

## **VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AND LISTENING SKILL OF GRADE 12 JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the Japanese listening skill. Many studies showed that vocabulary knowledge is significantly correlated with language skill, especially reading. But, how about the correlation with other language skills? Investigations to uncover the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and listening skill are also needed. The participants in this research were 34 Japanese learners from grade 12 of senior high school in Jakarta. They were given test that measured their vocabulary knowledge and Japanese listening skill. The result showed that vocabulary knowledge is significantly correlated with listening skill at .525 and can predict quarter of variance in listening score. Vocabulary knowledge contribution to Japanese listening skill as much as 28% and the rest was influenced by other factors that were not related with this research.

***Keywords: vocabulary knowledge, listening skill, Japanese language, correlation***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Listening is an activity that dominates daily communication activities. According to Burley-Allen in Flowerdew and Miller (2005), the average time spent in daily communication processes is 9% for writing, 16% for reading, 35% for speaking, and 40% for listening. Although previously regarded as a skill that seems to be neglected in language learning and research (Miller, 2003), listening skills have begun to be considered to have an equally important role as the three other skills (Field, 2002; Richards, 2005; Vandergrift, 2004).

Listening is not only considered useful as a skill, but also needed in supporting the development of other aspects of language, such as speaking and reading (Richards, 2005). The focus of listening instruction at this time is to developing listening as a skill needed to construct and communicate meaning (Goh, 2008).

Lexical competence is an important aspect of communication competence and vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of language proficiency of language learners (Stæhr, 2009). Researches conducted by Meccarty in Vandergrift (2004), Staehr (2008; 2009), Wang and Treffers-Daller (2017), Hu & Nation (2000), Aulina (2012), AD., Hastuti, Sukmawati, & Rahmawati (2019), Selviana, Mannahali, & Dalle (2020), (Fitri, 2019) confirmed these findings. The vocabulary required in listening and speaking skills tends not to be as large as in reading and writing skills (Nation, 2005). The results of these studies indicated that there is a strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension ranging from .50 to .85 of learners with various levels of proficiency (Staehr, 2008). Vocabulary knowledge is a critical component in reading (Hu & Nation, 2000). Research by AD et al. (2019) explained that there is a positive and significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the ability to understand the intrinsic elements of short stories for junior high school students in Kendari.

To explore the role of vocabulary knowledge in the whole language skills, studies that show the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to other skills are needed (Stæhr, 2009). Meccarty in Vandergrift (2004), Staehr (2008; 2009) and Wang & Treffers-Daller (2017) suggested that vocabulary knowledge related to and is considered as a strong predictor of learners listening comprehension.

Based on these studies, we can say that vocabulary knowledge gives a significant contribution to learners' listening skill. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and listening skill, especially listening skill of grade 12 Japanese language learners.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Vocabulary Knowledge**

Vocabulary knowledge is an important part in listening because there is a strong relationship between vocabulary accessibility and effective listening activities (Rost, 2011). Listening, in principle, is influenced by a person's vocabulary capacity and also the ability to recognize words in speech. Activation of knowledge (content schemata and cultural schemata), which is required in understanding discourse, is related to and influenced by word recognition (Rost, 2011). According to Segalowitz *et al.*, and Laufer and Hulstijn in Rost (2011), speed and breadth in the ability to recognize words are good predictors of listening ability. In addition, Rost, Nation *et.al.*, and Graves in Rost (2011) prove that the inability to understand words in oral texts can cause attentional problems that will affect the listener's understanding, either directly or indirectly.

According to Rost (2011), vocabulary knowledge consists of a surface level (syntagmatic) which includes recognition of the spoken form of the word (including variations in allophones), its written form and grammatical function, and a deeper level (paradigmatic) which includes word collocation, relative frequency in language, usage restrictions, denotations and connotations.

Vocabulary knowledge consists of a surface level and a deeper level so that there are productive vocabulary terms as well as receptive vocabulary. In the explanation by Richards & Schmidt (2010), the terms refer to the amount of vocabulary that a person actively uses, compared to the amount of vocabulary they know and understand but are not actively used. A person can understand more words than the ones they actively use. They can have a receptive vocabulary (vocabulary they can understand in reading or listening) of up to 100,000 words, but productive vocabulary (for example those they use in writing or speaking) is only about 10,000 to 20,000 words.

Stæhr (2009), in his research, used the term breadth and depth of vocabulary mastered by learners to describe vocabulary knowledge. These two terms more or less refer to the same thing that Richards & Schmidt described regarding receptive and productive vocabulary. According to Staehr, vocabulary breadth refers to the large number of vocabularies that is mastered by the learner, while the depth of vocabulary reflects how well learners know each vocabulary or in other words how well the vocabulary is regulated in the learners' mental state regarding its meaning and association.

From the explanation above, vocabulary knowledge is important in language learning. This research focuses on knowing how is the role of vocabulary knowledge in the listening skills of Japanese language learners.

### **Listening Skills**

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010) in the *Longman Dictionary of Language and Applied Linguistics*, skill is the abilities that are acquired to perform an activity well, usually through a series of actions and processes. Many aspects of language learning considered as the learning of skills, such as learning to speak or learning to read fluently.

Boyatzis and Kolb (1995) in their article about learning styles and learning skills, define skill as a combination of abilities, knowledges, and experiences that make someone able to do something well. Meanwhile, learning skill is defined as the ability to master a certain domain which is related to two components, namely the application and the process of knowledge transformation. Boyatzis and Kolb then summarize the definition in three important aspects, namely i) skills related to specific knowledges and domains, ii) skill is a description of an individual's integration with their environment, iii) skill is formed from practice and habituation.

Language skill is defined by Richards & Schmidt (2010) as the mode or way language is used, generally referring to four language skills, namely; listening, speaking, reading and

writing. Usually speaking and writing are called active/productive skills, while reading and listening are called passive/receptive skills.

Productive skills are skills used by learners in producing language, while receptive skills are skills in extracting meaning from the discourse they read or listen to (Harmer, 2011). Nation and Newton (2009) stated that when using productive skills, learners are focusing their attention on conveying ideas and messages to others. When using receptive skills, learners' attentions are focused on the ideas and messages conveyed to them.

From the description above, it can be concluded that skills, in this case language skills, are abilities that are supported by language knowledge and experiences obtained through training and habituation related to the production and extracting of language meanings. Listening is an activity that deals with many aspects of life. Apart from being an important component in oral language processing, listening is also interrelated with aspects of acquisition and development (Rost, 2011). In the view of language learning, listening can be seen as a way of learning language. By listening, learners get information to build knowledge that will be needed when using the language, they are learning (Nation & Newton, 2009).

According to Rost (2011), people tend to define listening activities using terminology related to their personal and theoretical interest in the topic. Rost himself defined listening by looking at the four orientations of listening activities: receptive, constructive, transformative, and collaborative. Listening is the activity of accepting what the speaker says; by constructing and representing back the utterance meaning of the speaker; through the listener's involvement, imagination, and empathy; and also negotiate the meaning and respond to what the speaker said. In line with Rost, Yokoyama (2008) defined listening as a process of constructing the meaning of speech using language knowledge and utilizing context, setting, and schemata.

Buck (2001) called knowledge of language as linguistic knowledge (phonology, lexeme, syntax, semantics, and discourse structure) while context, setting, and schemata are non-linguistic knowledge. Talking about listening, we cannot help but talk about the uniqueness of spoken language. According to Yokoyama (2008), spoken language has several differences from written language. In spoken language, especially those related to everyday communication, there are often repetitions, abbreviated or simplified forms, as well as corrections. Unlike written language, which has boundary markers for words, sentences, or clauses such as period or comma, spoken language has invisible boundary markers, so many people consider it unclear. Apart from that, spoken language is also very much influenced by the region of origin, culture, and speaking style of the speaker, as well as the timing and the purpose of the language being delivered. Oral language with its uniqueness is aural input used by learners in the listening process to construct and produce meaning. So, listening skills are ability to process spoken language uttered by the speaker through receptive, constructive, collaborative and transformative stages, using both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, obtained by practice and habituation, related to extracting language meanings, for communicative purposes and acquisition and development of language.

This research builds on existing studies and continues to investigate the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and Japanese listening skills. What is the level of Japanese vocabulary knowledge of grade 12 language learners? What is the level of Japanese listening skill of grade 12 language learners? Is there a relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the Japanese listening skill of grade 12 language learners?

## **METHOD**

This research is a quantitative research using the correlation method. Participants in this research were 34 Japanese language learners in grade 12 high school in Jakarta. To obtain the data needed in the research, the researcher conducted a test (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012) using two instruments to measure Japanese listening skills and to measure participants' Japanese vocabulary knowledge. The listening skills test consists of 15 items of multiple choice and short answer test and the vocabulary knowledge test consists of 20 items of multiple-choice test.

The test results were confirmed for the normality through Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the linearity through Anova. The results of the normality test and the linearity test showed that the data are normally distributed and linear. Researcher then conducted correlation test using SPSS

with the formula of product moment to determine the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and listening skill of Japanese Language.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

There are two data in this research, data on vocabulary knowledge and data on learners' listening skill. As explained above, data from 34 Japanese learners of grade 12 were first tested for normality and linearity using the SPSS application. After it is known that the data is normally distributed and linear, a correlation test was performed using the SPSS application with the Product Moment formula.

#### **What is the level of Japanese vocabulary knowledge of grade 12 language learners?**

Based on the results of the vocabulary knowledge test, the mean score of the learners was 77, with the maximum score obtained was 100 and the minimum score obtained was 35. The data on the results of the vocabulary knowledge test can be seen more clearly in the following table.

*Table 1 Data on Vocabulary Knowledge Test Results*

No.	Total score	Score	Number of Students	Percentage
	20	100	2	6%
	19	95	7	21%
	18	90	4	12%
	17	85	3	9%
	16	80	2	6%
	15	75	1	3%
	14	70	4	12%
	13	65	4	12%
	12	60	4	12%
	11	55	1	3%
	8	40	1	3%
	7	35	1	3%

#### **What is the level of Japanese listening skill of grade 12 language learners?**

Based on the results of the listening skill test, the average score of the students was 72, with the maximum score obtained was 96 and the minimum score obtained was 35. The data on the results of the listening skills test can be seen more clearly in the following table.

*Table 2: Data on Listening Skill Test Result*

No.	Total score	Score	Number of Students	Percentage
	101	96	1	3%
	99	94	1	3%
	97	92	1	3%
	95	91	1	3%
	94	90	1	3%
	93	89	2	6%
	91	87	1	3%
	89	85	1	3%
	87	83	2	6%
	86	82	1	3%
	83	79	1	3%
	81	77	1	3%
	80	76	1	3%
	78	74	1	3%
	77	73	1	3%

No.	Total score	Score	Number of Students	Percentage
76	72	1	3%	
72	69	3	9%	
70	67	1	3%	
67	64	2	6%	
66	63	1	3%	
65	62	1	3%	
62	59	1	3%	
61	58	2	6%	
60	57	1	3%	
58	55	1	3%	
56	53	1	3%	
52	50	1	3%	
37	35	1	3%	

**Is there a relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the Japanese listening skill of grade 12 language learners?**

Based on the correlation test using the SPSS application with the Product Moment formula, the data showed that there is a significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and Japanese listening skill. This is indicated by an r value of 0.525 and sig. 0.001. Then, the contribution value of vocabulary knowledge to Japanese listening skill is 28%. For more details, the results of the correlation test can be seen in the table below.

The result of the correlation test above is in line with those shown by previous studies such as by Stæhr, (2008; 2009), Meccarty in Vandergrift (2004), Wang and Treffers-Daller (2017).

*Table 3 Data on test result of Correlation between Knowledge of Vocabulary with Listening Skill in Japanese*

<b>Correlations</b>			
		vocabulary	listen
vocabulary	Pearson Correlation	1	.525 **
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	34	34
listen	Pearson Correlation	.525 **	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	34	34

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Meccarty in Vandergrift (2004) found that both grammar and vocabulary knowledge were significantly related to listening comprehension, but vocabulary knowledge was more likely to be related. Research conducted by Staehr shows that there is a strong relationship between the receptive capacities of learners' vocabulary and their reading and writing abilities, and is quite related to their listening ability. In addition, vocabulary capacity can still explain a significant and substantial variant of the learner's listening score (Staehr, 2008). Then, Wang and Treffers-Daller (2017), in their research, showed that vocabulary knowledge is the strongest predictor of listening comprehension, compared to the other two variables, general language skill and metacognitive awareness.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, the things that can be concluded are as follows. The average value of Japanese vocabulary knowledge of grade 12 language learners is 77,

with the maximum score obtained is 100 and the minimum score obtained is 35. The average score of Japanese listening skills of grade 12 language learners is 72, with the maximum score obtained is 96 and the minimum value obtained is 35.

Vocabulary knowledge has a significant relationship with the Japanese listening skills of grade 12 high school students. This is indicated by the  $r$  value of 0.525 and sig. 0.001. The contribution value of vocabulary knowledge on Japanese language listening skill is 28%. These results indicated that vocabulary knowledge is not only strongly associated with reading skills but also with listening skills. For this reason, teachers also need to put efforts to develop vocabulary knowledge in teaching listening skills. Rost (2011) provides several methods that can be used to increase vocabulary knowledge, such as stimulating lexical knowledge by introducing important vocabulary before doing listening activities; providing a *video caption* on the video to be listened to; simplification of vocabulary in oral texts, including rephrasing or paraphrasing, especially in texts with a rather high level of difficulty; emphasizing the negotiation of the meaning of lexical items that are not yet familiar to learners; and carrying out activities to reconstruct the text in a group after the listening activities.

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