

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND RECOUNT TEXT READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT AT SMPN 1 SONGGON BANYUWANGI

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ABSTRACT

This research was intended to compare the eighth grade male and female students' attitude and reading comprehension achievement in reading recount texts at SMP Negeri 1 Songgon Banyuwangi. The subject of this research was 30 students of VIII C class. The data collection method in this research was reading test, questionnaire, interview and documentation. In accordance with the result of questionnaire the female students had good tendency in reading comprehension. The female students had more willingness in reading, the way they used their background knowledge, environmental knowledge and vocabulary knowledge in comprehending the reading texts, as well as their ability to comprehend the general and specific information of the reading texts. Based on the result of the data analysis, there was significant different between the eighth grade male and female students' achievement in reading recount texts. Because the level of significance 0.05 and $dk=15$, the t table was 1.753. In fact, the t empiric was higher than the t table ($4.190 > 1.753$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis which stated that there is significant difference between the eighth grade male and female students on reading comprehension achievement of recount texts at SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi

Key Words: *gender different, attitude, reading comprehension achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

In the foreign language classroom, teaching language is a process of guiding the students in order to communicate actively in the target language. Successful reading can be achieved through comprehending the reading text. Along with Harmer (2004) reading text provides many exposures of English for the students. At the very least, some of the language sticks in their mind as part of the process of language acquisition.

Reading is an interactive process that takes place between the text and the reader's processing strategies and background knowledge Lems *et al.* (2010). In the reading activities, the readers do not only employ their body, especially eyes, but also their brain to process the reading text into meaningful message. In this case, the background knowledge of the reader will be helpful in processing the reading texts too. They interact dynamically in the reading activities. They have to use their eyes and brain in one occasion. Besides, readers also need to recall their prior knowledge if the text corresponds with their world to support their comprehension about the texts.

Bennete (2001) states that reading is a visual process, which cover a symbolic process of seeing an item or symbol and translating it into an idea or image. The image is processed into concepts and whole dimensions of thought. So, reading process not only involve physical processing (by using eyes) but also mental processing (by using brain and prior knowledge). Those processing acts are tied up to produce a new concept from the written text. When readers try to comprehend a reading text, they will identify the individual meaning of the words then they work out the relationship between the words to draw meaning from the texts.

The previous research findings on reading comprehension were abundantly documented. One of them was at national level White (2007) reported gender differences in literacy at two age levels: 13 year old and 16 year old girls consistently outperformed boys in reading test scores. Related to the students' abilities, there is a difference between male and female, especially in reading comprehension. Reading is one of the English skills that support the students to learn and develop their reading skill.

On the other hand, Al-Shumaimeri (2007) finds out that the male students seem to have performed significantly better than the female students in their comprehension performance of gender-neutral texts. They tended to score higher on both the familiar and the unfamiliar texts. However Al-Shumaimeri (2007) assumes that female students are in general more successful in language learning than their male counterparts. The study of foreign languages is generally viewed as a female domain.

In addition, gender differences in achievement have been attributed to a variety of biological and environmental factors. On the biological (nature) side, evidence has been found of differences in male and female brain structures and exposure to sex hormones appear to influence the gender specific skill advantages. Nussbaum (2008) states that the female and male brain is different and the two brains process information differently. Any biological differences interact with environmental factors that appear soon after birth Center of Educational Policy (2010). Weiner (2007) finds out that female read more books than male. It abounds from the biological differences between male and female brains and the way that male and female are introduced to reading at young age. In summary, the biological and environmental factors give different contribution to male and female students.

Based on the rationale above, the researcher was interested in conducting a research entitled, "A Comparative Study of the Eighth Grade Male and Female Students' Attitude and Recount Text Reading Comprehension Achievement at SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi". The problem of the research was formulated as follows : (a)What is the male and female students' attitude in reading activity at SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi?, (b)Is there any significant difference between the eighth grade male and female students on the reading comprehension achievement of recount texts at SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi?

RESEARCH METHOD

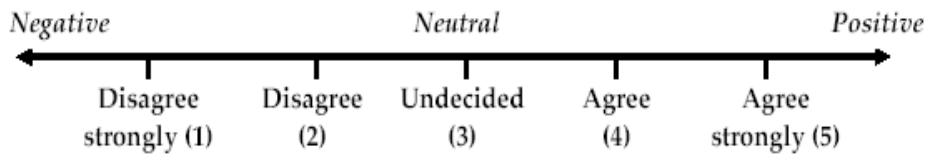
The research method was causal comparative study. Causal comparative research allows the researcher to investigate the possibility of causal relationship among variables that cannot be manipulated (such as ethnicity or gender). In causal comparative research, two groups that different in particular variable are compared on the other variable Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). The researcher chose gender as the variable. The subject of the research consisted of eighth grade male and female students in the VIII C class. It is due to VIII C clas had balance number between male and female students. In the day of reading comprehension test implementation, all of the students attended the class.

The data collected through reading test, questionnaire, interview and documentation. The reading test was used to collect the data about the students' achievement in reading recount texts. The researcher composed the reading test in the form of multiple choice item as many as 30 items. The questionnaire was employed to investigate the students' attitude in reading. Then, the interview and documentation were beneficial to collect the supporting data in this research. All of the data result were analyzed statistically and described qualitatively.

The data analysis for the result of reading test was t-test analysis. T- test formula was beneficial to find out the different or effect between variables Masyhud (2012). Through reading test, the researcher earned the students' raw score. Furthermore, the students' raw score was calculated by using t-test formula.

The questionnaire was used to obtain the data about the eighth grade male and female students' attitude in reading habit. The researcher constructed 25 items of questionnaire with 5 scales. The questionnaire was delivered in the Indonesian language. It was done in order to make the students were easier in comprehending the questions. Then the questionnaire was analyzed by using likert scale. The points in Likert scale vary from 1 up to 5 points. Furthermore, Johns (2010) notes that, attitude in any

object or any issues varied along the same underlying negative to positive dimension. The simple notion of Likert scale is illustrated below.



In positive statements, the scoring procedures were; 5 points for strongly agree, 4 points for agree, 3 points for neutral, 2 points for disagree and 1 point for strongly disagree. In negative statements, the procedures are reversed Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). Then the students’ answer was multiplied by the point in Likert scale. In this research the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions with 5 scales, and the scale varied upon 1 point up to 5 points, the points of each scale are multiplied by 25 to determine the maximum and minimum score. The maximum score was 125, and the minimum score was 25. The middle score was 75.

The classification of the students’ attitude was based on the former calculation of the students’ score by multiply each answer with the Likert scale. Hence, the lowest and highest score were able to determine, as well as the middle score. The score range between 100 – 125 was determined as positive attitude. On the contrary, the score range between 25 – 74 was determined as negative attitude. Then, the score range between 75 – 99 was considered as neutral attitude. The students who got score in these range would be regarded as having attitude based on the score classification.

RESEARCH FINDING

This research warrants several findings in relation with the male and female students’ attitude in reading as well as their reading comprehension achievement. According to the result of semi-structured interview with the English teacher, it was known that the eighth grade male and female students had several differences in mastering reading comprehension. Female students were more active in reading activities. They also had more achievement in sentences, and texts comprehension. But on the other hand, both male and female students had difficulties in words comprehension.

In accordance with the result of questionnaire, the number of female students who had positive attitude in reading was higher than that of male students. The result of questionnaire is available in the table below.

Table 1. The Result of Questionnaire

Num.	Male Students	Num.	Female Students
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	Score	Category		Score	Category
1	101	Positive attitude	1	69	Negative attitude
2	84	Neutral attitude	2	101	Positive attitude
3	59	Negative attitude	3	77	Neutral attitude
4	63	Neutral attitude	4	102	Positive attitude
5	74	Negative attitude	5	76	Neutral attitude
6	78	Neutral attitude	6	106	Positive attitude
7	69	Negative attitude	7	82	Neutral attitude
8	103	Positive attitude	8	74	Neutral attitude
9	59	Negative attitude	9	79	Neutral attitude
10	80	Neutral attitude	10	78	Neutral attitude
11	77	Neutral attitude	11	69	Negative attitude
12	100	Positive attitude	12	102	Positive attitude
13	77	Neutral attitude	13	103	Positive attitude
14	80	Neutral attitude	14	79	Neutral attitude
15	73	Negative attitude	15	100	Positive attitude

As previously shown in Table 1 above, there were 3 male students had positive attitude, 5 students had negative attitude and the rest of them had neutral attitude. On the other hand, 6 female students had positive attitude, 2 students had negative attitude and the rest of them had neutral attitude. Then the researcher compared the reading score that is achieved by the students based on their attitude. The male students who had positive attitude achieved the highest score with the score of 60. Meanwhile the female students with positive attitude achieved the highest score with the score of 77. Next, the male students with negative attitude achieved the lowest score with the score of 50. On the contrary, the female students who had negative attitude achieved the lowest score with the score of 6

Furthermore, the students mean score in the reading comprehension test is presented in the table below.

Table.2 The VIII C Students' Mean Score

Num	Reading Comprehension Ability	VIII C	
		Male	Female
1	Words comprehension	51	61
2	Sentences comprehension	50	63
3	Paragraphs comprehension	76	72
4	The texts comprehension	43	62
5	The recount texts comprehension	56	64
	Mean	55.7	64.5

The previous table shows the mean score of male and female students in reading comprehension. Generally, the female students performed better in reading comprehension. It was proved by the female students' score which was higher than male students' score. When it came into each indicator of reading comprehension, the female students still had better achievement than male students, except for paragraphs comprehension. The male students' mean score of paragraph comprehension was 76. Meanwhile, the female students gain 72 in mean score of paragraph comprehension.

Hence, the male and female students' mean score were analyzed by using t-test. Based on the result of the data analysis, there is significant different between the eighth grade male and female students' achievement in reading recount texts. Because the level of significance as many as 0.05 and $dk=15$, the t table was 1.753. In fact, the t empiric was higher than the t table ($4.190 > 1.753$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis which stated that there is significant difference between the eighth grade male and female students on reading comprehension achievement of recount texts at SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

In line with the result of questionnaire, the number of female students who had positive attitude in reading was higher than that of male students. It meant that the female students had good tendency in reading comprehension. Such as the female students had more willingness in reading, the way they used their background knowledge, environmental knowledge and vocabulary knowledge in comprehending the reading texts, as well as their ability to comprehend the general and specific

information of the reading texts etcetera. One example is the male students' tendencies in paying attention on the sentence structure. The result shows that almost male students did not pay attention on the sentence structure while they were reading. It was only two students who did that. Nevertheless, Bell *et al.* (1996) state that attitude at least influence behavior. Therefore, it can be predicted that female students have good behavior in reading.

In this research, it was found that the mean score of female students is higher than the mean score of male students. It means that female students are better than male students in reading comprehension. It is in line with the previous research finding from Center of Educational Policy (2010), females tend to perform better on reading test, while males perform better on math test particularly at the high school level. Both result of the research found that female students are better in reading comprehension rather than male students. The different is the subject of the research. In this research the subject was eighth grade students. Meanwhile in the previous research, the subject was high school students.

Furthermore, this research finding seems to support Sunderland (2000) in Al-Shumaimeri (2007) who assumes that female students are in general more successful in language learning than their male counterparts. The study of foreign languages is generally viewed as a female domain. The possible explanation for the superiority of the female students in reading is that the female students had more willingness and better effort in reading. Although they were in the same instruction level, the female students likely to be more proficient reader than male students. It was proved by the female students' mean score which was generally higher than male students' mean score.

On the contrary, this research finding appears in contrast with the research finding of Al-Shumaimeri (2007), who finds out that the male students seem to have performed significantly better than the female students in their comprehension performance of gender-neutral texts. The male students tended to score higher on both the familiar and the unfamiliar texts. Content familiarity was also found to have significantly affected the male and female students' overall comprehension performance: both genders tended to score higher on the familiar passage.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In summary, the eighth grade male and female students of SMPN 1 Songgon Banyuwangi was different in reading comprehension achievement. The female students performed better in reading comprehension rather than male students. It was due to the female students' attitude in reading. The female students had better attitude in reading comprehension, which meant that they had better beliefs,

tendencies and efforts in reading comprehension.

The pedagogical implication which can be drawn here is that language educators need to take advantage of the significant difference of male and female students' attitude on learners' comprehension performance to provide students with appropriate technique of reading to enable them in employing the appropriate skills and strategies to understand the texts. Reading is a complex psychological activity that involves various mechanisms. It is suggested here that the educators are expected to be able to influence the students' attitude, so that the students either male or female, are possible to have the best way of comprehending the reading texts.

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