

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN GUESSING WORDS' MEANING IN READING

BY THE EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Guessing words' meaning by context clues can be resulted various depends on the contextual factors affected the process; richness factor, local-global factor, partial factor, and clear-ambiguous factor. The question lies in this article is 'what is contextual factor mostly affected guessing words' meaning in reading by the EFL learners?' After taking data from 23 subjects by the instrument of observational test, the data analysis resulted as follow (1) context clues is positively contributed to the score of guessing words' meaning in reading by the percentage 62,17% of correct answer, (2) both of richness factor and local-global factor are consistent to the theory, the rich-local factor is the most factor affect the guessing words' meaning by the percentage of 69,56%, (3) after comparing the results of richness factor and local-global factor, it is resulted that richness factor is the factor which is mostly affect the guessing words' meaning in reading by the percentage of 64,28% followed by the local-global factor by the percentage of 62,42%.

Keywords: contextual factors, context clues, reading

A. INTRODUCTION

Unlike in the first language, reading process in second language is mostly stuck by the vocabulary capacity. Research for decades recorded that some methods are found to resolve this problem; such as consulting to the dictionary, applying translation process, use the parts of speech, use words analysis, and many other ways. However all of them observed not really effective, then finally inference the meaning from the context (context clues) viewed as one of effective strategy to overcome the vocabulary problems in reading.

Research indicated that contextual guessing is one of the most favoured strategies (Paribakht & Wesche, 1999; Harley & Hart, 2000). Similarly, in the study by Fraser (1999), it was found that inferring meaning from context was a more preferred strategy (44%) than consulting (29%), ignoring (24 %), and no attention (4%). Furthermore, in a study by Kanatlar (1995), it was observed that the prediction of word

meaning by means of context clues was the most popular strategy. In his research, the total use of this strategy was 260, while the total use of translation was 195, the total use of parts of speech and word analysis was 18 and 15 respectively. These research findings said that language learners try to generate a hypothesis about the meaning of an unknown word based on some information in the word and in the text. In conclusion, context clues are affected positively in the reading process.

After context clues included in the teaching material to overcome the vocabulary capacity's problems, the ability of guessing words' meaning remained various. However, guessing ability in reading is affected by two variables (1) reader-related variable and (2) text-related variable (Kaivanpanah and Alavi: 2008). Furthermore, context clues which is a part of text-related variables is influenced by the contextual factors; (1) richness factor (Mondria and Wit de Boer: 1991), (2) local-

global factor (Mokhtar and Rawian: 2008), (3) Partial Factor (Cetinavci, B.M.: 2014), and clear-ambiguous factor (Frantze: 2003 and Cetinavci: 2014). This study aims to describe the contextual factors affects to the guessing words' meaning in reading by the EFL learners and it is scoped to the richness and local-global factors.

B. RELATED THEORY

1. Context Clues

For several decades, there much has been done in the field of context clues classification/types (Ames, 1966; Dulin, 1970; Robinson, 1976; Huckin and Bloch, 1993; Spears, 2000, Kusumarasyati, 2010, etc). Huckin and Bloch (1993: 161) investigated various types of context clues facilitating reading comprehension process and determined the following basic ones: (1) Local linguistic constituent (syntactic and semantic collocations), (2) Global text representation (text schemas), and (3) World knowledge.

Secondly, Kusumarasyati (2001) distinguishes four types of context clues that can be implemented in the process of reading comprehension: (1) Semantic, (2) Syntactic, (3) Picture, and (4) Internal Clues. Kusumarasyati also explained that internal clues imply the knowledge of morphemes (the smallest unit of meaning) such as prefixes, suffixes, combining forms, and words roots as well as their meanings. Picture clues are graphic illustrations of a textual content which can be used in a word cognition process. Syntactic clues presuppose the reader's knowledge of sentence structure and functional distinctions of words within a sentence. This type of clues is Linguistic in nature and usually explored in collaboration with semantic clues, a detailed investigation of which will be presented further.

Kusumarasyati in Gorelova (2015) here presented a classification of context clues which is almost in the same line with Huckin and Bloch (1993:161). Both of Huckin & Bloch and Kusumarasyati are agree to classified some clues in syntactic and semantic context clues, while Huckin define text structure as one of types of context clues however Kusumarasyati define it as a picture or any visual aids. Last,

another difference is Huckin and Bloch include common insight whether it is linguistics proficiency or culture as one of context clues type named World knowledge. However, Kusumarasyati include morpheme understanding as one of her context clues types named Internal Clues.

From all types of context clues discussed above, there is one type of context clues which is got attention deeper that is Semantic Clues. Burns and Roe (1984: 103) explained semantic clues are derivatives of the words, phrases and sentences which an unknown word is enclosed into. Then, Harris and Sipay (1980) underlined that semantic clues effectiveness is the subject to the following conditions: the reader's background knowledge and the knowledge of words surrounding the new one. The following are two classification of semantic clues presented by Robinson (1976: 62) and Ames's (1966:66) and Dulin's (1970: 440-445).

Robinson (1976: 62) distinguished 8 types of semantic clues: (1) Statement of meaning, (2) Definition by example, (3) Definition by synonym, (4) Definition by experience, (5) Definition by description, (6) Definition by comparison, (7) Definition by contrast, and (8) Reflection of mood, tone, and setting.

However, almost in the same line with Robinson (1976: 62), Ames (1966: 66) and Dulin (1970:440-445) defined semantic clues classification into 13 types: (1) Language experience or familiar expression, (2) Indirect description, (3) Direct description, (4) words in series, (5) Comparison/contrast, (6) Synonym, (7) Tone, setting, mood, (8) Reference, (9) Restatement, (10) Preposition, (11) Cause/effect Pattern, (12) Modification, and (13) Example. The following is table presented contented with explanation of each semantic clues which is taken from Gorelova (2015).

Though their findings in context clues and its classifications are not exactly the same but in fact those are remained to deliver the same ideas, the following is a figure to show the related findings from several researches.

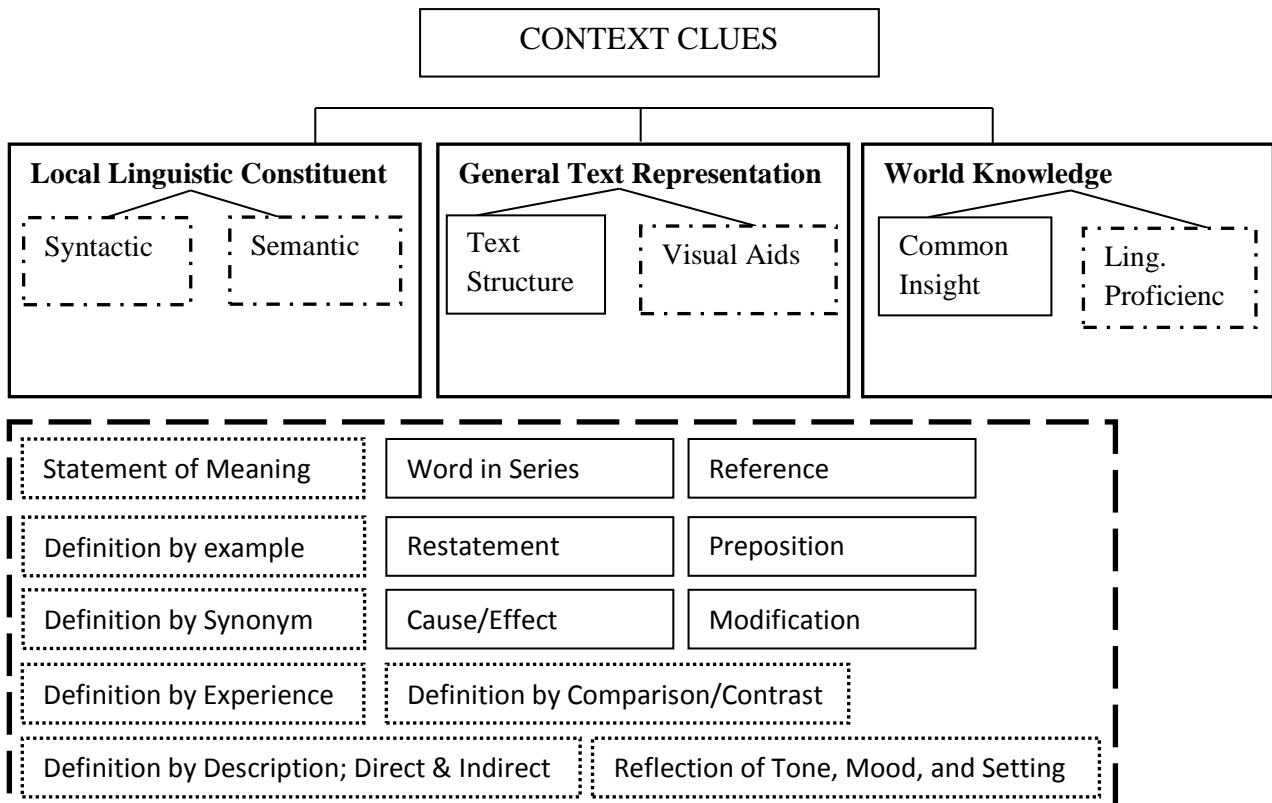


Figure 2 Context Clues Classification Adapted from Huckin and Bloch, Kusumarasyati, Robinson, and Ames & Dulin

2. Contextual Factors

Kaivanpanah and Alavi (2008) in Cetinavci, B.M. (2014) explain that there are two main factors affecting guessing ability: (1) Reader-Related Variables and (2) Text-related variables. Reader-related variables are vocabulary size, knowledge of grammar, language proficiency, attentions to details, cognitive and mental effort, and reader characteristics. As for text-related variable, they are word characteristics, text characteristics, the presence of contextual clues and topic familiarity.

Focus to the text – related variables, the existence of context clues is the source of contextual factors targeted in this study. Related to the contextual factors there were several researches had been done concerning to the contextual factors possibly exist in guessing process in reading. They are as follows:

1. Contextual richness/ Context pregnancy Factor

The term of contextual richness was firstly announced by Mondria and Wit-

de-Boer (1991) and with the same meaning Van Parreren (1967 cited in ibid) who mention the term of context pregnancy. Both of rich context or a pregnant context as a context which provides sufficient clues enable readers to infer the meaning of unknown words easily and correctly. The sufficient clues existence meant here is the number of context clues possibly around the target word.

2. Local – Global Factor

Mokhtar & Rawian (2012) defined local contextual clues as the other types of clues which are present in the sentence that includes the target word, in other words, they are the clues that are very close to the unfamiliar word such as an unfamiliar adjective just in front of a familiar noun. Some clues do not locate near the unfamiliar words. In that case, the meanings of unfamiliar words are interpreted by analyzing the clues in the whole text and these clues are called global contextual clues.

3. Partial contextual Factor
Cetinavci, B.M. (2014) said partial clues enable language learners arrive at a general meaning. Clarke and Nation (1980) In Cetinavci (2014) make an example of partial clue as follows: 'Typhoon Vera killed or injured 28 person and **crippled** the seaport city of Kellung'
The target word is **crippled**. The reader can understand crippled as 'damaged' or 'destroyed' due to the fact that a *typhoon* (clue) can have mostly negative effects on a place. It is understood from this example that in some cases arriving at the general meaning or approximate meaning of the words is sufficient for comprehending context in general.
4. Clear – Ambiguous Factor
Cetinavci (2014) said another factor affecting accurate lexical inferencing is

the fact that some contexts may not be clear enough to direct language learners to the meaning of the unknown words. Furthermore, Frantze (2003) revealed that context might not always lead to accurate inference of the unknown words. In the study investigating how Spanish students derived word meaning from context, some words could easily be guessed from the context because in these cases the contexts were beneficial. However, at times, the contexts were unhelpful or responsible for the subjects' failure because they were vague, ambiguous or misleading contexts.

There are 4 (four) contextual factors explained above and to clearer the explanation, the following figure aims to show the position of contextual factors in this study. The figure is as follows:

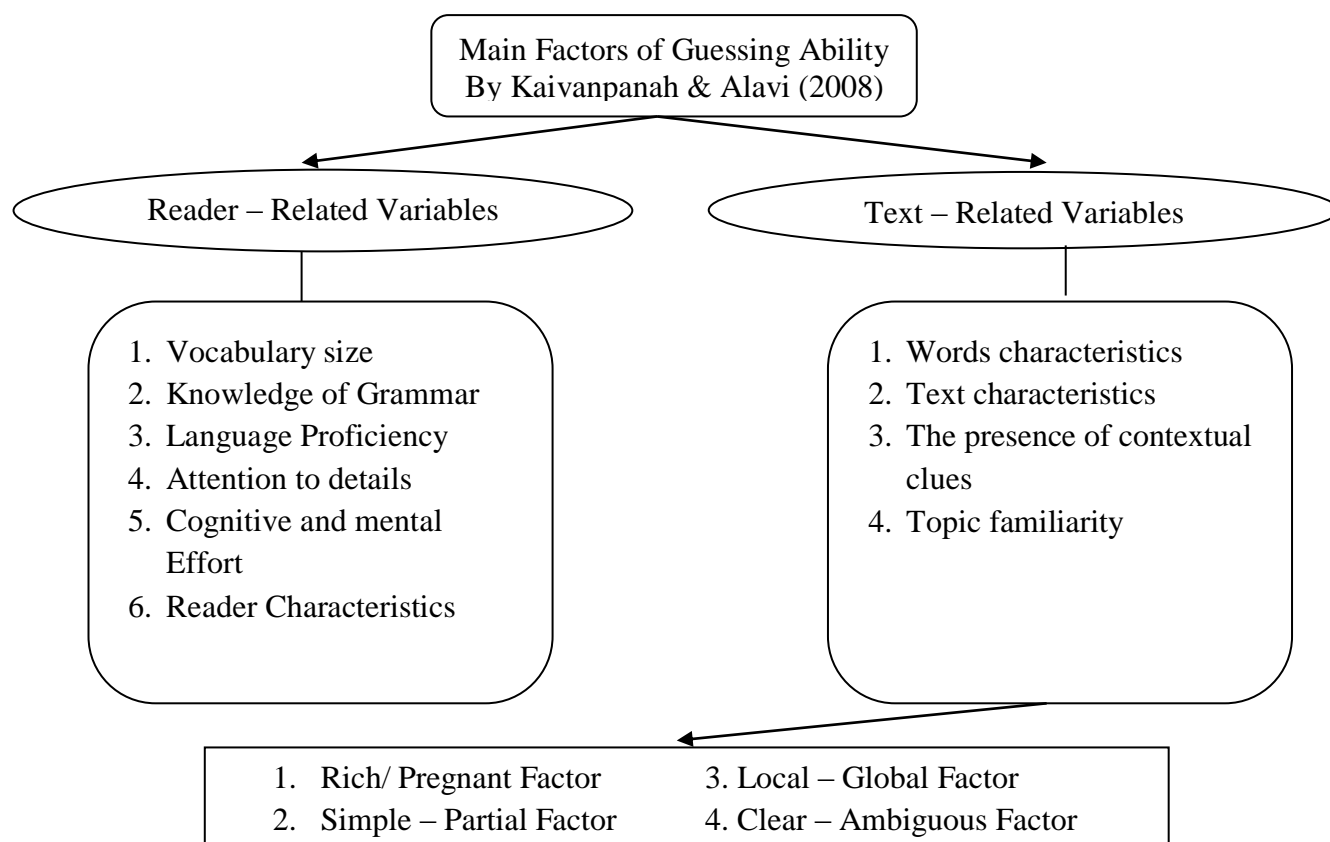


Figure 2 Contextual Factors in guessing process

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive qualitative study. This study is collaborated with 23

students of reading class of an English Department as the subjects. The 23 subjects are grouped into high, moderate, and low level of linguistic proficiency. The

instrument of this study is observational test which is consist of two passages of reading activity, each passage completed with 10 questions of guessing words meaning in multiple choice type of question, so totally there are 2 passages with 20

questions to answered by the 23 subjects. As it is scoped that this study is only described two contextual factor; (1) richness factor and (2) local – global factor, so there are four possibly group of questions/data, as the following:

		Local – global Contextual Factors	
		Local	Global
Richness contextual factors	Single	Single – Local	Single – Global
	Rich	Rich – Local	Rich – Global

Before the instrument applied to the subjects, the instrument has been analyzed into four groups of contextual factors; (1) single-local factor 3 questions, (2) rich-local factor 3 questions, (3) single-global factor 3 questions, and (4) rich-global factor 11 questions. The data analysis will be translated into numbers and percentages. The translation system is as follows:

1. The multiple choices are scored by Correct and Incorrect. The correct answer is scored by 1 and the incorrect answer scored by 0
2. The correct and incorrect answers will be grouped into the group of factors
3. The score of each group of factors will be presented and compared to see the contextual factors mostly affect guessing words' meaning in reading.

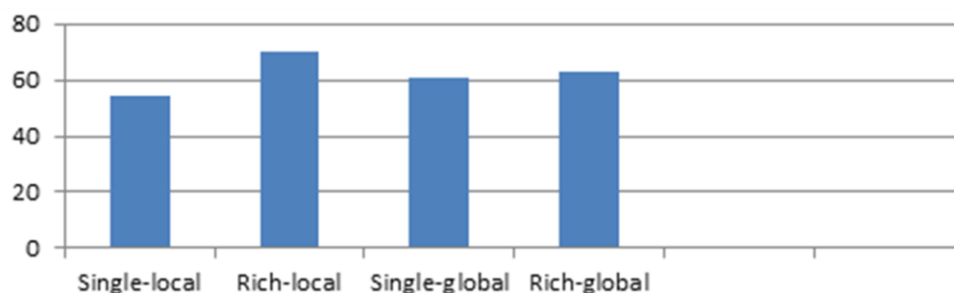
The data analysis will be done based on the issue (the four group of factors) and applying the Miles and Huberman procedure of data analysis; data reduction, data display, drawing conclusion, identifying interrelation among factors and variables, and Building conceptual coherence and consistency.

D. DATA ANALYSIS

1. After the 23 subjects answering the 20 question, the total score for the correct answer is 286 and the incorrect answers is 174.
2. The score is group into the four groups of contextual factors and the results is as follows:

- a. **Single – local clues** (3 question (question number: 7,9,15): 69 responses/points (37 Correct and 32 Incorrect) = **53,62%** of correct answers
- b. **Rich – local clues** (3 questions (question number: 8,19,20): 69 responses/points (48 Correct and 21 Incorrect) = **69,56%** of correct answers
- c. **Single – global clues** (3 questions (question number: 1,2,5): 69 responses/points (42 Correct and 27 Incorrect) = **60,86%** of correct answers
- d. **Rich – global clues** (11 questions (question number: 3,4,6,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18): 253 responses/points (159 Correct and 94 Incorrect) = **62,84%** of correct answers

Or in a chart for a more communicative description:



The data and chart above shows that the rich-local clues factor is the highest percentage correctly answered by the subjects. It is theoretically suitable previous research findings which said that rich and local clues factor is affect more the guessing words' meaning in reading. Next, to find the contextual factors (richness or local-global

factor) which is affect mostly to the guessing words' meaning in reading, the following are the data analysis in comparing the richness factor and local-global factor, and then finally the calculation of richness factor compared to the calculation of local - global factor, or as follows:

1. The single - local and single - global factor to rich - local and rich - global factor (by richness factor)

No	Factors	Number Of correct answers	Percentage	Sum	
				Number	Percentage
1	Single - local	37/69	53,62	79/138	57,24
2	Single - global	42/69	60,86		
3	Rich - local	48/69	69,56	207/322	64,28
4	Rich - global	159/253	62,84		

The table above is the analysis of comparing data based on the richness factor. In the table, the single - local is summed to the single - global and then the total number compared to the rich - local summed to the

rich - global. This calculation applied to see the real power of richness clues factor, and it is found that the real richness factor percentage is 64,28%.

2. The single - local and rich - local factor to single - global and rich - global factor (by local - global factor)

No	Factors	Number Of correct answers	Percentage	Sum	
				Number	Percentage
1	Single - local	37/69	53,62	85/138	61,59
2	Rich - local	48/69	69,56		
3	Single - global	42/69	60,86	201/322	62,42
4	Rich - global	159/253	62,84		

The table above is the analysis of comparing data based on the local - global factor. In the table, the single - local is summed to the rich - local and then the total number compared to the single - global summed to the rich - global. This calculation applied to see the real power of local - global clues factor, and it is found that the real local - global factor percentage is 62,42%.

From the two table of data analysis above, it has been clear concluded that richness factor is more powerful or mostly affect the guessing words' meaning in reading. It is concluded in that way since richness factor percentage is higher that is 64,28% than the local - global factor percentage is 62,42%. In conclusion, richness clues factor is the mostly affect guessing words' meaning in reading by the EFL learners.

3. At last, the comparison between richness factor to local - global factor

E. CONCLUSION

There are four contextual factors by Kaivanpanah in Cetinavci (2014) and only two of them (1) richness factor and (2) local-global factor is described in this study. The result of this study says that richness factor affect guessing words' meaning than local-global factor.

F. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study is to describe the contextual factors mostly affect guessing words' meaning in reading by the EFL learners, as this study focus to two contextual factors; (1) richness clues factors and (2) local - global clues factors. Before completing the description, the data analysis comes to several points.

Firstly, it is the richness contextual factors in guessing words' meaning in reading. The data analysis compares the single clues to the rich clues, and it is found that though the single and rich clues are intervened by the local and global clues, the single and rich clues shows their affection to the guessing words' meaning in reading. It is shown by the percentage of 57, 24% for single clues to 64, 28% for rich clues. The percentage comparison is shown the far difference of rich clues in affecting the guessing words' meaning than the single clues.

Secondly, it is the local - global clues factors in guessing words' meaning in reading. The data analysis compare the local clues factor to the global clue factors, and it is surprisingly found that global clue factors affect more the guessing words' meaning than the local clues factor. Both of the result of the richness clues and the local - global clues factors deliver different result due to the previous theory.

Richness clues factor had been analyzed previously by Mondria and Wit de Boer in 1991 and it is said that sentence with multiple or rich clues is more helpful for the readers in guessing words' meaning when it is needed, and based on the data analysis in this study the result is consistent to the Mondria and Wit de Boer research. Contrastively, the local - global clues factor deliver different result due to the previous research by Mokhtar and Rawian in 2012

which is said that local clues are more helpful than global clues in guessing words' meaning, since the meaning of local clues are clues that near to the target words and global clues are clues that are far to the target words. When the clues are near to the target word, reader will proceed the cognitive process of reading easier than when the clues are far from the target word

Comparing the theory of Mokhtar and Rawian (2012) and the result of this research, that shows a phenomenon of difference, there is a possibility as the reason of why, it is the intervene of the richness factors in the percentage of local-global factors. As it has been explained before, that the questions' composition are not balance, even finally the percentage is calculated due to the number of question (so it is completely fair) but one group of question, that is the rich-global factor is consist of 11 question which is timed to the number of subjects (23 subjects) it becomes 253 point and from 253 point the successful correct answer is 159 points and it is strong enough to support the global clues to be dominant, and yes, in this study, it is found that global clues are more affect than local clues.

However, the richness and local - global factor theory is really applied in this study for the following facts:

- a. **Single - local clues** (3 question (question number: 7,9,15): 69 responses/points (37 Correct and 32 Incorrect) = **53,62%** of correct answers
- b. **Rich - local clues** (3 questions (question number: 8,19,20): 69 responses/points (48 Correct and 21 Incorrect) = **69,56%** of correct answers
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- d. **Rich - global clues** (11 questions (question number: 3,4,6,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18): 253 responses/points (159 Correct and 94 Incorrect) = **62,84%** of correct answers

Coming back to the main objective of this study “what is contextual factor mostly affect in guessing words’ meaning in reading by the EFL learners?” The data analysis resulted richness clues factor is the most affect than local – global clues factor in guessing words’ meaning in reading. Both of richness factor and local – global factor have their own capacity in affecting guessing words’ meaning in reading. The theory says rich clue is more affect than single clue, and local clue is also more affect than global clue. And due to the first point of discussion above, it has been answered why do richness factor is more affect the guessing words’ meaning is because **since the beginning the rich-local clues factors has been proved hold the highest percentage from all.**

One other important point should be remained here is the existence of reader-related variable in guessing ability. Remembered the theory of guessing ability by Kaivanpanah and Alavi (2008) in Cetinavci, B.M. (2014) which said that guessing ability is affected by two important factors (1) reader – related variables and (2) text – related variables. So, guessing ability is an interaction of reader-related variable and text-related variables. One aspect of reader-related variables that has been measured by the researcher is the readers’ level of linguistic proficiency. The variety of readers’ level of linguistic proficiency is as follows:

No	High (H)	Moderate (M)	Low (L)
1	S1	S2	S3
2	S4	S6	S10
3	S5	S9	S11
4	S7	S12	S13
5	S8	S16	S14
6	S18	S17	S15
7	S20	S19	
8	S22	S21	
9		S23	
Total	8	9	6
		23	

From 460 points supposed to be, there is only 286 points as the correct answer and 174 points as the incorrect answer. Then,

the data that related to the readers’ level of linguistic proficiency is as follows:

No	Group of level linguistic proficiency	Student	Total points	Correct	Incorrect	% correctness
1	High (H)	8	160	116	44	72,5%
2	Moderate (M)	9	180	109	71	60,55%
3	Low (L)	6	120	61	59	50,83
	Total calculation	23	460	286	174	
				460		

The table above described that the highest level of linguistics proficiency proved their strength by showing the correct percentage of 72,5%, followed by the moderate level of linguistic proficiency correct percentage of 60,55%, and last the low level of linguistic proficiency correct percentage of 50,83%. These numbers of distribution proved that

level of linguistic proficiency support the language process of the readers’ mind in guessing words’ meaning. In conclusion, though there are contextual factors affect the process of guessing words’ meaning but the process is still an interaction between text-related variable and reader-related variable.

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