

THE EFFECTS OF READING INTEREST AND VOCABULARY MASTERY ON STUDENTS' WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS

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Abstract

This research aims to get empirical data and analyze the effects of reading interest and vocabulary mastery on students' writing skills at State Vocational High Schools in Tangerang City, Banten. This research was designed and calculated using quantitative calculation. The research findings indicated: (1) There are significant effects of reading interest and vocabulary mastery towards students' writing skills. It is proved by Sig is $0,000 < 0,05$ and the value of F_0 is 47,110. (2) There is a significant effect of reading interest on students' writing skills. It is proved by the Sig is $0,044 < 0,05$ and the value T_0 is 2,078. (3) There is no significant effect of vocabulary mastery on students writing skills. The Sig proves it is $0,142 > 0,05$, and the value of T_0 is 1,603. Due to the result, it can be inferred that there was a significant effect of students' reading interest and vocabulary mastery towards students' writing skills. The students' higher writing skill is influenced by the vast amount of vocabulary mastery and other influential factors such as a high reading interest.

Keywords: reading interest, writing skill, vocabulary mastery.

Introduction

In recent years, English serves as a global language. There are 335 million people who speak English as their first language and an additional 505 million people worldwide who speak it as a second language (Ethnologies, 2014.) English has a vital role in communication, politics, health, work, international communication. Hence, English is needed to be learned by people in this world.

In learning English, there are four aspects of a skill that the students are required to master. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Those four skills can be divided into two groups; and the first group is called receptive skills, and the second one is productive skills. Receptive skills consist of listening and reading, while productive skills consist of speaking and writing. Writing as one of English's four skills must be mastered by students, although it may not be easy. It is the most challenging skill for language learners because they must generate and organize ideas by constructing words into meaningful sentences. Pasand & Haghi (2013) state that writing is one of the most critical skills in learning a foreign language. It involves the development of ideas and experiences with subjects.

Writing is much more than the simple mechanics of getting the words down; it also involves being creative, spelling, grammar, punctuation, choice of the appropriate word, sentence linking, and text construction, and for older children, having an idea about content and the ability to be self-critical and to edit their work. Thus, we can reveal and develop the sentence structure and vocabulary used and our thoughts, ideas, and feelings about meaning through writing.

Writing is one of the English language skills that the students in the school learn. In this case, there are some types of texts which students in the school learn. Based on the basic competence of Curriculum 2013, the eighth-grade students at junior high school are expected to be able to: "Arrange a short and simple

descriptive text, both in the form of spoken and written, about people, animals, and things, by considering the purpose, structure of the text and its language elements correctly and appropriate with the context.

Learning the writing skill effectively may not be easy because several things should be considered: sentence structure, grammar, and word choice. As a result, some students may encounter difficulties while learning this skill. According to the writer's preliminary study at a state junior high school in Tangerang Banten, some difficulties were encountered when learning this type of text. At the time, the writer interviewed one of the school's English teachers and observed students as they learned English in the classroom. The findings revealed that some eighth-grade students still had some primary matters, particularly in vocabulary mastery. Due to the students' lack of vocabulary, they frequently asked their teacher the English words that they wanted to write they were making a composition. To address this issue, she (the English teacher) requested that each student bring their dictionary to the English class. Thus, the primary medium of instruction while they were learning to write was the dictionary. In this case, the dictionary they brought was a bilingual dictionary (i.e., it covered English-Indonesian and vice versa dictionary compiled in one dictionary).

The English teacher only facilitated their learning by presenting and discussing the materials and providing the tasks or assignments commonly taken from students' worksheets. The English teacher often asked them to translate an English passage into the Indonesian language. The passage usually is taken from students' handbooks. From the findings, it may be considered that the students there should be active in learning English since the teacher there was just a facilitator. The English teacher just provided some materials and assignments that would make them encounter some vocabularies through their discovery while translating some English sentences or passages; thus, it depends upon their endeavors to enhance their vocabulary mastery. However, some students sometimes had less motivation in doing the tasks, which are intended to enhance their vocabulary, given by the English teacher; consequently, some students had still lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, another problem was found that some of the students still had a common understanding in learning descriptive text; in this case, they were sometimes still confused about writing to develop a topic included as a descriptive text. Some of them still did not know what a descriptive paragraph means and its function, and the generic structure of this text.

Based on the researcher's experiences, however, he often found that some factors influenced student's writing ability; a few of them were reading interest and vocabulary mastery. The researcher realized that most students were lack of reading in the term of reading interest as they felt that reading was such a tedious activity. They still had some difficulties in reading the texts. They read word by word, got confused with unfamiliar words, and did not comprehend the text messages. In terms of vocabulary mastery, students were still difficult to comprehend, determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, and answer the text's questions because their vocabulary mastery was inadequate.

As stated previously, reading is one of the essential skills in learning English, especially for students. They need to read English materials for their English subject. In high school, reading competence becomes even more critical because students can gain written information. Reading comprehension is generally defined as understanding a text written in English proved by the competence to choose the correct answer to the text's question correctly. High school students have to master reading comprehension to get a good score in English subject. All students are expected to understand the text's central idea, factual information, vocabulary, and stated and unstated information.

Having an interest in reading is important because by having that, students will do reading joyfully; thus, they will get benefits from what they read. Success in reading is essential and is most necessary because it is the primary learning activity tool. All subjects such as science, linguistic, social, and even mathematics need the ability and interest in reading. Furthermore, the students' attitude toward reading is a central factor affecting reading and writing performance. Therefore, it can be assumed that the more positive the attitude, the more likely student will engage in reading and writing activities. Moreover, students' positive attitude toward reading is one reading and writing curriculum objective in most countries. It stated that students who enjoy reading and who perceive themselves to be good readers usually read more frequently and more widely, impacting their reading experience and improving their reading and writing ability.

On the other side, vocabulary mastery plays a significant role in determining foreign language learning success. Schmitt (2000:19) points out that one of the key elements in learning a foreign language is mastering the L2 vocabulary. It means that without having enough vocabulary, a foreign language learner



will have problems understanding a language and expressing his ideas. Besides that, it is also stated that we all know how essential vocabulary is when we are learning a language. Finding the exact word for the idea we want to express is important for becoming a fluent, confident speaker. Learners feel many difficulties in both receptive and productive language use are from an inadequate vocabulary.

Hence, to be successful in writing English text, one of the competencies that learners must be good at is vocabulary knowledge. According to Wilkins (1972), very little can be conveyed; nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary. Therefore, vocabulary is the key to understanding what they listen and read in school and communicating the intended meanings successfully. As such, students need to build up a large of words. The vocabulary knowledge relates to the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is the foundation for comprehension. Without having a sufficient vocabulary, it is difficult for learners to perform the four language skills. In other words, the vocabulary of written language is much more extensive and diverse than the vocabulary of oral language (Hayes, Wolfer & Wolfe, 1996).

Vocabulary is an essential thing that students in learning English must control. It plays a vital role in oral communication. The more vocabulary possessed, the more quickly they will develop their four language skills. In learning English, vocabulary is the essential aspect that has to be mastered by students because it uses in speaking, listening, writing, and reading. A foreign language learner will speak fluently and clearly if he or she understands what he read or hear, and they will write quickly if he or she has enough vocabulary. Therefore, we have a lot to add to our vocabulary so that we also gain insight. There are various ways to learn vocabulary, such as watching movies, listening to music, reading news, reading novels, and more. In other words, the vocabulary of written language is much more extensive and diverse than the vocabulary of oral language (Hayes, Wolfer & Wolfe, 1996).

Most theorists and researchers in education have assumed that reading and vocabulary mastery are closely related, and numerous studies have shown a strong relationship between the two. There are several ways to encourage the students' vocabulary development, but the most important and influential is reading and comprehension. By reading every single reading material, students will often find many new words. It can be concluded that it will increase students' vocabulary. As a result, it can be assumed that reading habits and vocabulary mastery contribute to the students' achievement in improving their speaking skills. Therefore, this research investigates whether there are any effects of reading interest and vocabulary mastery towards students' writing skills in a descriptive text (survey at Vocational Senior High Schools in Tangerang Banten).

Method

The method of the research is the quantitative method. According to Sugiyono (2016), the quantitative method emphasizes objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, surveys, and statistical data using computational techniques. The dependent variable (Y) in the research is Students' Writing Skill in Descriptive Text. Independent variables in the research are Reading Interest (X1) and Vocabulary Mastery (X2). The source of data is taken from the result of a test questionnaire.

The research instrument is a measuring instrument used in collecting correct data and information. The tool used is a questionnaire. Arranging instruments is essential, but collecting data is even more critical. Reading interest is a person's desire to read because he is interested in the subject he likes. The interest leads the person to be happier to read more. Reading interest is a questionnaire value from students' response to something they like, studying and social environment as a center of culture and learning.

Vocabulary mastery becomes an essential part of any activities related to language learning, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating text. The more vocabularies a person has, the better communication a person has, whether in written or spoken. Vocabulary mastery consists of expressive vocabulary mastery. This expressive vocabulary mastery can be used for speaking, writing, listening, and reading activities. To get the data for vocabulary mastery, an objective test such as a multiple-choice test is done. The test is done to assess some aspects there are: (1) responding to the questions from the conversation, (2) defining the synonym and antonym, (3) defining the type of text, (4) changing the form of the sentence, (5) matching the question to the answer.

The writing skill test to determine the students' writing skill, the writer tested the students with a free writing test. The writer limits the word to 150 words. In the Technique for analyzing data, it has been

collected, and all the data are tabulated and analyzed to answer the question of this research. The tabulation and analysis are conducted using the program SPSS 20.0. This descriptive analysis will then employ the data presentation technique in a frequency distribution table, polygon graphs, and histogram for each variable. All variables will be tabulated and analyzed to measure the center of tendency and the position of mean, median, and mode and the range of variance, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. To get accurate results, the calculation of descriptive statistics in this research uses *SPSS 20.0*.

Results and Discussion

The research results show that; 1) There are any significant effects of reading interest and vocabulary mastery jointly towards students' writing skill in Descriptive Text at Vocational Senior High Schools in Tangerang Banten. The score of Sig proves it is $0,000 < 0,05$, and the value of F_0 is 47,110. 2) There is a significant effect of reading interest towards student's writing skill in Descriptive Text at Vocational Senior High Schools in Tangerang Banten. It is proved by the score of Sig $0,044 < 0,05$, and the value T_0 is 2,078. 3) There is no significant effect of vocabulary mastery on students' writing skills at Vocational Senior High Schools in Tangerang Banten. The Sig proves it is $0,142 > 0,05$, and the value of T_0 is 1,603. The regression analysis result shows that reading interest and vocabulary mastery provides a 68.7 % influence on the writing skill variable. In comparison, the left-over result of 31.3 % is affected by other variables unexamined by the researcher. Hence, we can conclude that reading interest, and vocabulary mastery variables can be employed as predictors for writing skill, with the standard error of estimation of 5.126. So, the hypothesis signifying reading interest and vocabulary mastery used as predictors to one's writing skill is acceptable.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, writing skills are an essential part of communication. Good skills allow you to communicate your message with clarity ease to a far larger audience than face-to-face or telephone conversation. To express clearly, a person needs a good active vocabulary. Therefore, cultivating reading interest can be a suitable method of achieving good vocabulary mastery. Students who have good vocabulary mastery may have good language skills, in this case, writing. When doing writing activities, students need the vocabulary to convey ideas or messages. So, they need to have good vocabulary mastery. In other words, the reading interest variable and vocabulary mastery variable can highly influence descriptive writing skills. With a high reading interest, students can more significantly increase their vocabulary mastery because they read more.

Every individual who applies English cannot be separated from the interest in reading and mastering good vocabulary, reading as a field in honing one's ability to add knowledge in grammar, as well as in reading adding to the space of human thought to increase the amount of vocabulary that continues to grow with a large amount. According to Mudjito (1993: 86), interest in reading is encouragement or motivation to read. Encouragement can be a trigger for growth in reading motivation in a person. While there are some good ways to read, such as Moyle's theory (1973: 102) which says that: "One of the characteristics of a good reader is a person who likes to read, skilled in word recognition techniques, understanding reading and in adjusting reading techniques in reading goals."

From the research results above, it can be concluded that the effect of reading interest has a positive effect on students' writing in the descriptive text at Vocational High Schools in Tangerang Banten. Reading interest becomes the last term for students to be good in language. The higher reading interest a student has the high skill of reading comprehension a student has. The more interest a person has, the more motivation he also has to read more and more. So, motivation and feeling affect interest. Contrary, if one does not have any motivation or likeness in reading, he will be lazy to read. Nothing empowers the motivation to read more. Reading interest relates to vocabulary development, comprehension, and general intellectual development. Reading interest can improve students' vocabulary skills and development. It also develops students' general intellectual. Because by reading, students can get many information and knowledge at the same time.

From the hypothesis test, it can be seen that *sig* $0,044 < 0,05$ and the value T_0 is 2,078. It showed that the value is significant. Based on those calculations, it can be concluded that the higher of students' reading interest, the better of writing skills as well. Otherwise, based on the research result, there is no significant effect of vocabulary mastery on students' writing skills at Vocational Senior High Schools in Tangerang Banten. The Sig proves it is $0,142 > 0,05$, and the value of T_0 is 1,603. It showed that the value

is not significant; based on those calculations, it can be concluded that the higher of students' vocabulary mastery is not always followed by the better of their writing skill.

Table 1
Multiple Regression Test of the Significance of F. The Effects of the Two Independent Variables X1 and X2 Collectively Upon Dependent Variable Y
ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 2404.973 | 2 | 1202.487 | 47.110 | ,000 ^b |
| Residual | 1519.610 | 57 | 26.660 | | |
| Total | 3924.583 | 59 | | | |

- a. Dependent Variable: Writing Skill
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reading Interest, Vocabulary Mastery

Table 2
Multiple Regression Test of Beta Coefficient, Partially Coefficients^a

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 5.205 | 14.683 | | ,355 | ,724 |
| 1 Reading Interest | ,638 | ,307 | ,462 | 2,078 | ,044 |
| Vocabulary Mastery | ,696 | ,463 | ,335 | 1,603 | ,142 |

- a. Dependent Variable: Writing skill

Conclusions

Based on the description and analysis of the research data, the researcher arrives at the following conclusions: The findings of the research indicated: (1) There are significant effects of reading interest and vocabulary mastery towards students' writing skill. It is proved by Sig is $0,000 < 0,05$ and the value of F_0 is 47,110. (2) There is a significant effect of reading interest on students' writing skills. It is proved by the Sig is $0,044 < 0,05$ and the value T_0 is 2,078. (3) There is no significant effect of vocabulary mastery on students writing skills. The Sig proves it is $0,142 > 0,05$, and the value of T_0 is 1,603. Due to the result, it can be inferred that there was a significant effect of students' reading interest and vocabulary mastery towards students' writing skills. The students' higher writing skill is influenced by the vast amount of vocabulary mastery and other influential factors such as a high reading interest level.

Based on the research result, the researcher would like to offer the following suggestions: Firstly, the teacher should build the students' interest in reading. One of the ways is by practicing extensive reading in which the students are trained to read for pleasure. They can read what they want to read. By exploring students' extensive reading, they would have an interest in reading. In order to have reading interest, someone should have something that makes him or her attractive with the text being read so that teachers should select the suitable and attractive one to be given to the students to build their interest. It is aimed to build their consciousness to feel that reading is a need. To build interest in reading, the teacher should consider the factors that may affect students' interest in reading, such as gender differences, topic interest, or characteristics. The interrelated factors can be used as the way teachers elaborate and design the techniques in teaching reading. It is needed to build students' interest in reading earlier.

Secondly, to support the suggestions mentioned above, the students should have enough vocabulary to understand the text literally and interpretatively. However, students should know the meaning of a word and its role in a text. It is essential to know the word 's role or part of a word as the text they usually read

is not that simple but sometimes they find it a complex one. Based on the classification of vocabulary knowledge, students should not be given breadth vocabulary in which they only focus on the amount of vocabulary they have. However, they should be more focused on the depth of vocabulary. The students know how to put every word in a sentence appropriately and accurately to know the word 's role and position in a sentence. The third, for the eleventh-grade students at Vocational High schools in Tangerang Banten academic year 2020/2021, is expected to read many English passages to increase their vocabulary mastery and knowledge. Moreover, they also should try to make a note of the new English word they find. Finally, the Vocational High schools in Tangerang Banten are expected and always suggested to increase the quality of the educators' works that they may provide the students with the knowledge and guide well and maximally.

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