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Speed vs. Understanding: A Study of Student Readers

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Abstract

Reading is essential for acquiring the English language, as it enhances learning in both academic and practical contexts. Nonetheless, reading devoid of comprehension renders the activity ineffective. A practical reader should utilize strategies that harmonize pace and understanding to enhance the reading experience. This study sought to ascertain the relationship between reading speed and reading comprehension among fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Kadiri. The study utilized a correlation research method and applied a non-probability saturation sampling technique, encompassing all students from Class A of the fourth semester. The data collection tools were a reading speed assessment, quantifying the number of words read per minute, and a multiple-choice comprehension evaluation, gauging text understanding. The correlation between the two variables was calculated using SPSS software. The results indicated no significant link between students' reading speed and comprehension, with a p-value of 0.879 ($p > 0.05$). The data indicate that accelerated reading does not inherently correlate with improved comprehension for this sample. The study underscores the need for educators to focus on teaching reading skills that support adequate comprehension without losing speed, hence encouraging balanced literacy development.

Keywords: *Correlation, Reading Speed, Reading Comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of four skills that are needed to learn the English language. Liu (2010) asserts that numerous educators, textbook authors, and language assessment developers consider reading to comprise various abilities and components. The learner acquired new knowledge and enhanced their proficiency in their subjects through reading. Meanwhile, Liao (2011) states that reading encompasses not just the ability to pronounce words correctly but also the comprehension of the book's overall meaning. Reading is the capacity to identify and analyze words in sentences to comprehend the information contained in the research.

Reading is also the most significant skill that Indonesian students should have, especially in academic contexts, due to the function of English in Indonesia as a foreign language. Sometimes, when students complete reading activities, they do not comprehend the texts they read. Therefore, students must read via reading comprehension. According to Rasinski (2004), reading success depends on the readers processing the text and interpreting it in a deeper meaning.

However, if it is only read without comprehending the passage, it wastes time and is useless.

Therefore, a good reader should have a reading technique so that the reading process becomes more effective. One of the techniques in reading that can help the reader is the reading speed technique. Through the reading speed technique, the reading process will finish faster, and then the information being sought will be found quickly.

According to Richard and Richard Schmidt (2010), everyone reads at a diversity of speeds, sometimes quick and sometimes sluggish. Reading speed, or a rate of reading, is the pace at which a person reads. The speed represents how many words may be read in a minute.

According to Noer (2012), there are five rates of reading speed: poor, average, good, excellent, and unbelievable.

Reading speed has become one of people's needs because it will benefit them and make their reading time more effective, especially for students. Reading speed helps students follow the learning process well. They can get information from many sources. However, reading speed is not only about reading faster but also about understanding the text's meaning. Therefore, good reading speed skills should be balanced with reading comprehension skills.

Comprehension is the central part of the reading process. According to Miller, as mentioned in Humaira (2017), comprehension is founded upon word recognition and association. It cannot successfully take place unless the reader first is efficient in these two components of reading. Reading cannot be separated from comprehension because the reading activity's objective or effect is to comprehend what has been read. Reading comprehension is an interaction between the reader and the text, as stated in Mukhlisyah and Fajarin (2024). So that way, when people talk about reading, it might be instantly associated with comprehension or understanding. For instance, a reader who understands what he has read can answer questions about it. It suggests that understanding something is the primary purpose of reading.

According to Ryken, Wade-Woolley., and Deacon (2024), reading comprehension is making meaning from text. The reader will analyze and understand what is described in the text. However, the ability to comprehend text depends on the reader itself; if they have a low capacity to read, it can affect their reading comprehension. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading to search for simple information is typical reading ability, and scanning and skimming the text is a method that may be used to find a specific piece of information or a specific phrase.

Reading is a fundamental skill required for academic and professional success, needing speed and comprehension. While strategies like skimming and scanning enable readers to find specific material or important ideas swiftly, many individuals still struggle with slow reading due to limitations in understanding. This issue sometimes needs word-by-word reading and frequent rereading, which can impair time management, especially in jobs requiring responses to comprehension questions. Previous research has studied the benefits of boosting reading speed and comprehension. However, few have addressed the difficulty of balancing these skills to accomplish the twin aims of efficiency and understanding. Addressing this gap, this study analyzes techniques to boost reading speed and comprehension, concentrating on their combined impact on achieving practical reading goals. The findings aim to inform educational approaches that promote balanced literacy development, giving readers the capabilities needed for more successful learning and information processing.

METHOD

Correlational research was adopted in this study, which examined the connection between English language learners' reading comprehension and speed. In statistical science, the term "correlation" refers to a relationship between two or more variables, according to Sudjiono (2014). Researchers used the bivariate correlation method, the relationship between two variables. The research was conducted among 4th-semester English students in class A at Kadiri Islamic University. The research subjects are

class A English students in semester 4th of the 2023 academic year, totaling 26 students. The instruments used in this study are test instruments, including texts to measure student reading speed and reading questions in the Student Assessment Test by Speed Reading for ESL Learners 3000 BNC by Sonia Millet, which has 10 questions. Data processing is carried out in 2 stages: first, measuring the student's reading speed scores and second, measuring the reading comprehension.

The researcher chose fourth-semester students because they had previously learned material about reading in the first and second semesters. As Sugiyono (2013) states, the sampling technique used in this study is Non-Probability Sampling. It is a sampling technique that does not provide equal opportunities for each element or member of the population to be selected as a sample. The selected category is saturated sampling. In addition, according to Sugiyono (2013), a saturated sample is used when the population is relatively small, less than 30 people, or generalized with relatively small errors. Based on this theoretical basis, it was decided to use all students in the 4th semester of class A English Students at Universitas Islam Kadiri as samples. The total number was 26 students. The acquired data was examined using classical linearity, normality, and hypothesis tests, all assessed using SPSS version 25.

RESULT

The study was conducted in two series: first, students were given a text and then asked to read it. Measurement of the student's reading speed was carried out using a stopwatch. In the measurement
of reading speed, students simultaneously read the text that has been given. Then, if the student finished reading the text, he wrote down the time completed using the stopwatch. As
a result, each student would be aware of their reading pace. The ranking was based on reading speed, or the words read per minute (WPM) to seconds read. The reading speed test score shows that the students' reading speed varied.

Table 1. A score of Reading Speed Test

WPM	Frequency	Category
97	1	POOR
102	1	POOR
113	1	POOR
114	2	POOR
117	1	POOR
120	1	POOR
121	1	POOR
122	1	POOR
123	1	POOR
125	1	POOR
137	2	POOR
140	1	POOR
141	1	POOR
145	1	POOR
146	1	POOR
154	1	AVERAGE
158	1	AVERAGE
168	1	AVERAGE
171	1	AVERAGE
173	1	AVERAGE

179	1	AVERAGE
207	1	AVERAGE
235	2	AVERAGE

The table shows that the lowest speed is 97 WPM, and the highest is 235 WPM. This means that 17 students are categorized as poor readers, and the other 9 are in the average category.

After reading the text, they were asked to answer the questions according to the readings they had read. Measurement of students' reading comprehension was carried out using questions. In measuring reading comprehension, students simultaneously worked on the questions that had been given. The ranking of reading comprehension was determined by dividing the total number of successfully answered scores by the total number of questions; the results of the reading comprehension assessment can be seen in a following table:

Table 2. Result of Reading Comprehension Assessment

SCORE	**Frequency**	**Category**
10	1	POOR
40	1	POOR
50	5	Fairly sufficient
60	6	Sufficient
70	8	Good
80	3	Good
90	1	Good
100	1	Good

The result shows that results for reading comprehension vary; for those with poor comprehension, it is 2, sufficient is 5, sufficient is 6, and for those with good comprehension, it is 13. The results of reading comprehension and speed tests were also subjected to normality and linearity tests to determine whether they were regularly distributed. The criteria for decision-making are as follows: the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted when the significance value (p-value) exceeds the threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$. Conversely, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted when the significance value (p-value) is smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 2.3 Normality Test of Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

			Unstandardized Residual
N			26
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean		.0000000
	Std. Deviation		17.41382914
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.142
	Positive		.134
	Negative		-.142
Test Statistic			.142
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]			.187
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[d]	Sig.		.188
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.178
		Upper Bound	.198

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Based on the outcome of the normality test, it can be stated that Asym. Sig (2-tailed) is 0.188, and a = > 0.05. So, Ha is accepted. The conclusion is that the data are regularly distributed. Meanwhile, test linearity is used to analyze whether the relationship between independent and dependent variables is linear.

The result of the computation is being done by SPSS as follows:

Table 2.4 Linearity Test of Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading Comprehension * Reading Speed	Between Groups	(Combined)	6938.462	22	315.385	1.456	.430
		Linearity	7.425	1	7.425	.034	.865
		Deviation from Linearity	6931.036	21	330.049	1.523	.412
	Within Groups		650.000	3	216.667		
	Total		7588.462	25			

It might be claimed that if data is linear, it is significantly lower than 0.05. The analysis above shows that the value of significance in linearity is 0.412 > 0.05. It signifies that the data of two variables is not linear.

After measuring both tests' speed reading and reading comprehension, the data will be correlated using product moment correlation accessed using IMB SPSS. The extent of the relationship between reading comprehension and speed reading, as depicted in this table, will then be determined.

Correlations

		Reading Speed	Reading Comprehension
Reading Speed	Pearson Correlation	1	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.879
	N	26	26
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.031	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.879	
	N	26	26

The correlation test aims to assess the degree and direction of the relationship between variables, represented by the correlation coefficient (r). This study's correlation coefficient between reading speed and comprehension was 0.879 (two-tailed), with a significance level of 0.879 > 0.05. As per the threshold, a significance value larger than 0.05 leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis (Ho) and the rejection of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). Consequently, it was found that there is no substantial positive link between students' reading speed and their reading comprehension. Despite this, visible trends in the data show that faster readers do not necessarily score higher in comprehension tests, indicating that speed alone is insufficient to ensure understanding.

This conclusion underscores the need for educational interventions that balance reading fluency with deeper comprehension. For example, educators could integrate activities such as timed reading exercises followed by thorough comprehension questions or scaffolded instruction that gradually improves reading speed while retaining attention on understanding. Additionally, teaching metacognitive strategies like summarizing and forecasting could help kids enhance both skills simultaneously.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results related to the correlation between Reading Speed (X) and Reading Comprehension (Y). As presented in the correlation table, the findings show a correlation coefficient of -0.31 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.879 (two-tailed). Since 0.879 > 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is rejected. This indicates no significant correlation between students' reading speed and comprehension.

These findings are consistent with previous research by Saputra (2019), which reported no significant correlation between these variables. Saputra's study found a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.015 with a p-value above 0.05 based on a sample size of 41 students (r-table = 0.3008). Both studies suggest that reading speed and comprehension may function independently rather than in a directly proportional relationship.

By addressing these gaps and integrating tailored instructional methods, educators can help students achieve a balanced development of reading skills, ultimately enhancing their academic and real-life literacy.

Therefore, this research is in line with the result from previous research by Saputra (2019), which stated that there was no significant correlation between students' reading speed and reading comprehension with r = 0,015 in two-tailed testing at 0,05 of the significant level of 41 samples (r-table) = 0,3008. It means that Ha accepted and Ho rejected, and it could be said that the correlation was not significant.

This is also supported by Mustarihah (2018), which stated that the hypothesis ro was lower than rt (0.16 < 1.701 and 0.16 < 2.467). The result of the hypothesis of this research was that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was rejected, and the null hypothesis (Ho) was accepted.

The result of this research further strengthens that reading speed is not a guarantee of understanding a text; as expressed by Kurniawan and Wulandari (2018), reading is defined as a complex interaction between text and reader, which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, attitude, experience, and language community which is socially and culturally situated. Then, it can be concluded that instead of reading speed, reading comprehension depends more on the reader's ability to understand it, which is influenced by his background knowledge.

The results emphasize the need for balanced instructional strategies addressing reading speed and comprehension. Educators can incorporate methods such as (1) Guided Practice by combining timed reading exercises with post-reading comprehension tasks to encourage both fluency and understanding; (2) Metacognitive Strategies by teaching students to use summarizing, predicting, and questioning techniques to enhance comprehension while reading at an optimal pace; (3) differentiated Instruction; by tailoring activities to individual needs by identifying students who struggle with speed or comprehension and providing targeted support; and (4) Integrated Skill Development: Use interactive reading activities, such as group discussions or critical analysis tasks, to help students connect ideas in the text while maintaining focus on fluency.

Several limitations in the study's design may have influenced the results. First, multiple-choice comprehension tests might not fully capture the depth of students' understanding. Future research could incorporate a broader range of assessments, such as open-ended questions or verbal explanations, to provide a more comprehensive measure of comprehension. Second, the study was conducted with a limited sample size from a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample to include participants from diverse educational backgrounds could yield more robust results. Lastly, this study did not control factors such as text difficulty, reader

motivation, and prior knowledge, which could have impacted the outcomes. Future investigations should consider these variables to understand better the complex relationship between reading speed and comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it is proven that students' reading speed does not correlate with their reading comprehension. The null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is rejected. This research aimed to explore the correlation between students' reading speed and comprehension, but as demonstrated, there is no relationship between the variables. These findings indicate that students' ability to understand texts and answer basic comprehension questions is not influenced by their reading speed. Instead, factors such as students' background knowledge and the text's difficulty level are more likely to affect both reading and comprehension outcomes.

Focus on fostering reading comprehension through scaffolded practices that address individual challenges. Integrating reading strategies with background knowledge activation can support students struggling with complex texts.

Meanwhile, future researchers are suggested to Investigate other variables, such as text complexity, reader motivation, or cognitive processing, that might mediate the relationship between reading speed and comprehension. Employing diverse comprehension measures and more prominent, more varied samples would provide a more comprehensive understanding of these factors.

By implementing these recommendations, educators and researchers can contribute to more effective literacy practices and insights that benefit diverse learners.

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