

STUDENTS' MASTERY OF PHRASAL VERBS AND THEIR READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to find out whether or not there was correlation between students' mastery of phrasal verbs and their reading comprehension ability. This research used quantitative method with the research design of correlational study. The subject of this research was 2nd semester students of English Teacher Education, Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta which consisted of 41 students. In collecting the data, the writer used phrasal verbs test and reading comprehension test as the instruments. The data were computed statistically by using Pearson Product Moment SPSS 20. The result showed that there was a positive medium correlation in which the coefficient correlation "r_{value}" (0.496) was higher than the value of r_{table} (0.308) with the level of significance 5% (0.496 > 0.308).

Keywords: students' mastery of phrasal verbs, phrasal verbs, reading comprehension

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Introduction

Among all the four skills of a language, reading is one of the facets that everyone has to learn well to increase their knowledge, including in English. According to Patel and Jain (2008, p. 113) reading is an act in understanding the meaning of printed words i.e. written symbols. Harmer (2015, p. 190) explained reading is an activity that involves the eyes to get the message and information from reading text and then processing that information into the brain so that the readers will gain new knowledge. It is an activity done by the readers to get specific information or general ideas through written signs or symbols.

In daily life, most people also read a lot of sources and information that are written in English such as journal articles, newspapers, advertisements, novels, magazines, and even all kinds of information from the internet. People read those written sources in order to gain all the information needed in life. In

other situations, people frequently read for pleasure. They select the reading material that interests them and read it without any compulsion.

In the academic setting of English, reading will affect students' achievement in learning that language. Students should engage in reading activities since it will help them in dealing with their tasks and other academic demands. Yukselir (2014) considered that reading as a central way for learning new knowledge and obtaining access to other alternative interpretations and explanations. It also gives the foundation for synthesis and critical evaluation skills. Having good skills in reading is essential for students to help them concentrate on the subject matter and master their target language.

Reading is called as a receptive skills which means that students use cognitive processing to receive and understand the language instead of producing it. When students read, they are interacting with the text, decoding

word by word and making an understanding of what they have read. Although reading is receptive skills, it is not totally a passive skill because this skill requires students' knowledge and comprehension. Students must comprehend the message in reading material unless they will fail to comprehend the message from the passage.

Reading comprehension becomes one of the most frequent issues in reading activities. Snow (2002, p. 11) defined reading comprehension as a process of interaction and involvement with written language by extracting and constructing the meaning simultaneously. Comprehension is consist of three factors which are the reader who is doing the comprehension (considering with abilities, knowledge, and experiences that a person brings to the act of reading), the text that is to be comprehended (including printer or electronic text), and the activity in which comprehension is a part (the purposes, process, and consequences associated with the act of reading). Klingner, et al. (2007, p. 2) also delivered that reading comprehension is a complex processing to construct meaning involving word reading, world and word knowledge, and fluency. Comprehension means a thinking process of how students identify and understand the ideas conveyed in the text by connecting their background knowledge and experiences. Without a thinking process, students cannot be able to make inferences from the text.

There is a lot going on in reading, Qrquez and Rashid (2017) stated that EFL students face difficulties in their reading comprehension where they come across unfamiliar vocabulary, ambiguous words, and have limited available time to cognitively process the text. Unlike reading in first language, reading in foreign language often more challenging. Students must be able to decode every

word, phrase, and sentence so they can extract the meaning. When students encounter vocabulary they do not know what the meaning is, they are likely to skip ahead. The more cognitively challenging the reading becomes, the harder it is for students to make meaning especially when it comes to phrasal verbs.

According to McCarthy & O'Dell (2007, p. 6), phrasal verbs consist of a verb and a particle (a preposition or adverb) or a verb and two particles (an adverb and a preposition). In addition, Vasbieva (2015) defined phrasal verbs as mixture of a verb and a particle which has a different meaning from each word meaning. Phrasal verbs are not words which can be formed freely but it is limited to certain particles.

Ginting, et al. (2019) stated that phrasal verbs play an indispensable role in English particularly in written form. Phrasal verbs are known as ones which present considerable difficulties for students. For example, these two sentences "The weather is so cold so I put on my jacket" and "The weather is so cold so I wear my jacket" have the same meaning, but the one with phrasal verbs 'put on' seems more difficult for them to be understood.

White (2012) mentioned the reason why phrasal verbs are difficult for students to learn because they are unpredictable, polysemous, frequent, and non-universal. It is unpredictable because phrasal verbs have idiomatic and literal meaning such as, "Could you pick up the pen please?" (literal) and "I pick up some new slang words while watching the tv series." (idiomatic). The meaning of phrasal verbs depend on the context of the sentence.

Helmie (2015) stated that many phrasal verbs are polysemous which means that they have more than one meaning. The example of phrasal verbs that contain multiple meanings: "My car

broke down” (means stopped moving), “Talks between the two groups broke down” (means ended in failure), and “She broke down when we told her the news” (means started crying and could not control her emotions). It is often difficult to learn phrasal verbs because they are formed from one verb and one or more particles which will produce different meanings. That’s the reason why learning phrasal verbs become a challenge for EFL students, they experience errors in using and understanding of phrasal verbs because some meaning of phrasal verbs can be pretty obvious, but for some other phrasal verbs the meaning is not what it seems.

It is very understandable why most EFL students often face difficulties in understanding phrasal verbs especially when they do not know the meanings or the synonyms of phrasal verbs. Dealing with the meaning of phrasal verbs become a challenge once they found phrasal verbs in reading passage. Vernon in Mart (2012, p. 116) suggested that phrasal verb should be learned in the same way as any other type of verb. The more students are familiar with phrasal verbs found in the reading passages, the easier for them to understand the text.

Moreover, most of the students cannot aware either phrasal verbs considered as idiomatic or literal meaning without any contextual support. The meaning of some phrasal verbs may be too obvious and not what they seem. It might be causing misunderstanding that also could affect students’ reading comprehension. A comprehension can be achieved only if students fully understand the whole sentences constructed from some words like phrasal verbs.

It is important for EFL students especially Indonesian students to focus their learning on phrasal verbs since they are often used in written texts such as

newspaper, magazines, and books. Bronshteyn and Gustafson (2015) stated that phrasal verbs are inherently difficult for ESL/EFL learners to master. This suggests a need for a more complete understanding of this grammatical structure so they can interpret phrasal verbs correctly. It means that student must have a satisfactory setting where they can be exposed to a wide variety of language and reading experiences. Students will be at a disadvantage when they have very little or no knowledge and experience in identifying and understanding the complexities of idiomatic language, especially when they encounter phrasal verbs in reading material. Juniartawan et al. (2020) stated that good mastery of phrasal verbs is very helpful to get the point of a message. Therefore, mastering phrasal verbs will lead them to get complete comprehension in reading that could be seen as ‘a sign’ of language proficiency. This emphasizes that phrasal verbs needed to be considered in reading activities.

Methodology

This research applied quantitative method with correlational study as research design. According to Ary, et al. (2010, p. 27), correlational research collect data from individuals on two or more variables, then seeks to find out if those variables are correlated or not. The independent variable is students’ mastery of phrasal verbs and the dependent variable is students’ reading comprehension ability.

The population involved in this study was the second semester students of English Teacher Education, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta in the academic year of 2020/2021. It consisted of 65 students. Fraenkel, et al. (2011, p. 338) stated that the minimum acceptable sample size for correlational study is not

fewer than 30. If the sample size is smaller than 30, the result of the degree of correlation may be inaccurate. Therefore, to fulfill that requirement, the researchers took only one class of second semester students as the sample consisted of 41 students.

Try-out tests for phrasal verbs and reading comprehension were taken to get the validity of the instruments before they were being used to collect the data. The procedures for collecting the data were explained such the following:

1. Phrasal verbs test consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions.

2. Reading comprehension test consisted of 4 passages with 10 multiple-choice questions.

The researchers compiled the test from various sources such as textbooks and internet.

After that, the data were calculated using Pearson Product Moment through SPSS 20 program. The researchers interpreted the correlation by using the interpretation of product moment correlation as follows:

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Interpretation

The score of "r" product moment (r_{xy})	Interpretation
0.00 - 0.19	There is a correlation between X and Y, but the correlation is very weak or little so it is ignored or it is considered no correlation in this rating.
0.20 - 0.39	There is a correlation between X and Y, but it is weak or little.
0.40 - 0.69	There is a correlation between X and Y, the value is medium.
0.70 - 0.89	There is high correlation between X and Y.
0.90 - 1.00	There is a very high correlation between X and Y.

Result and Discussion

Before calculating the correlation, there were two steps that must be done. Those are normality test and linearity test. Based on the results of normality test, the significance level students' phrasal verbs mastery was 0.631 and reading comprehension was 0,115 where both of values are higher than 0.05. Therefore, the data were considered normally distributed. And

from the result of linearity test, the output showed that the value of Deviation from Linearity was 0.755 which were higher than 0.05 ($0.755 > 0.05$). It can be concluded that the data were linear.

Result of Phrasal Verbs Test

The descriptive statistic of students' phrasal verbs comprehension score is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Phrasal Verbs Score

N	Valid	41
	Missing	0
Mean		68,29
Median		70,00
Mode		40 70
Std. Deviation		22,350
Range		80
Minimum		20
Maximum		100
Sum		2800

The result obtained from the data showed that the total score from 41 students who followed phrasal verbs test was 2800. The average score was 68.29. The median score was 70.00. The mode or the score that appear the most was 40

and 70. The minimum score was 20 and the maximum score was 100. Then, the standard deviation was 22.350. Furthermore, the score distribution students' phrasal verbs can be seen in table 3 below.

Table 3. The Score Distribution Students' Phrasal Verbs

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
81 - 100	11	26.83%	Excellent
61 - 80	13	31.71%	Good
41 - 60	8	19.51%	Fair
21 - 40	8	19.51%	Poor
0 - 20	1	2.44%	Failed

From the table above, it showed that there were 11 students (26.83%) whose scores are 81 – 100 is excellent. Then, most of students who got score in the range 61 - 80 with 17 students (31.71%) were categorized as good. Next, there were 8 students (19.51%) with 41 - 60 who belonged in fair category and there were also 8 students (19.51%) in the

range 21 - 40 who belonged in poor category. The last one, there were 1 student (2.44%) whose score in the range 0 - 20 were categorized as failed.

Result of Reading Comprehension Test

The descriptive statistic of students' reading comprehension is presented in Table 2.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Reading Comprehension Score

N	Valid	41
	Missing	0
Mean		73,17
Median		70,00
Mode		70
Std. Deviation		18,089
Range		70
Minimum		30
Maximum		100
Sum		3000

The result showed that the total score from 41 students was 3000. The mean score was 73.17. The median score was 70.00. The mode or the score that appear the most was 70. The minimum score was 30 and the maximum score

was 100. Then, the standard deviation was 18.089.

Furthermore, the percentage of students' reading comprehension score can be seen in table below.

Table 5. The Score Distribution Students' Reading Comprehension

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
81 – 100	10	24.39%	Excellent
61 – 80	21	51.22%	Good
41 – 60	7	17.07%	Fair
21 – 40	3	7.32%	Poor

	0 – 20	-	Failed
<p>The table above showed that there were 10 students (24.39%) with scores 81 – 100 who belonged in excellent classification. Then, 21 students (51.22%) who got scores in the range 61-80 belonged in good classification. Next, there were 7 students (17.07%) in the range 41 - 60 who belonged in fair classification. The last one, in the range</p>	<p>21 - 40 there were 3 student (7.32%) in poor classification.</p>	<p>Correlation Analysis</p>	<p>The result of correlation between the students' mastery of phrasal verbs and their reading comprehension ability can be seen in the table below:</p>

Table 6. Correlations

		Phrasal Verbs	Reading Comprehension
Phrasal Verbs	Pearson Correlation	1	,496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	41	41
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	,496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	41	41

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

Based on the SPSS calculation above, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient or the r_{value} between two variables was 0.496 with the value of r_{table} at significant level 5% (0.05) and N was = 41 was (0.308). It gave the the conclusion that r_{value} was higher than r_{table} ($0.496 > 0.308$).

The result indicated that there was medium correlation between the two variables referring to the value of Pearson correlation (0.496) which laid between the interval of 0.40 - 0.69. The correlation itself belongs to the positive correlation as the Pearson correlation value was in the positive number.

The writer made formulation of hypothesis as follows:

1. If $r_{\text{value}} > r_{\text{table}}$, it means that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected so there is significant correlation between two variables.
2. If $r_{\text{value}} < r_{\text{table}}$, it means that the null hypothesis (H_o) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is rejected so there is no significant correlation between two variables.

In other words, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) which said "There is significant correlation between students' phrasal verbs mastery and their reading comprehension ability" was accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_o) was automatically rejected.

Thus, students' phrasal verbs mastery gave positive contribution to the students' reading comprehension ability. The stronger students' mastery of phrasal verbs, the better their reading comprehension skills were. However, this correlation was not based on cause and effect. Some students might get low scores in phrasal verbs yet they still got high scores in reading comprehension. This indicated if students get low scores on phrasal verbs test, it does not always mean that their reading comprehension is poor.

Conclusion

As the objective of this research was to investigate whether or not there was a correlation between English pre-service students' mastery of phrasal verbs and their reading comprehension,

the correlational analysis revealed that r_{xy} was higher than r_{table} ($0.496 > 0.308$). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the null one (H_o) was rejected.

This result implied that the improvement of student's phrasal verbs gave contribution to their reading comprehension ability. The better the students mastered phrasal verbs, the better their reading comprehension ability was. The educators are recommended to give students the input of phrasal verbs as often as possible because it will help them to comprehend the text. Presenting phrasal verbs can be done by explain the definition, give the example, then apply how to use it in the classroom so the students become more familiar with phrasal verbs and they can use phrasal verbs in daily activities

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