

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE FOURTH SEMESTER ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM STUDENTS' VOCABULARIES AND READING COMPREHENSION SCORES

Sugeng Hadi Kusuma

2017

Sugeng.hadi5595@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the correlation between students' vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores. By doing homogeneity test to the all students of the fourth semester, the homogenous comprehension was found, so simple random sampling was used. Data were collected from 27 fourth semester students. The test items of reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery were given to the students to measure their level of reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement. The results were compared to find out the correlation between those variables. The findings showed that there was a strong correlation between students' vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores. The present study concluded that having more adequate vocabulary significantly affects students' reading comprehension. It is supposed to enrich their vocabulary by practicing to read more which can help them in gaining vocabulary and comprehending the text.

Key Words: *Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Scores, Correlation.*

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Reading is considered as one of the most important foreign language skills. According to Lynch and Hudson (1991) Reading is one of the most important goals in English as Second Language and English as Foreign Language Learning. Alderson (2000) states that reading is both process and product which the process is the interaction between the reader and the text and the product is the reading comprehension. Pam & Glenda (2008) state that reading comprehension is the intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of written text.

The aim of reading comprehension is to improve the students' skill, who have been able to read their first and second language, in understanding the meaning of a written text (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011). To achieve those purposes, students need a lot of words (vocabulary) of English to master. Alqahtani (2015) says that learning vocabulary is the key to language

learning. However, Bogaards and Laufer (2004) stated that unknown words often create obstacles to comprehension in second language reading. Huckin (1995) in Alqahtani (2015) also stated that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for second language readers to overcome. Most of students, when finding new words, they still just continue their reading with hope that the word they pass by is not really important or that its meaning will become clear later on. However, sometimes the word that they pass by is usually the key of their reading and understanding. Therefore, they cannot catch and grasp the idea from their reading as good as possible.

Therefore, the vocabulary and reading comprehension has a relationship. This is line with what Min and Hsu (2010) who stated that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading comprehension. In term of constructing meaning of the text, the readers need to know most of the vocabulary and the contextual meanings used in the text. A better understanding of the vocabulary meaning will produce a better understanding on the whole meaning of the text. Based on the explanation above the researcher is interested to conduct a research to find the correlation between the vocabulary and the reading comprehension score.

2. Research Questions

Research problem of this study is: “Is there any significant correlation between the Fourth Semester English Education Study Program Students’ vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores?”

3. Objective of the Research

The objective of the study is to find out whether or not there is a significant correlation between the between the Fourth Semester English Education Study Program Students’ vocabulary and their reading comprehension scores.

4. Significances of the Research

This research will give some useful information about English vocabularies and reading comprehension of the fourth semester English Education Study Program students of Jambi University in Academic Year 2016/2017. This research will also present the description and the degree of correlation between students’ vocabulary and their reading comprehension scores. The research will give the EFL students and the educators the awareness to realize and consider whether or not that having adequate vocabulary can affect their comprehension in reading text.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Definition of Reading

Definitions of reading have been defined differently by some experts. Hill (1979) states that reading is what the reader does to get the meaning he needs from textual sources. It means that the reading activities need the readers' ability to understand the meaning from the text. Grellet (1985) also explains that reading is assigning meaning and extracting information from written texts. It shows that reading is the interaction between reader and the text that needs some abilities from the reader to extract and construct information from a text and to get a new understanding.

However, McEntire (2003) defines reading as a constructive process which the prior knowledge and experience affects the reader's comprehension of the text. Klingner, Vaughn, and Boardman (2007) support this by stating that reading is a process of constructing meaning that can be achieved through dynamic instruction among the following aspects: the reader's prior knowledge, the information suggested by the text, and the context of the reading situation. It means that the prior knowledge and experience of the reader are important to get proper understanding of the information in a text. Appropriate comprehension is possible to obtain as the content of the text is close to the reader's prior knowledge. For instance, chemistry students who read a chemistry articles or books would find it better in comprehending the text than the language students.

A Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller (2002) state that the idea of reading is also to do with purposes, experiences, strategies, skills, and even attitude towards reading. From their statement, it means that when we read, it should with purpose, which can be reading for pleasure or reading for seeking information. Reading also needs experience from the reader to make the reader easy to obtain and understanding the text holistically. Strategies, such as skimming or scanning, skills, and attitude of the reader are the aspect that can't be separated when the reader wants to read.

2. Reading Comprehension

Alderson (2000) states that reading is both process and product. The process of reading involves the interaction between the reader and the text – how the reader is deciphering the writing on the page, what he or she is thinking about while reading, and how the reader is

monitoring his or her reading (cited in McKay, 2006). McKay (2006) adds that the product of reading is comprehension, or an internal construction of meaning; that is, there has been understanding (at least to some degree) of what has been read. Grabe and Stoller (2002) define reading comprehension as processing words, forming a representation of general main ideas and integrating it into a new understanding. It suggests that comprehension is achieved when a reader successfully extracts the useful knowledge from a text and constructs it into a new understanding of their own.

3. Vocabulary

According to Nation (2001) vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. Actually vocabulary is more complex, vocabulary mastery is not only knowing the words and its meanings, but also knowing about how the words sound and how the words are used in the context. According to Miller and Gildea (1987) knowing a word by sight and sound and knowing its dictionary definition are not the same as knowing how to use the word correctly and understanding it when it is heard or seen in various contexts.

Aebersold and Field (1979) classify vocabulary into two kinds, they are:

1. Active vocabulary refers to put item which the learner can use appropriately in speaking or writing, and it is also called as *productive vocabulary*, although in fact it is more difficult to put into practice, it means that to use the productive vocabulary, the students must know how to pronounce it well, they must be familiar with collocation and understand the connotation meaning of the word. This type is often used in speaking and writing skill.
2. Passive vocabulary refers to language items that can be recognizes and understood in the context of reading of listening and also called as *receptive vocabulary*

In addition, knowing and understanding words mean knowing their “form” - how they sounds, how they spelt, grammatical change that could be made to them, and their “meaning” - their conceptual content, and how they relate to other words and in particular types of language use (Cameron, 2001).

4. The Correlation between Students’ Vocabularies and Their Reading Comprehension Scores

The correlation between vocabularies and reading comprehension has been explored widely by some researchers. Laufer and Nation (1999) argue that the acquisition of an adequate

vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, learners will be unable to use the structures and functions they may have learned for comprehensible communication. Kaivanpanah & Zandy (2009) state that the connection between vocabulary knowledge related to synonymy, polysemy, antonymy, and grammatical knowledge are significant in performing higher level of comprehension. Hirsch (2003) found that knowing at least 90 percent of the words of a text enables the reader to get the main idea from the reading and guess correctly what many of the unfamiliar words mean, which will help them learn new words. Ali (2015) found that the students' vocabulary mastery had fair correlation toward their reading comprehension with the r_{xy} value was .641. Another study by Chen (2014) also found syntactic knowledge has relationship as well as the vocabulary toward reading comprehension which were vocabulary (.543) had higher correlation than syntactic knowledge (.501).

METHODOLOGY

To conduct the research, the researcher used correlation research design. The variables of this research are students' vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores. The participants of this research were 106 registered of the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program in Jambi University in the Academic Year 2016/2017 from class A, B, H, and I. This research used simple random sampling in determining the class that would participate to this research. Homogeneity test was used in this research since to know the homogenous level of the participants. Homogeneity test showed that the fourth semester English Education Study Program students were homogenous in level of low comprehension. Since the participants were homogenous, the researcher just chose the class randomly. The researcher chose A class as the sample and B class as the pilot class.

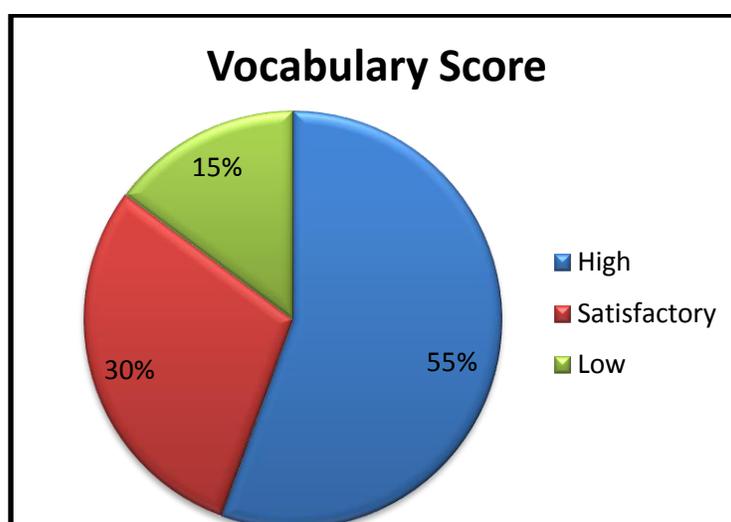
There were two achievement tests used in this research namely vocabulary and reading comprehension tests. There were 50 questions in each test. In reading comprehension test there were some indicators, they were finding main idea, answering stated detail question, answering unstated details questions, finding pronoun reference, answering implied detail question, answering transition question, and finding specific information, whereas in vocabulary test there were also some indicators, they were synonym, antonym, word's definition, and finding word that doesn't fit together.

To find the reliability and validity of the questionnaires, the researcher conducted a pilot study to B class. The researcher used Cronbach Alpha to measure reliability and Product Moment Correlation formula to measure validity of the instruments. The result of pilot study showed that both vocabulary and reading comprehension tests have high reliability which the value was .746 for vocabulary test and .713 for reading comprehension test. There were also 13 invalid items in the vocabulary test and 11 invalid items in reading comprehension. However, the researcher excluded 10 invalid items in each test. Therefore, there were 40 questions in each test that were used in this research. After the pilot study conducted, the tests were distributed to A class and the data were analyzed using SPSS program.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Vocabulary Achievement

Figure 1. Students' Vocabulary Achievement



From the figure 1 above, 55 % students have high achievement, 30 % students have satisfactory achievement, and 15 % students have low achievement in vocabulary test. The mean score is 74.44, the highest score is 90, and the lowest score is 42. To sum up, more than half of the fourth semester students have high mastery in vocabulary which could affect their comprehension in reading. According to Hirsch (2003) knowing at least 90 percent of the words of a text enables the reader to get the main idea from the reading and guess correctly what many of the unfamiliar words mean, which will help them learn new words. Therefore, vocabulary and reading cannot be separated, because both of them relate to each other.

Figure 2. Indicators of vocabulary test

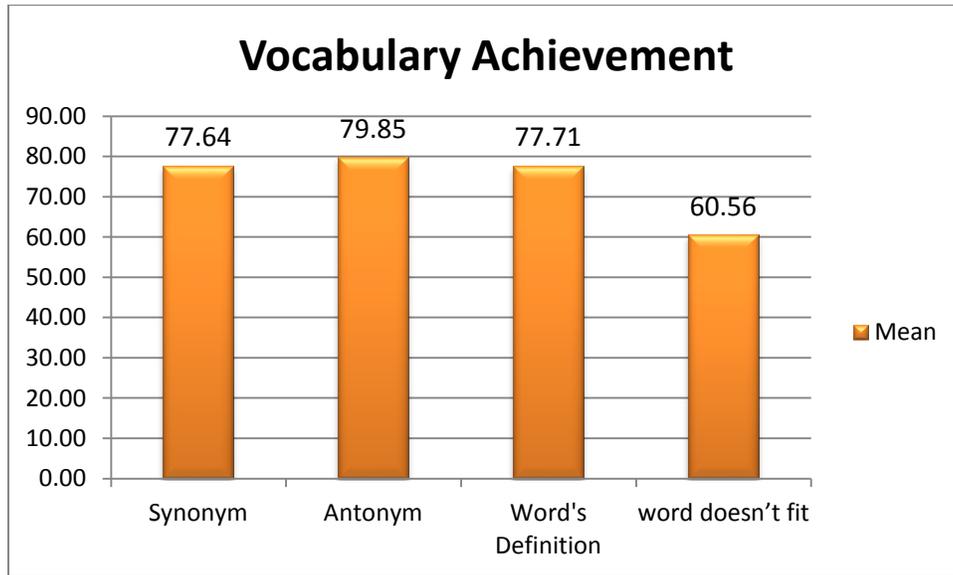
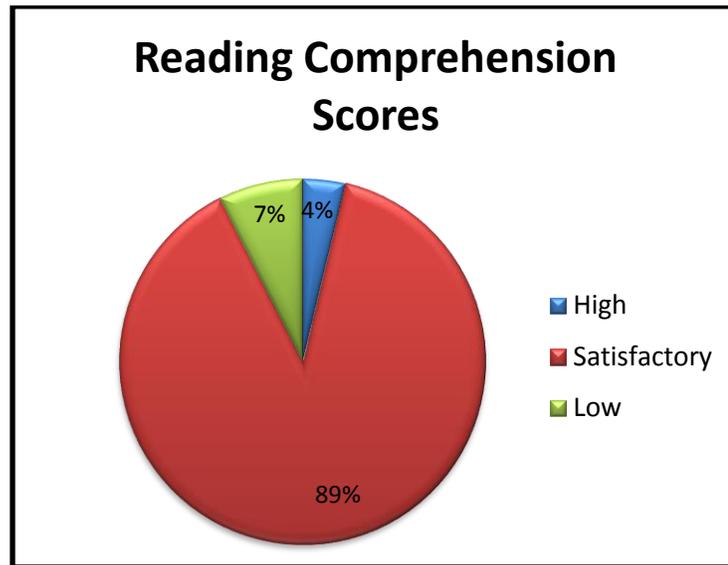


Figure 2 above shows that 77.64 % can answer synonym correctly, 79.85 % can answer antonym correctly, 77.71 % can answer word's definition correctly, and 69.56 can answer word that doesn't fit correctly. Although all indicators of the vocabulary test can be answered in the level of satisfactory, there is still one indicator that is finding word that doesn't fit that is near to the low achievement that could affect their level in comprehending the text. Supported by Kaivanpanah & Zandy (2009) who stated that the connection between vocabulary knowledge related to synonymy, polysemy, antonymy, and grammatical knowledge are significant in performing higher level of comprehension. In this term, vocabulary knowledge is not a single dimension construct, but it refers to multi-dimension construct which comprises of vocabulary size (how many words are known by someone) and the depth of someone knowledge about the words. The depth of knowledge emphasizes on the concept that the learners need to have a deeper understanding of high-frequency of words and develop a rich and specific meaning so they are able to use it in appropriate context

2. Students' Reading Comprehension

In reading comprehension test, there is 4% students have high comprehension, 89 % students have satisfactory comprehension, and 7% students have low comprehension in reading comprehension test that can be seen in figure 3 below. The mean score is 64.81, the highest score is 80 and the lowest is 52.

Figure 3. Students' Reading Comprehehsion



Another factor that affects the students' reading comprehension is the level difficulty of the text or the reading materials provide in the text. It could be seen in homogeneity test that the averaged score of the students was in low comprehension, while in the test of the research the average score was in satisfactory comprehension. It is affected by the level difficulty of the text given. It is supported by Lenz (2010) who states that Reading comprehension is also affected by the quality of the reading material. Some writers are better writers than others, and some writers produce more complex reading material than others. Text that is well organized and clear is called "considerate text" and text that is poorly organized and difficult to understand can be called "inconsiderate text." The more inconsiderate the text, the more work will be required of a reader to comprehend the text. Readers who do not have the background, abilities, or motivation to overcome the barriers presented in inconsiderate text will have more difficulty comprehending these types of texts. This is in line with Pulido (2004) in Wachyuni (2011) who states that the level of difficulty of vocabulary used in the text is one of many essential aspects that contribute to lower or higher achievements in reading comprehension.

Figure 4. Indicators in Reading Comprehension Test

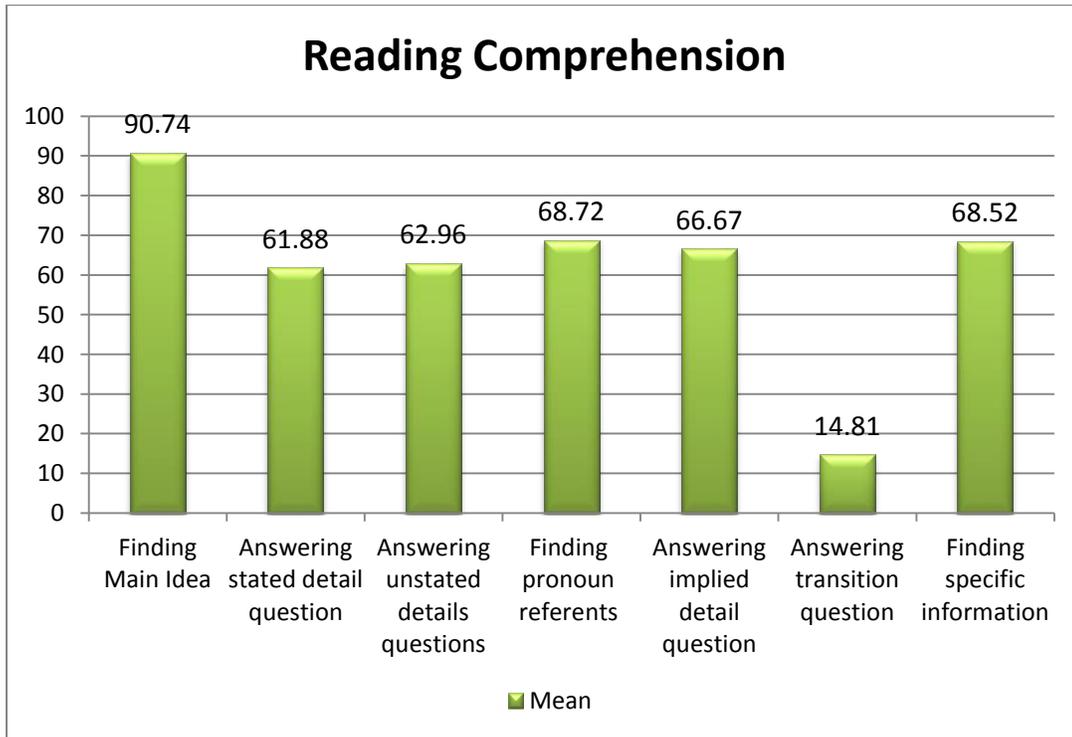


Figure 4 indicates that 90.74 % students can find main idea, 61.88 % students can answer stated detail question, 62.96 % students can answer unstated detail question, 68.72 % students can find pronoun reference, 66.67 % students can answer implied detail question, 14.81 % can answer transition question, and 68.52 % can find specific information of the text correctly. It can be said that the the lowest score of reading score is about answering transition question. This kind of question is like we should guess what paragraph will precede or follow a paragraph. The difficulties here, perhaps, the students' ability in understanding the whole paragraph or the students didn't know yet the strategies or techniques to solve this kind of question. It is supported by Lenz (2010) who states that the readers with poorly developed language skills and strategies will not have the tools to take advantage of the obvious structures and comprehension cues that are part of considerate text nor will they have the extra tools needed to overcome the barriers of inconsiderate text

3. Correlation between Students' Vocabularies and Reading Comprehension Scores

Correlations

		VOCABULARY	READING COMPREHENSION
VOCABULARY	Pearson Correlation	1	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	27	27
READING COMPREHENSION	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	27	27

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings also showed that there is a correlation between the fourth semester English Education Study Program students' vocabulary and reading comprehension score in Academic Year 2016/2017. The result in Pearson Product Moment Formula showed that the correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension score was positive because $r > 0$ with coefficient correlation is 0.788, and the $t_{count} \geq t_{table}$ or $6.396 \geq 1.708$. This score showed that having adequate vocabulary affected students' reading comprehension. Therefore, it is in line with Min & Hsu (2010) who stated that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading comprehension. In term of constructing meaning of the text, the readers need to know most of the vocabulary and the contextual meanings used in the text. A better understanding of the vocabulary meaning will produce a better understanding on the whole meaning of the text. It can be concluded that the higher degree of vocabulary, the more the students have higher in reading comprehension

CONCLSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusions

Based on finding and discussion, the average ability of the fourth semester English Education Study Program students in Academic Year 2016?2017 in vocabulary score could be categorized as the satisfactory achievement because the mean score of the students reaches 74.44

and reading comprehension reaches 64.81 was also in level of satisfactory comprehension. Referring to the findings and discussions that have been elaborated in the previous chapter, it is found that there is a strong correlation between students' vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores. Although the scores of reading and vocabulary test are different but the correlation is strong. It may be caused by the difficult vocabulary in test items. Students who have high scores in reading also have high score in vocabulary.

2. Suggestions

It is hoped that the students tend to enrich their English vocabulary by practicing to read more in which can help them in gaining their vocabulary and comprehending the text. It is important for the lecturers of vocabulary and reading subjects to give more explanation and attention about this subject. The lecturers also can give more examples and practice or exercise more to the students and apply or implement the interesting and fun way in teaching reading since the students' reading comprehension is in low comprehension. It is also suggested to have well-qualified libraries by providing the students with the good references. By giving space to the students to read a book and add knowledge about the vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension, it is hoped that their vocabularies will be increased and their reading comprehension will be improved.

REFERENCES

- Aebbersold, J. A. & Field, M. L. (1997) *From Reader to Reading Teacher* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ali, I. R. (2010). *The Correlation Between Students' Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Comprehension*. State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. Retrieved from <http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/L-E/article/download/329/218>
- Alqahtani, M. (2015) *The Importance Of Vocabulary In Language Learning And How To Be Taught*. International Journal of Teaching and Education
- Bogaards, P. & Laufer, B. (2004). *Vocabulary in a second language: Selection, acquisition, and testing*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Cahyono, B. Y. & Widiati, U. (2011). *The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia*. Malang: University of Malang Press.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, K. Y. (2014). *Vocabulary, Syntactic knowledge, and reading comprehension: the perspective of college EFL Students*. WHAMPOA - An Interdisciplinary Journal 66(2014)39-52
- Gay, L.R. 1992. *Educational Research Competencies for Analysis and Application: Fourth Edition*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Grabe, W. and Stoller, F.L. (2002). *Teaching and Researching Reading*. England: Pearson Education Limited
- Grellet, F. (1985). *Developing Reading Skills*. Leeds: Leeds University Press
- Hill, W. R. (1979) *Secondary School Reading Process, Program, Procedure*. Boston; Allyn and Bacon
- Hirsch, E.D. (2003). *Reading comprehension requires knowledge – of words and the world*. American Educator: American Federation of Teachers
- Kaivanpanah, S. & Zandy, H. (2009). *The Role of Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge in Reading Comprehension in EFL context*. Journal of Applied Science.
- Klingner, J. K., Sharon V., & Alison B. (2007). *Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Laufer, B. & Nation, P. (1999). A Vocabulary Size Test of Controlled Productive Ability. *Language Testing* 16, 33-51.

- Lynch, B., & Hudson, T. (1991). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle
- Lenz, K. (2010). *Reading Comprehension*. [online] retrieved on December, 2016 from http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/?q=instruction/reading_comprehension
- McEntire, J. (2003). *Read Ahead 2: Reading and Life Skills Development*. Longman: Pearson Education
- Mckay, P. (2006). *Assessing Young Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Miller, G. & Gildea, P. (1987). *How Children Learn Words*. Longman: Pearson Education
- Min, H. T. & Hsu, W.S. (2010). *The Impact of Supplemental Reading on Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention with EFL Learners in Taiwan*.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pam & Glenda (2008) *What is Reading Comprehension* [online] retrieved on December, 2016 from www.K12reader.com/what-is-reading-comprehension/
- Wachyuni,S. (2011). *Cooperative Learning, Reading Comprehension, and Vocabulary Learning*. University of Groningen