

**THE EFFECT OF MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS
ON ENGLISH COMPETENCY TEST (ECT) OF
READING SECTION ABILITY OF FKIP UIJ
BEGINNER LEVEL TEST-TAKERS**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the strategic role of explicit morphology to improve reading ability for ECT for UIJ English Education and Trainings Students of TOEFL Reading of beginner level. The sufficient knowledge of word formation influences the speed of comprehending reading text. Analysis of data collected from 50 participants revealed that morphological awareness affected reading comprehension directly. Students were enrolled an ECT. 50 students took part as the participant of this study. These students are divided into two groups named experimental and control groups. The first step was, giving pretest of reading section of ECT for both groups. This pretest, using explicit morphological practice, functioned to measure their reading comprehension through questions from passages. The second step was, conducting the treatment through both groups for 4 sessions of reading comprehension training. The third step conducted to held posttest for both groups, which was in line with pretest. The deviations of the performance were computed by mean of the scores. The outcome shows that the experimental group performed an advancement of the scores from pretest to posttest. From this data can be concluded that explicit morphological awareness is effective to improve FKIP UIJ Beginner Level test-takers' reading ability.

Keywords : Morphology, Reading Comprehension, TOEFL Reading Section

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang peran strategis dari eksplisit morfologi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca bagi mahasiswa FKIP UIJ yang mengikuti ECT pada level beginner. Pengetahuan yang memadai akan formasi kata mempengaruhi kecepatan text reading comprehension. Analisis data yang diperoleh dari 50 partisipan mengungkapkan bahwa kesadaran morfologi dapat mempengaruhi reading comprehension. 50 Partisipan terdaftar pada program ECT kemudian dibagi menjadi kelompok control dan kelompok eksperimen. Kedua kelompok tersebut menjalani pretest yang di dalamnya terdapat praktek eksplisit morfologi, yang

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berfungsi untuk mengukur reading comprehension melalui menjawab soal dari text yang ada. Tahap berikutnya, melakukan treatment pada kedua kelompok selama 4 kali dalam pelatihan reading comprehension. Tahap terakhir yakni melakukan posttest sebagai lanjutan dari pretest pada kedua kelompok. Deviasi dari performa partisipan dihitung untuk mendapat mean of the scores. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kelompok eksperimen mengalami kenaikan scores dari pretest ke posttest. Dari data tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa kesadaeran eksplisit morfologi efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan reading comprehension mahasiswa FKIP UIJ yang mengikuti ECT pada level beginner.

Keywords : Morphology, Reading Comprehension, TOEFL Reading Section

I. INTRODUCTION

a. Research Background

Depth research has much conducted for L2 TOEFL Reading Test-Takers' Morphological Competence and Reading Comprehension. Studies of morphology and reading comprehension for both L1 and L2 students have shown that students first develop awareness of inflectional morphology and compound morphology. Later, after the primary school years, derivational morphology awareness takes over as an impact factor in reading comprehension (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2008; Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Miguel, 2012).

Deacon and Kirby's (2004) four-year longitudinal study indicates that there is a positive relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension for the second, fourth and sixth graders. The study indicates that morphological awareness contributes to reading development even after three years of the study and after controlling for phonological awareness.

Ku and Anderson (2003) conducted a study to investigate whether morphological awareness plays a significant role in vocabulary acquisition and reading proficiency among second, fourth and sixth American and Chinese graders of English and Chinese languages. Researchers administered a reading comprehension test along with a set of tests. These tests involve a morpheme recognition test and a morpheme interpretation test. The results demonstrate that morphological awareness is developed gradually throughout the students' language experience, and that morphological awareness is indispensable for English and Chinese vocabulary acquisition and reading proficiency. White, Power and White's (1989) results of experiment 1 of the characteristics of affixed words is in accord with the previous studies. They draw the conclusion that morphological analysis is sufficient to understand affixed words that are semantically transparent (i.e. the meaning of the whole words can be derived from the meaning of its morphological units).

Explicit instruction on morphological units may help the learners to recover the meaning of complex words, and this might be accounted as an important

vocabulary learning strategy. The fact that according to studies Indonesian EFL students encounter a large number of morphologically complex words in their reading has motivated the researcher to explore further the role of morphological practice in reading comprehension of Indonesian students.

b. Research Problems

This study examine the following question: “How does the role of morphological awareness in Reading Comprehension on ECT Reading Section for UIJ FKIP Beginner Level Test-Takers?”

c. Objectives of The Study

This study was aimed to observe the role of morphological awareness in Reading Comprehension on ECT Reading Comprehension on ECT Reading Section for UIJ FKIP Beginner Level Test-Takers?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

a. Morphology

Morphology, in linguistics, is the study of the forms of words, and the ways in which words are related to other words of the same language. The forms of words can carry complex and highly structured information. Words do not serve simply as minimal signs, arbitrary chunks of sound that bear meaning simply by virtue of being distinct from one another. Some aspects of a word’s form may indicate the relation of its underlying lexeme to others (markers of derivational morphology or of compound structure), while others indicate properties of the grammatical structure within which it is found (markers of inflectional properties). All of these relations seem to be best construed as knowledge about the relations between *words* however: relations between whole lexemes, even when these can be regarded as containing markers of their relations to still other lexemes; and relations between word forms that realize paradigmatic alternatives built on a single lexeme’s basic stem(s) in the case of inflection. These relations connect substantively defined classes in a way that is only partially directional in its essential nature, and the formal connections among these classes are signalled in ways that are best represented as processes relating one shape to another.

b. TOEFL Reading Section

The Reading Comprehension section contains reading passages and questions about the passages. The questions are about information that is stated or implied in the passage and about some of the specific words in the passages. Because many English words have more than one meaning, it is important to remember that these questions concern the meaning of a word or phrase within the context of the passage. The Reading section uses passages to measure the ability to understand non-technical reading material, but new tasks that require the test taker to become more closely involved with the text have been developed.

c. Academic Vocabulary

Academic comprehension improves when students know the meaning of words. Words are the building blocks of communication. Students with great vocabulary mastery can have good performance of four major language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Recent English-reading models for ESL consider vocabulary knowledge an important source of variation in reading comprehension, because it affects higher-level language processes such as grammatical processing, construction of schemata, and text models (Adams and Collins, 1977 as cited in Zimmerman, 2007). TOEFL Reading session is known has high difficulty vocabulary level for ESL. Students with high academic vocabulary development can stand several parts of unfamiliar words in a text without disturbance of comprehension and can estimate the meaning of those words from the given context.

On the contrary, students with low academic vocabulary development have poor comprehension of the text given in TOEFL Reading session. Without the existence of academic vocabulary knowledge, neither language production nor language comprehension would be possible to be performed.

Academic vocabulary is used across all academic disciplines to teach about the content of all discipline; e.g. Students who study chemistry are requires to know how the chemistry concepts. According to Marzano (2004, as cited n Adger, 2001) academic vocabulary includes general academic terms such as analyze, infer and conclusion.

d. English for Academic Purpose

The English for Academic purposes classroom focuses mostly on Academic language. Academic language is the language used by teachers and students for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1992, as cited in Zwiers, 2008). Marzano (2004, as cited in Zwiers, 2008) argues that academic vocabulary is positively related to higher-status occupations. This is true based on researcher's personal experience because there is a thing called vocabulary acquisition that has vital connection to social, academic, and professional achievement.

III. METHODOLOGY

a. Hypothesis

Explicit morphological practice has role on reading comprehension of FKIP UIJ students.

b. Participants

This study employs 50 populations. Those include 25 females and 25 males of beginner level English language learners attending English Competency Preparation

Class of Jember Islamic University. They attended 4 meetings of English Reading Comprehension of EC Preparation Class 12 hours per week. The main ages of these participants are 22-26 years with a mean age of (23.33). At the time of the study, 50 participants were enrolled in English Education and Training Department.

c. Materials

To answer the present study's questions of explicit morphological practice and its effects on reading comprehension skills of intermediate level students, three tests are applied to achieve the purposes of the study. The first test is ECT, which is adapted from TOEFL Proficiency test as described on the following subchapters.

1. TOEFL CBT Proficiency Test

The ECT test is adapted from ETS 4th Edition and is used to test students' English proficiency in four skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening. This test is of interest to the researcher as it can be applied to make the students homogeneous. The researcher creates some items of the test, and others are taken from ETS 4th Edition. The test is divided into two sections: Reading Comprehension and Morphological Structure.

Reading Comprehension Test measures students' ability to understand the text. It is comprised of a reading passage and 8 related questions. Students are asked to read the passage and select the most appropriate alternatives. The Morphological Structure Test measures students' morphological knowledge. The test consists of 12 four-option items. The researcher creates these items. All of items are embedded in a sentence frame. Again, the students are asked to choose the appropriate alternatives.

2. Reading Comprehension Test "as Pretest"

This test consists of two reading passages. These passages are recruited from Active Reading by Anderson (2007). These passages are selected as to best suit the students' age and level. The test is comprised of 15 two-option questions. Almost all of the questions are designed to measure the participants' morphological knowledge and its effects on their overall comprehension of the texts. The participants are asked to read the passages and select those choices that are appropriate.

3. Reading Comprehension Test "as posttest"

This test consists of the same reading passages as the pretest, but it is comprised of somewhat different items as questions; in fact, parallel-forms method is applied. The posttests' items are designed to have the same level of difficulty of the pretest items and again they are used to measure the participants' morphological knowledge and its effects on their understanding of the texts.

d. Procedure

First, ECT test was administrated to the 50 students who participated in the study. The goal of delivering this test was choosing the homogeneous students of the same level of language proficiency for the subsequent stages of the study. The proficiency test was divided into two parts; reading section test and morphological structure test. The students were asked to read the passage, questions, and other test items and choose the best possible responses. Then, the researcher selected those 20 students whose grades were lower than average and had the lower level of proficiency as the main participants of the study.

Then, these resulting 30 students were randomly assigned to two groups of fifteen as one control group and one experimental group. First, students in both groups took a reading comprehension test as pretest. This test was designed to measure morphological knowledge of students and its effects on their total reading comprehension of passages. Then, the treatment of the researcher started and all students in both groups received a six-sessions reading comprehension training, but the experimental group also received explicit morphological practice during reading comprehension classes. The reading material that was selected from Active Reading by Anderson (2007), included six reading passages. Each session, the researcher taught one passage. In the experimental group, the participants received reading comprehension training and at the same time, morphological features of the passage was explained by the researcher and practiced in the classroom. In other words, the participants received morphological training beside of reading comprehension practice. In the case of the control group, students only received reading comprehension practice in the whole sessions.

After finishing the treatment, all the participants took a posttest that was designed so as to be the parallel form of the pretest. The aim of the researcher was to measure the changes, if any, in the performance of both experimental and control groups after receiving their own specific trainings.

e. Data Analysis

The data collected in this study is quantitative. In the case of the positive hypothesis “explicit morphological practice has effect on reading comprehension of FKIP UIJ Beginner Level test Takers”, the mean of the scores of the participants in pretest and posttest will be calculated. Then, a t-test will be used to determine if the means of two groups in both pretests and posttests are significantly different from one another.

IV. Result and Discussion

UIJ students take TOEFL at the end of their English Competency Preparation Program, with a target of TOEFL 450 for English-Majored Students and 400 for Non-English Majored Students required to enroll Thesis as the final project of their undergraduate program. Thus the vast majority of this research sample, coming

from the same English language-training course, reported previous TOEFL reading scores within a narrow range of scores 35 – 45.

a. Data Analysis and Findings

The table below displays the data number of both experimental and control group, which consists of the mean, standard deviation, and variance participants' scores in pretests and posttests.

Table 4.1

Pretest of Control Group		Pretest of Experimental Group	
N	25	N	25
Mean	6.0000	Mean	5.5555
Std. Deviation	1.6786	Std. Deviation	1.8787
Variance	2.1789	Variance	2.7652
Sum	86.00	Sum	80.00

The table shows the mean, standard deviation, and variance of scores of control group and experimental group.

Table 4.2

Posttest of Control Group		Posttest of Experimental Group	
N	25	N	25
Mean	7.320	Mean	9.8715
Std. Deviation	1.2625	Std. Deviation	2.765
Variance	1.1955	Variance	4.1152
Sum	95.00	Sum	140.00

The table displays that 25 participants were joined in reading comprehension posttest of experimental group.

This study used quantitative method to gain the data. The hypothesis of explicit morphological practice has effect on reading comprehension of FKIP English Education and Training of UIJ, participants' posttest scores of control and experimental group can be compared.

Hypothesis Analysis

Based on the above- mentioned tables and statistics, the observed value of t is more than the critical value of t ($5.503 > 2.048$). The hypothesis is match of the fact that explicit morphological practice is significantly effective on reading comprehension of UIJ FKIP level English language learners.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on examining the role of explicit morphological practice on reading comprehension of FKIP UIJ Beginner Level Test Takers. The

experimental group was trained in 4 session for reading comprehension and morphological awareness class, while in the control class only got reading comprehension training.

The collected data is expended to determine the substantial enhanced performance of experimental group from pretest to posttest. Through explicit morphological knowledge implemented in reading comprehension of ECT Reading section, almost all students performed good understanding to respond reading questions. On the other hand, the control group shows stagnant performance which is not significantly different from pretest score.

Undergraduates are generally aware that a good vocabulary is essential to successful reading. Students of FKIP English Education and Training Program of UIJ's L1 is Indonesia so they need help in identifying the words. By knowing the word formation process, the ECT reading test takers know the meaning of the given text better. It helps them to grasp its meaning faster.

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