore, this research was aimed at investigating the correlation between prior knowledge and skimming ability in reading comprehension of second semester students of English Language Teaching Department at STAIN Jurai Siwo Metro.

METHODS

This part discusses research design employed in this research and discusses population and sample of this research. The instrument of the research was discussed also in this part.

Research Design

The design of this research was correlation research. This research was focused on investigating the correlation between two variables. The first variable was prior knowledge as noted as variable X, and the second variable was skimming reading comprehension as noted as variable Y. In this case, the research tried to investigate the correlation between prior knowledge and skimming reading comprehension of the second semester students of English Language Teaching Department of STAIN Jurai Siwo Metro. Both students' prior knowledge and their

skimming reading comprehension were measured by using tests. The tests were in the form of multiple choice questions. After attaining both data, the data was analyzed by using parametric statistics, Pearson Product Moment. The calculation was computed by using SPSS.

Population and Sample

The population of this research was all second semester students of the English Language Teaching Departmentat STAIN Jurai Siwo Metro in the academic year of 2010/2011 who were taking Reading II course and had passed Reading I course. Due to inability to investigate 288 students as the population, the researcher needed to take the sample form the population mentioned before. In order to maintain representativeness of the sample, the researcher employed Slovin's formula. From the result of calculation, it was obtained that the sample of this research was 74 students.

Instrument of the Research

The instrument in this research was two sets of test. The first test was intended to measure students' prior knowledge and the second test was intended to measure students' skimming ability in reading comprehension. The topics for both tests were similar but the indicators were different. The number of item for prior knowledge test was 40 and the number of item for skimming ability in reading comprehension was 20. The tests were tried out to find out their item validity and their reliability. The result of tryout demonstrated that there were several invalid items for prior knowledge test and skimming ability in reading comprehension test. To make sure that all the items were valid, the invalid items had been revised. The reliability of prior knowledge test was categorized into low category, 0.11, while reliability of skimming ability in reading comprehension was categorized into average category, 0.68.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This part presented and discussed the findings gained from the instrument employed to measure students' prior knowledge and students' skimming ability in reading comprehension.

Finding

The data were obtained from tests. The tests were constructed based on the syllabus on the topics of social, health, education, culture and religion. The result of both prior knowledge test and skimming reading comprehension test were presented in descriptive statistics showing mean, median, mode, and variance of the score. The result of the test can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Prior Knowledge	Skimming Reading Comprehension
Mean	66.07	60.88
Median	66.00	60.00
Mode	70	55[a]
Variance	64.09	144.08

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table 1. showed that the mean score of students' prior knowledge was 66.07 while the mean score of students' skimming reading comprehension was 60.88.

The median score of students' prior knowledge was 66 while the median score of students' skimming reading comprehension was 60. The mode score of students' prior knowledge was 70 while the mode score of students' skimming reading comprehension was 55. The variance of students' prior knowledge was 64.09 while the variance of students' skimming reading comprehension was 144.08.

For hypothesis testing, the data were not calculated manually. The computation of Pearson Product Moment was computed by using SPSS. The purpose of using SPSS is due to efficiency and practicality. Table 2. showed the result of computation of Pearson Product Moment by using SPSS.

Tabel 2 The Result of Computation for Hypothesis Testing

		Prior Knowledge	Skimming Reading Comprehension
Prior Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.381(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	74	74
Skimming Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.381(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	74	74

It can be seen from Table 2. that the p $_{value}$ of Pearson Correlation was .001 and $r_{observed}$ was .381. If p $_{value}$ was examined to the criteria of acceptance of the hypothesis, it can be interpreted that the p $_{value}$ was lower than .05 (.001 < .05) which meant that there is correlation between students' prior knowledge and their skimming ability in reading comprehension.

Further, the direction of the correlation between students' prior knowledge and their reading comprehension was in positive direction in which the computation resulting positive value, .381. The strength of the correlation between students' prior knowledge and their skimming ability in reading comprehension was in modest correlation in which .381 was categorized into modest correlation.

Discussion
There are two variables in this research. The first variable is prior knowledge which is noted as X variable and the second variable was skimming reading comprehension which is noted as Y. The data of this research wereobtained from the tests. After administering the tests, the obtained data werecomputed by using SPSS to investigate whether there is correlation between both variables. The computation demonstrated that there is positive and significant correlation between students' prior knowledge and their skimming ability in reading comprehension.

In addition, the positive correlation was clarified by the value of Pearson Correlation. It is said positive if the Pearson Correlation had positive value, and it is said negative if the Pearson Correlation had negative value. Furthermore, the finding of this research demonstrated that the strength of the correlation of variable X and variable Y were in the modest category. It means that the correlation of both variables were almost weak.Moreover, Table 2. demonstrated that the p $_{value}$ was.001 <.05 which means that the correlation between prior knowledge

and reading comprehension was significant.

Furthermore, the result of this research confirmed what Adam and Bruce believed about the correlation between prior knowledge and skimming reading comprehension was right. In addition, it also confirmed what Parris and Stahl stated that the reader's background knowledge and motivation are further factors in comprehension: comprehension is easy when the domain knowledge is high was proved. In addition, the finding of this research is in line with Adam and Bruce, and Paris and Stahl which indicates that when the reader's prior knowledge is high, the reader's skimming reading comprehension is also high.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This part discusses the conclusion inferred from the discussion of the findings and discusses suggestion for other researcher interested in investigating the same field as the researcher.

Conclusion

Prior knowledge is the accumulation of one's experience and knowledge which assist him in the act of reading. In comprehending reading text, prior knowledge is needed to provide prior information related to the text so that the readers comprehend the text faster and easier.

In addition, after discussing the finding of this research, it was inferred that prior knowledge was correlated to reading comprehension especially when the students read a

text by using skimming although the correlation was categorized into modest correlation, still, the correlation between prior knowledge and skimming reading comprehension was positive and significant. It means that the finding of this research revealed the theories which stated that there is correlation between prior knowledge and skimming reading comprehension. The higher the prior knowledge, the higher the comprehension.

Furthermore, while conducting the research, the writer found an interesting point which demonstrated that the students' educational background also has such a crucial correlation to skimming reading comprehension. The comprehension will be achieved if the reading text is appropriate with their educational background.

Suggestion

Considering the result of this research, it was suggested for other researchers who are interested in conducting a similar research to investigate other aspect such as students' educational background, students' topic familiarity, and students' selection of readings since such factors appears while this research was conducted.

References

Brown, H.D.,*Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (3rd Edition)*, New York: Pearson Education, 2007

Gillet, J.W., and Temple, C., *Understanding Reading Problems*, New York

:Harper Collins College Publisher, 1994

Harris, A.J., and Sipay, R.S., *How to Increase Reading Ability,* New York & London: Longman, 1984

Haynes, J., *Getting Started with English Language Learners*, Alexandria: ASCD, 2007

Marzano, J.R., *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*, Alexandria: ASCD, 2004

Nuttall, C.,*Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, London: HEB, 1982

Parris, G.S., and Stahl, S.A., *Children's Reading Comprehension and Assesssment,* London: Lawrence Erlbarm Associates, 2007

Tankersley, K., *The Thread of Reading,* Alexandria: ASCD, 2003