

AN INTEGRATION: NARROW READING TO WEST'S GENERAL SERVICE LIST FOR VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Attempting to consider an SLA issues on vocabulary acquisition in middle school level, this article aimed to investigate the difference in score on vocabulary test of experimental and control group; and to find the effect size of the narrow reading integrated to West's GSL intervention on students' English language acquisition. Forty-five middle school students in two classes were assigned in two groups, with 22 students in the experimental group and 23 students in the control group. In addition to a traditional curriculum for both groups, a five-meeting narrow reading on narrative text, fable, which was integrated to West's GSL was conducted for the experimental group by encouraging students to read using L1 gloss which was derived from GSL, consulting different meaning in some multi-definition content words and discussing on vocabulary exercise. In contrast, the control group did not engage in any narrow reading program but a general English course. A pretest and posttest of both groups were employed to collect data. The findings of the study showed that the intervention has a large effect size on student's SLA. The experimental group exhibited significantly better reading comprehension, acquired new vocabulary and word knowledge than the control group. Therefore, applying narrow reading integrated to West's GSL into EFL class helps improve students' word knowledge in terms of recognizing word meaning, identifying part of speech and producing a sentence. **Keywords:** *narrow reading, narrative text, GSL vocabulary, SLA*

BACKGROUND

Vocabulary acquisition is a key component to successfully developing communication and literacy skills. Acquiring a word means more than just understanding its meaning. Thornbury (2007) stated that knowing a word means knowing the form, meaning, grammatical characteristic (e.g. part of speech), common collocation and derivation of the word itself. Yet, the current case is student at middle school level in Indonesia have a difficulty on understanding vocabulary knowledge in English (Widyawati, 2011). Of course, this problem often occurred in second language acquisition area. Attempting to solve those issues, Thornbury (2007) asserted that student needs to acquire a critical mass of words for use in both understanding and producing language, remember words over time, and develop strategies for coping with the gaps in word knowledge. Therefore, EFL students are asked not only could understand the words (receptive knowledge) but also could produce the language actively (productive knowledge).

In order to acquire mass of words for use in both understanding and producing language, Clouston (2013) suggested that word lists are frequently good used in many English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Thus, the way determining the list of vocabulary to teach could be done by considering the existing principled lists of English words, research related to their use, and students' interests, needs, and goals. Moreover, the advent of communicative approach sets the concern of

teaching vocabulary more focus on *content words*; those that carry high information word which consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Regarding those considerations, General Service List seems all the way fit to EFL learner in middle school level. Therefore, Clouston (2013) suggested that ideally ESL/EFL students on middle school level should be familiar with and fluent in using first 1000 words GSL vocabulary. The GSL, issued by Michael West (1953), is a list of vocabulary families reflecting the 2,000 most frequent words in English and representing an average of around 82 percent coverage of various text types (Nation, 2008). In latest version, GSL is divided into the first 1000 words and the second 1000 words. It is used as the basis for many ESL/EFL materials.

One of the materials covered by GSL is narrative reading text. Narrative reading text is one of considerable material for EFL learner in middle school level. It is also used as target material in middle school syllabus in Indonesia. Furthermore, Cho, Ahn, and Krashen (2005) stated that narrative text is better used when it is authentic. What meant by authentic is those materials which are designed for native speakers; they are real texts; designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language (Harmer, 1991) and it has not been changed in any way for ESL students (Tamo, 2009). In conclusion, authentic reading text is suitable for EFL learner to get real exposure from a real world where the target language is used, in this case is English. However, it is taken for granted that authentic material has high level of difficulty to be used for middle school level student.

Therefore, the notion of narrow reading has come up to abridge this high difficulty of authentic material vocabulary to EFL learner. Narrow reading means reading in only one genre, one subject matter or the work of one author (Cho et al. (2005). Schmitt and Carter (2000) found that reading in single genre is valuable in promoting literacy development because it could encourage student to read more. Thus, reading in one subject matter could expose learner to repeated vocabulary that may occur several times and claimed as one of factors to incidental vocabulary acquisition. Last, reading the work of single author could limit learner to the same vocabulary pool and the same writing style.

By showing the benefits above, this current research promoted narrow reading in single genre as basic frame to collect authentic narrative stories because it was proven that single genre story could encourage learners to read more and let learners to gain more new vocabulary afterwards. The researcher also felt that previous familiarities with the character and the repeated context would insure that the authentic narrative stories were comprehensible although the competence of the students on English is limited.

Some studies have been done in the area of narrow reading on authentic material. Wongrak, Kongpetch, and Boonmee (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the narrow reading technique on students' English reading comprehension and motivation. News stories of Thai coups written in 2002 and 2006 were selected as reading material. The results reveal significant improvement in students' reading comprehension and motivation. It was also found that moderate- and low-proficiency students were highly motivated by this technique. Another study was done by Gardner (2008) by investigating whether the collection of authentic reading text with the same theme or written by one author, afford readers with more repeated exposures to new words than unrelated materials. Findings indicated that thematic relationships impacted specialized vocabulary recycling within expository collections (primarily content words), whereas authorship impacted recycling within narrative collections (primarily names of characters, places, etc.).

With those backgrounds in mind, as an attempt to consider the SLA issues on vocabulary acquisition in middle school level student and to prevent an overwhelming material to student in early

EFL level, a study on narrow reading in authentic narrative text which is integrated to West's General Service List has been done.

Based on the background and research problem, the research questions are formulated into:

1. Is there any significant difference in vocabulary test scores of students who have been given a treatment on narrow reading integrated to West's GSL and those of students who have not been given a treatment?
2. To what extent does this treatment influence the improvement of students' word knowledge in terms of part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production?

RESEARCH METHOD

A quasi-experimental study with a *pretest-posttest non-randomized control-group design* (Phakiti, 2014) was employed to this current research since it was not easy to reshuffle students randomly in real-life language classrooms. Therefore, the subject of this study was two intact classes of eighth grader students in SMP IT Subulul Huda Madiun in which 8A class as a control group and 8B as an experimental group.

Since quantitative research was hypothetic-deductive in its approach, the data were collected using pretest and posttest model which were obtained from pretest and posttest score of vocabulary test of those both groups, an experimental and control groups.

The sequence of procedures has been done to conduct this quasi-experimental research. The procedures of the research were presented as follows; *Firstly*, preparing reading material and conducting pilot test to meet the validity of the test instrument; *Secondly*, administering pretest to both experimental and control group; *Thirdly*, giving narrow reading treatment to the experimental group and conducting general course to the control group; *Next*, administering posttest to the experimental and control group.

After gaining the data needed, to answer research question number one, the data were analyzed in SPSS 16 by using different inferential statistics type including *independent-sample T test* and *paired-sample T test*.

Next, to answer the research question number two, the analysis of T test was also occupied using *paired-sample T test* on experimental group. Furthermore, Pallant (2007) proposed *Eta squared* to find the effect size of the treatment toward student's vocabulary development. Thus, the formula of Eta squared (Eta^2) were presented as follow.

$$Eta\ squared = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N-1)}$$

Then, in interpreting *Eta squared*, Cohen (1988) guideline was taken into account. The Cohen's guideline was presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1 Cohen's guideline

Size	Eta squared
Small	0.01
Medium	0.06
Large	0.13

In Table 1, the obtained *Eta Squared* analysis range into three sizes: small, medium, and large effects. This guideline was being the main threshold in determining the effect size of the narrow reading integrated to GSL treatment toward student's vocabulary development.

Findings

The research findings are elaborated in two main sections based on the research question.

1. The difference in scores between experimental and control class after being exposed to narrow reading integrated to West's GSL

Specifically, this study was done to identify the significant difference in scores between control class and experimental class after the implementation of narrow reading on narrative text which was integrated to West's GSL. Therefore, as it has been stated in data analysis technique in chapter three, the posttest scores of experimental and control groups were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 through *independent-sample T test*. Independent-sample *t*-test was statistical technique appropriately used to compare means between two independent groups, in this case was experimental and control groups. Then, this following table was the output of the analysis in detail.

Table 2 Independent sample test on posttest score

		Posttest_score		
		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	6.685		
	Sig.	.013		
t-test for Equality of Means	T	2.576	2.549	
	Df	43	34.511	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.015	
	Mean Difference	16.62648	16.62648	
	Std. Error Difference	6.45480	6.52197	
	95% Confidence Interval of Difference	Lower	3.60913	3.37947
		Upper	29.64383	29.87350

From the Table 2 above, it can be seen the significant value of t-test (Sig. 2-tailed) in posttest of control and experimental groups was 0.014. This value was lower than 0.05. Therefore, since the analysis was tested in 0.05 level and the significant value was lower than 0.05 (Sig.< 0.05) then the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. It meant that there was significant difference in vocabulary test (posttest) scores between control and experimental class after being exposed to narrow reading on authentic narrative text integrated to West's GSL. Regarding those conclusion, the first research question is answered that there is significant difference in scores (posttest) between two classes.

As the consequence of no treatment in control group, the analysis was also done in *paired sample test* to check the significant difference in scores of pretest and posttest in experimental group. Paired sample test was used because the compared data was taken within one group.

Table 3 T test on experimental group

		Pair 1	
		Pretest - Posttest	
Paired Differences	Mean	-27.54545	
	Std. Deviation	15.92461	
	Std. Error Mean	3.39514	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-34.60603
		Upper	-20.48488
T	-8.113		
Df	21		
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	

Based on Table 3, it showed that the significant value of t-test (Sig. 2-tailed) in pretest and posttest score of experimental group was 0.000. This value was lower than 0.05. Since the significant value was lower than 0.05 (Sig. < 0.05), the null hypothesis (Ho) therefore was also rejected. It meant that there were significant difference in vocabulary test scores, in pretest and posttest score within experimental group, after being exposed to narrow reading on authentic narrative text integrated to West's GSL. It is therefore this paired-sample analysis has been confirming the independent-sample analysis result.

After proceeding two analyses through *independent-sample* and *paired-sample test*, both analysis result confirms the conclusion that there was significant difference in vocabulary test scores of control and experimental class after being exposed to narrow reading on narrative text integrated to West's GSL.

2. The influence of narrow reading integrated to West's GSL treatment to students' improvement on word knowledge in terms of part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production

In order to answer the second research question, the data was taken from student's score on pretest and posttest in experimental class. The data was analyzed to find the mean of each section (part of speech, recognition word meaning and sentence production) and the effect size (*Eta squared*) using *paired-sample test* in SPSS 16.0 since the compared data was taken within one class (experiment class).

Table 4 Paired sample stats on experimental group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Part of Speech Pretest	8.0909	22	5.70638	1.21660
	Part of Speech Posttest	15.2727	22	8.89185	1.89575
Pair 2	Recognizing Meaning Pretest	10.4545	22	5.01167	1.06849
	Recognizing Meaning Posttest	19.2727	22	8.45257	1.80209
Pair 3	Sentence Production Pretest	8.3182	22	8.03200	1.71243
	Sentence Production Posttest	19.8636	22	10.78930	2.30029

By referring to the result of the mean score on the table above, there was significant increase in vocabulary score from pretest to posttest in experiment class after the implementation of narrow reading integrated to West's GSL. The following figure was the illustration of the increase of the scores.

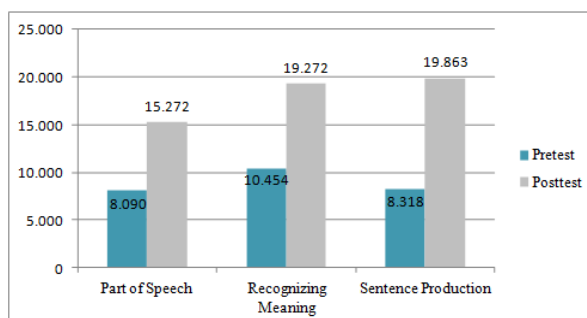


Figure 1 Mean scores of experimental class

Then, to answer the extent of this treatment influenced the improvement of students' word knowledge in terms of part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production, Pallant (2007) proposed *Eta squared* to find the effect size of the treatment toward student scores and Cohen (1988) guideline in Table 1 was taken into account in interpreting the result of *Eta squared* calculation. The following formula was one way to calculate the *effect size* statistic.

$$Eta\ squared = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N-1)}$$

Thus, the influence of narrow reading treatment toward the development of student's word knowledge in part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production were analyzed through *paired-sample t-test* using pretest and posttest scores in experimental class as the data.

Table 5 Paired sample test on experimental group

		Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	
		PoS Pretest	RM Pretest	SP Pretest	
		–	–	–	
		PoS Posttest	RM Posttest	SP Posttest	
Paired Differ ence	Mean	-7.1818	-8.8181	-11.5454	
	Std. Deviation	5.1142	6.0996	10.34052	
	Std. Error Mean	1.0903	1.3001	2.20461	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-9.4493	-11.522	-16.1301
	Upper	-4.9142	-6.113	-6.96072	
T		-6.587	-6.781	-5.237	
Df		21	21	21	
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	

Using *Eta squared* formula of *paired-sample t-test* (Pallant, 2007), the researcher computed the magnitude of the effect of narrow reading integrated to West's GSL to part of speech knowledge.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N-1)} \\
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{43.38}{43.38 + (22-1)} \\
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{43.38}{64.38} = 0.67
 \end{aligned}$$

In Cohen's guideline on Table 1, the value of 0.138 has a large effect size. The obtained *Eta squared* value of *paired-sample test* for pair one on Part of Speech knowledge is 0.67 derived from the *Eta squared* calculation, which is greater than 0.13; consequently, narrow reading integrated to West's GSL had a very large effect on vocabulary test scores in Part of Speech knowledge after the intervention.

Next, the calculation of effect size on narrow reading integrated to West's GSL treatment to the increase of recognizing word meaning knowledge score was done as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N-1)} \\
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{45.98}{45.98 + (22-1)} \\
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{45.98}{66.98} = 0.68
 \end{aligned}$$

Eta squared of Pair two on recognizing word meaning was 0.68. Regarding to Table 1, the obtained number was considered having a large effect, which is bigger than 0.13; consequently,

narrow reading integrated to West's GSL also had a very large effect on vocabulary test scores in recognizing word meaning knowledge after the intervention.

And the last, to indicate the magnitude of effect size, the *Eta squared* on sentence production knowledge was calculated as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \textit{Eta squared} &= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N-1)} \\
 \textit{Eta squared} &= \frac{27.42}{27.42 + (22-1)} \\
 \textit{Eta squared} &= \frac{27.42}{48.42} = 0.56
 \end{aligned}$$

According to Cohen's guideline in Table 1, the obtained *Eta squared* (0.56) on pair three was also considered large effect size. Thereby, narrow reading integrated to West's GSL had a large effect on sentence production test scores in experimental class. Therefore, it can be summed up that the treatment on narrow reading integrated to West GSL has a large effect on student's word knowledge development in terms of part of speech and meaning recognition and sentence production.

Discussion

1. The significant difference in scores of vocabulary test in experimental and control class as the result of narrow reading integrated to West's GSL intervention

The result of this current study revealed better performance of the experimental subjects over the control one in the vocabulary learning test by implementing narrow reading on single genre narrative text integrated to General Service List vocabulary. This result confirmed previous study of Cho et al. (2005) and Wongrak et al. (2011) in which student showed the positive effects of narrow reading method on vocabulary acquisition. Accordingly, it can be verified that their findings may be applicable to the result of research question number one in which narrow reading method proved fruitful in vocabulary learning toward Indonesian EFL learner in middle school level.

Furthermore, the result showed that student with treatment could do the vocabulary task right after narrow reading in single genre was applied (on daily vocabulary task) and they still remember the target words even when it was tested in the last day they end the sequence of treatment (on posttest). This result argued Schmitt and Carter (2000) finding in which narrow reading in single genre is only valuable in promoting literacy development. Thus, the study conducted by Gardner (2008) concluded the two main concepts of narrow reading which had a big impact on vocabulary gain, there were narrative work written by single author and expository text shared the same theme. But, narrow reading on the single genre was abandoned. Therefore, this current research has proved that narrow reading material in single genre not only benefit to promote literacy development in which student want to read more and more, but also played as an effective way to gain new vocabulary.

Furthermore, the result of this current study revealed that most student gained new vocabulary (e.g. *advice, decide, through*) which was derived from GSL vocabulary after the treatment. However, there was such a debate occurred regarding the use of word list in this study, Folse (2004) believed that using word lists to learn second language vocabulary is unproductive (p. 35). But, Shillaw (1995) asserted that it is important for students to read materials that include such words in a list, using them

in their writing, and hearing them in context. Then, attempting to mediate the debate, Clouston's (2013) asserted that word list was suitable used when it met the student need. Thus, added lately by Folse (2004) that using word lists itself to memorize known words is ineffective but integrating it into context is more helpful. Therefore, this current research had similar belief with Clouston (2013), Folse (2004) and Shillaw (1995) to use a word list as a target list which was integrated to the context, not merely using the list itself to memorize the new words.

As the consequence of the result of this current study about the use of word list, the inference can be drawn that West's General Service List is suitable word list for used in EFL class at middle school level. Confirming the claim of Clouston (2013) that student in middle school level need to be familiar with General Service List issued by West (1953). This inference came up because West's GSL was not an overwhelming word list for beginner level and still the best general-purpose list for addressing the most frequent words in English.

Finally, based on the discussion above, it can be proved that narrow reading method integrated to West's GSL vocabulary has been successfully influencing the increase of student score in vocabulary test in posttest of the experimental group.

2. The effects size of narrow reading integrated to West's GSL treatment to students' improvement on word knowledge in terms of part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production

It was taken for granted that the improvement on students' score has also led to the improvement of word knowledge in terms of part of speech, recognizing word meaning and sentence production after being exposed to narrow reading integrated to West's GSL. Thus, the second question of this current research focused on the improvement of students' word knowledge influenced by the treatment itself.

Based on the result of analysis through *Eta squared* (Eta^2), the finding of this research has driven to the conclusion that the narrow reading integrated to West's GSL had a large effect size in influencing students' word knowledge development in terms of identifying part of speech, recognizing word meaning and producing a sentence.

The discussion began with the treatment the student got in five meetings. The treatment covered reading using L1 gloss which was derived from GSL, as suggested by Clouston (2013), Folse (2004) and Shillaw (1995) to use a word list as a target list integrated to the context; consulting different meaning in some multi-definition content words (e.g. *bear* and *ear*), as suggested by Kavari (2014) to use L1 translation while teaching vocabulary in EFL class; and discussing on vocabulary exercise, as suggested by Laufer (2003) to occupy word-focus task in acquiring new vocabulary. Therefore, all the sequence of treatment made student notice on the unfamiliar word and being accustomed to repeated words which make them lessen the frequency of looking up into dictionary.

Improvement was obvious in recognizing word meaning knowledge. The result confirmed that student could memorize well most of the meaning of target words which was repeatedly occurred in context (e.g. *catch*, *decide*, *know*) and barely memorize the meaning of target words which had a small frequency of occurrence in context (e.g. *truth*, *unity*). Apparently, this findings confirmed Cameron (2001, p. 84) assertions in which learning words is a continual process which need to be met and recycled at interval, in different activities, with new knowledge and new connections developed each time the same words are met again. So, students need to meet and use the words repeatedly so that it is available for use in the longer term.

The next improvement was on identifying part of speech knowledge. By the result of noticing (Laufer, 2003) and consulting multi-definition meaning in content words which was explained using L1 translation (Kavari, 2014), students seem to have the ability to identify word class of the target vocabulary. The result of analysis above showed that the intervention had a large effect size to the vocabulary knowledge on identifying part of speech of the target words.

Furthermore, the increase of mean score in sentence production knowledge informed the situation in which students' knowledge on producing sentence was improved. This improvement occurred since student could grasp the meaning of the target word exposed in context, then, most of them were able to construct a complete sentence with high level of understanding that brought them to get high score points. As Bryan (2011) asserted that repeated exposure to words used in the context will cause the reader accumulate an ability to recognize and understand those words and be able to recognize appropriate ways to use them in sentences.

Finally, regarding above discussions, the treatment of narrow reading integrated to General Service List has been proved in having a large effect size to the increase of vocabulary score in experimental group.

Conclusion

Based on the research finding and discussion in previous chapter, two conclusions can be drawn in this section. *First*, the result of the study shows the positive effects of narrow reading method integrated to West's GSL on vocabulary acquisition. The findings reveal that experimental students have better reading comprehension, acquire new vocabulary and improve their word knowledge after the intervention.

Second, the result shows that reading stories on a particular genre integrated to English word list, General Service List, has a large effect size in developing students' word knowledge in terms of recognizing word meaning, identifying part of speech and producing a sentence which next leads to second language acquisition. In accordance with the students' improvement, the result also can encourage readers to reconsider word lists for vocabulary learning and teaching, use it as a target list which is integrated to the context, not merely using the list itself to memorize the new words.

Finally, based on the result, it seems that narrow reading method integrated to West's GSL is suitable to be applied in beginner and lower-intermediate level of proficiency because the narrow reading method focuses on the target words which do not make student feel overwhelmed. Thus, narrow reading integrated to GSL can motivate student to develop their literacy skill afterwards.

Suggestion

The study results inspire two important suggestions for the implementation of the narrow reading technique. *First*, this narrow reading technique may be very useful especially for low proficiency students. This study found that low proficiency students were particularly bolstered their improvement. *Second*, reading on the same genre in narrow reading can be done both in classroom and out of school because continual process of reading could lead student to gain more vocabulary.

Finally, this study suggests the school to continually encourage students to read in narrow reading approach (could be the same genre, theme or authorship) and integrate it to a word list to make student notice the meaning and language features of a new word in which student often ignored. Then, more research is needed to validate the findings of this study. Future research could include different level, text, genre, and controls, perhaps using more randomized materials. For instance,

conducting narrow reading shared the same authorship to some other relevant and latest word list for high-proficiency level of student.

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