

**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' VERBAL APTITUDE  
AND INFERENTIAL SKILL IN READING : A STUDY AT GRADE 10TH  
OF SMAN 3 MATARAM ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018**



**AN ARTICLE**

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**BY**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading as well as to analyze whether there is a possibility for low verbal aptitude students to achieve high score in inferential skill test and identify the factors that influence students' inferential skill in reading. Mixed method with sequential explanatory design was used in this study. The population of this study is all tenth grade students of *SMAN 3 Mataram* and 71 students from *X MIPA PC* and *X MIPA 1* were chosen as the sample by using purposive and random sampling technique. The data were gathered from documentation, test and interview. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to analyze the data with help *SPSS 16.0* to ensure the manual calculation. Based on the data analysis, it was found that the  $r_{XY}$  is 0.651 and  $r_{table}$  at significant level of 5% is 0.234 which means that  $r_{XY} \geq r_{table}$  with significant correlation 7.21 which is higher than  $t_{table}$  (1.99495), so that there is strong significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading. Furthermore, there were 8 students or 11% with low verbal aptitude students but they achieved high score in inferential skill which means there is a possibility for them to achieve high score in inferential skill, yet it was not as high as high verbal aptitude students. According to the result of interview, there are some factors that influence students' inferential skill such as age, motivation and interest, background knowledge, topics' interest, working memory, language skills, personality, learning styles, and extended English course.

Keywords : *Verbal Aptitude, Inferential Skill in Reading*

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berjudul “Korelasi antara Bakat Verbal Siswa dan Kemampuan Inferensial dalam Membaca : Penelitian di Kelas X SMAN 3 Mataram Tahun Ajaran 2017/2018” yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui korelasi antara bakat verbal dan kemampuan inferensial dan menganalisis kemungkinan bagi siswa yang memiliki bakat verbal rendah untuk mencapai nilai tinggi di tes kemampuan inferensial serta mengidentifikasi apa saja faktor yang mempengaruhi kemampuan inferensial siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kombinasi dengan design *sequential explanatory design*. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah seluruh siswa kelas sepuluh dan 71 siswa dari kelas X MIPA PC dan X MIPA 1 terpilih menjadi sample penelitian dengan menggunakan tehnik *purposive* dan *random sampling*. Data penelitian ini diperoleh dari dokumentasi, tes, dan wawancara. Korelasi *Product Moment Pearson* digunakan untuk menganalisis data dengan bantuan *SPSS 16.0* untuk memastikan hasil perhitungan manual. Berdasarkan analisis data, ditemukan bahwa  $r_{XY}$  (0.651) dan  $r_{tabel}$  pada level signifikan 5% adalah 0.234 yang berarti  $0.651 \geq 0.234$  dengan signifikan korelasi 7.21 lebih tinggi dibandingkan  $t_{tabel}$  (1.99495) sehingga ada korelasi yang kuat dan signifikan antara bakat verbal siswa dan kemampuan inferensial dalam membaca. Selain itu, ditemukan pula 8 orang siswa atau 11% dengan bakat verbal rendah namun mereka dapat memperoleh nilai tinggi di tes kemampuan inferensial yang mengindikasikan adanya kemungkinan bagi mereka yang memiliki bakat verbal rendah untuk memperoleh nilai tinggi di tes kemampuan inferensial namun tidak semaksimal yang diperoleh oleh siswa dengan bakat verbal tinggi. Berdasarkan hasil wawancara, ada beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi kemampuan inferensial siswa antara lain usia, motivasi dan minat, pengetahuan awal, topik bacaan, memori, kemampuan berbahasa, kepribadian, gaya belajar dan mengikuti kursus bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci : *Bakat Verbal, Kemampuan Inferensial dalam Membaca*

## 1. Introduction

Most of people still have misunderstanding about the aim of education. They still assume that education is about how to make our students can achieve good scores in subjects. This tends to make teachers forget about the development of students' potency. Triyono (2010) stated that there are three kinds of students' potency which are physical potency, socio cultural potency and psychological potency. In terms of psychological potency, it could be motivation, interest, intelligence and aptitudes. The aptitudes have contribution in language learning. According to Richard and Rodger in (Abiodun & Folaranmi, 2007), one of aptitudes that can be used to predict language learners' performance in language skill is verbal aptitude. Verbal Aptitude is a person's facility at putting ideas into words, both oral and written which also includes the ability to organize words in coherent ways (Andrew, *et.al.*, 2005). A person with high verbal aptitude will be more sensitive in spoken and written language which will impact to their ability in solving problems that related to words as well as understanding words.

In addition, among the four skills in language learning, reading is still being the major problem. The students feel hard to understand the text which is not only due to the lack of vocabulary, difficulties in recognizing the grammar and pattern of each sentence in the text, but also their ability in making inference. Inferential skill is a sub skill in reading which enables students to make a conclusion not only by looking at the coherency of the text, but also involving the students' background knowledge.

Furthermore, verbal aptitude is said to be a psychological aspect which may influence students' reading achievement. Shihab (2011) said that "reading is a sophisticated activity, which includes psychological, linguistic, and sociological aspects". In relation to that, verbal reasoning test is administered to measure students' verbal aptitude. Verbal reasoning test is a standardized test that can be conducted to get the data of students' verbal aptitude. This test has close relationship with students' inferential skill in reading because this test consist of analogies in which the students should find the relationship of two objects in

terms of their similarity to make a conclusion. Thus, there might be close relationship between verbal aptitude and students' inferential skill in reading.

In short, it is necessary to have the data of students' verbal aptitude in order to get more knowledge about the students so that the teachers can identify the problems and adjust it with students' potency. Therefore, this research aims to ensure and find more empirical findings about the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading which has not been investigated before.

## **2. Research Questions**

Based on the explanation above, the research questions can be formulated as follows :

1. Are there any significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading at grade 10th of *SMAN 3 Mataram* in academic year 2017/2018 ?
2. Are there any possibilities for the students who have low verbal aptitude to get high achievement in inferential skill test ? How many percent ?
3. What are the factors that influence students' inferential skill in reading ?

## **3. The Purpose of The Study**

Based on the research questions, the purpose of the study can be stated as follows :

1. To investigate and get more empirical findings about the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading at grade 10th of *SMAN 3 Mataram* in academic year 2017/2018.
2. To analyze whether there is a possibility for those having low verbal aptitude to achieve high score in inferential skill tells.
3. To identify the factors that influence students' inferential skill.

#### **4. The Significance of Study**

##### 1. English Teachers

This research can be conducted as a new input to know about the contribution of verbal aptitude to the students' inferential skill so that the teachers can use it to consider their decision in order to improve their teaching and their students' performance in the classroom.

##### 2. Students of English Department

The result of this research is expected to enrich the English department students' knowledge about the contribution of verbal aptitude to the students' inferential skill. This is going to be their reference in preparing themselves and also guidance in their real teaching practice.

##### 3. Students

The students will be more successful in having great achievement in English as well as knowing their potential more so that they can improve it and solve their English problems.

##### 4. Schools and Institutions

This research also aims to be the reference and reflection for the schools and institutions so that they will know how far and good their educational system. It can also be the recommendation for the institution to graduate a good quality of educational scholars.

##### 5. The Researcher

The knowledge about the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and students' inferential skill can be used by the other researcher not only to fulfill their thesis but also as the reference in education terms.

#### **5. Hypothesis**

1. Null Hypothesis (Ho): there is no significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading at 10th grade of *SMAN 3 Mataram* academic year 2017/2018.

2. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): there is significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading at 10th grade of *SMAN 3 Mataram* academic year 2017/2018.

## **6. Relevant Studies**

In this part, some previous studies about students' verbal aptitude are discussed whether it is focused on overall English achievement or just certain skill in English. Maisyarah (2016) found that there is no significant correlation between students' verbal linguistic intelligence and reading achievement. In other words, students' verbal aptitude did not give contribution to students' reading achievement. This study is limited by the instrument that was used to measure students' verbal linguistic intelligence that is questionnaire which is not standardized test, so that it could not explain the correlation between those variables in more detail and complex.

On the other hand, the second study was conducted by Abiodun and Folaranmi (2007) which was a quasi-experimental research by using standardized test and explained that verbal ability has significant effect on students' writing skill in English. Their study also revealed that gender also has contribution on their achievement in essay writing. In relation to that, their study could be a literature review since this study also dicusses about gender as one of the factors that influence students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading.

In addition, Ratnasari (2016) who found that there is significant correlation between students' verbal ability and students' achievement at fifth grade students of elementary school. Similarly, Mubasyira, Marliansih, and Indah Ayu found that there is strong and significant influence of linguistic intelligence towards English achievement. Both of those study have proven that verbal aptitude has contribution in students' English achievement in general, yet they do not explain specificaly in what kind of skills the students can achieve good scores.

All in all, those studies deal with the students' verbal aptitude and used quantitative method like quasi experimental and correlation with test, interview, and documentation as the techniques of collecting data. Furthermore, most of them have shown that the verbal aptitude has contribution on students' achievement in language learning especially for certain skills like reading and writing. However, there is no study which has investigated the correlation between the verbal aptitude and more specific subskills in reading like inferential skill which is very important to know by the teachers in order to improve their students' performance in classroom. Therefore, this study focus on the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading which has not been investigated in Indonesia before.

## **7. Research Method and Design**

This research used mixed method with sequential explanatory design in which the qualitative data were analyzed after quantitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed to know the correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading, while the qualitative data were analyzed to get deeper understanding whether there is possibility for those who have low verbal aptitude to achieve high score in inferential skill test and the factors that influence students in inferential skill.

The population of this study is all the tenth grade students of *SMAN 3 Mataram* academic year 2017/2018. In terms of sampling, purposive sampling was used to choose the class which were *X MIPA PC and X MIPA 1* and random sampling was used to choose the students with total sampling 71 students.

The data were gathered from the documentation of psychological test especially students' verbal reasoning test results which is held and administered by certified educational psychologist in February 2018 in order to know students' verbal aptitude. The second instrument is reading test of inferential skill which consisted of 50 multiple choice items which were tested its validity and reliability before. It was found that there were 32 of 50 items that were valid and calculated to get the students' inferential skill scores. The last instrument is semi structured

interview with note-taking. There were 12 questions which were given to the students to know factors that influence students' inferential skill.

In terms of data analysis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used with help of SPSS 16.0 to strengthen the result of manual calculation and the qualitative data were analyzed by using iterative qualitative analysis.

## 8. Research Findings and Discussion

To begin with, the following are the percentage of students' verbal aptitude scores which had been transformed into percentile point based on the documentation of psychological test in February 2018.

Table 8.1 The Percentage of Students' Verbal Aptitude Scores

No.	Classification	Percentile Point	The Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Low	1 – 49	48	68%
2.	Middle	50 – 74	13	18%
3.	High	75 – 99	10	14%
<b>Total</b>			71	100%

From the table 8.1, it is found that the frequency of students' who have low verbal aptitude is higher than the students who have high verbal aptitude and middle verbal aptitude. It is indicated by the percentage of the low verbal aptitude students which is 68% , while for the middle is 18% and high verbal aptitude is 14%. This means that most of the tenth grade students of *SMAN 3 Mataram* have low score in verbal aptitude. The result of the students' verbal aptitude were influenced by some factors such as the time of test in which the students took the test in the afternoon, which means that they might feel exhausted at that time and could not concentrate well to answer the test and the class situations which were not comfortable like hot weather, too noisy, and any other disruptions such as the difficulty in understanding the test instruction, or even seat position. Furthermore, based on age, the students who are at age 14 to 15 years old

had higher mean score than the other age which is 63 and classified as middle verbal aptitude which can be seen in table 8.2 below.

Table 8.2 The Students' Verbal Aptitude Scores based on Age

Age	The Number of Students	Verbal Aptitude Score	
		Mean Score	Classification
14 - 15	3	63	Middle
15 - 16	30	46	Low
16 - 17	35	28	Low
17 - 18	32	30	Low

Meanwhile, the males achieved little bit better achievement on verbal aptitude rather than females with score 41 but in the same classification as females in low verbal aptitude as the table below.

Table 8.3 The Students' Verbal Aptitude Scores based on Gender

Gender	The Number of Students	Verbal Aptitude Score	
		Mean Score	Classification
Female	44	35	Low
Male	27	41	Low

On the other hand, in terms of students' inferential skill, table 8.4 showed that the students' inferential skill is in between very low and low with the average 56.92, in which the number of students who got under this average score is higher than the students who achieved above the mean score. It can be seen by the percentage of each classification which was not too far from the data description of verbal aptitude, in which for the very low is 31% or 22 students, low is 13% or 9 students, middle is 23% or 16 students, high is 10% or 7 students, and very high is 23% or 17 students. This implies that students' inferential skill should be improved because they still in the very low and low classification.

Table 8.4 The Percentage of Students' Inferential Skill Test Scores

No.	Classification	Range Score	The Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Very Low	0 – 45	22	31%
2.	Low	46 – 55	9	13%
3.	Middle	56 – 69	16	23%
4.	High	70 – 79	7	10%
5.	Very High	80 - 100	17	23%
<b>Total</b>			71	100%

Moreover, in terms of age, the research findings were similar to the verbal aptitude, in which the youngest age of the tenth grade students that is 14-15 years old had better achievement on inferential skill test with the mean score 72 which was classified as high inferential skill among the other age's mean scores as in the table 8.5 below.

Table 8.5 The Students' Inferential Skill Scores Based on Age

Age	The Number of Students	Inferential Skill Score	
		Mean Score	Classification
14 - 15	3	72	High
15 - 16	30	63	Middle
16 - 17	35	55	Low
17 - 18	32	57	Middle

While according to the gender of the participants, there was only 1 point difference between males and females, yet the males were higher than females as in the verbal aptitude although they were on the same level that is middle inferential skill as the following table shows.

Table 8.6 The Students' Inferential Skill Scores Based on Gender

Gender	The Number of Students	Inferential Score	
		Mean Score	Classification
Female	44	58	Middle
Male	27	59	Middle

Furthermore, the finding also shows that there is a strong significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and students' inferential skill in reading since the correlation coefficient value ( $r_{XY}$ ) is higher than the  $r_{table}$  value that is  $0.651 \geq 0.234$  as in the table 8.7, which has been tested its hypothesis at the level of significance 0.05 and it can be concluded that there is correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading since the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted.

Table 8.7 Pearson Product Moment

		verbal	inferensial
verbal	Pearson Correlation	1	.651 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	71	71
inferensial	Pearson Correlation	.651 <sup>**</sup>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	71	71

In addition, based on the calculation of the determination coefficient, the students' verbal aptitude has contribution for 42.38% towards students' inferential skill while the rest are influenced by the other factors. Moreover, the calculation of  $t_{count}$  is higher than  $t_{table}$  that is  $7.21 \geq 1.99495$  at the level significance 0.05 which means that it has significant correlation. Therefore, students who have good verbal aptitude are always good at inferential skill in reading in which is in accordance with the statement of Andrew *et.al* (2005) who stated that a person with a good verbal aptitude will be more easily in overcoming the problems in both spoken and written language.

Table 8.8  
The Percentages of Students' Verbal Aptitude and Inferential Skill Scores

No.	Classification	The Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Low – Middle	9	13%
2.	Low – High/Very High	8	11%
3.	Middle – Low/Very Low	1	1%
4.	Middle – High/Very High	7	10%

5.	High – Low/Very Low	1	1%
6.	High – Middle	2	3%
7.	Normal/Linear	43	61%
Total		71	100%

Based on the table 8.8, the findings also revealed that the theory of Gardner (in Hemmati & Sadeghi,2015) who stated that person with good verbal aptitude will be more sensitive in spoken and written language so that they can get good achievement in that language. In fact, there were 8 students or 11 % who have low verbal aptitude but could show good performance in inferential skill more than they should be and had been predicted before. They got score in between high and very high classification. This proved that those with low verbal aptitude are possible to achieve high score in inferential skill which is influenced by some factors, but it is not as maximal as students with high verbal aptitude can get in inferential skill test.

The interview was done to get deeper understanding about factors that influence students' inferential skill in reading. Based on the interview findings, there are some factors that influence them such as their interest, motivation, language skills, background knowledge, working memory, topics, reading exercises, and an extended English course which will be discussed more detail below.

In terms of students' interest and motivation, they vary from one students to another students. They have different reasons of why they should learn English. Some students admitted that they learn English because they like the people and the culture of England itself which is classified as integrative motivation by Gardner and Lambert (in Khasinah,2014), while the rest said that they learn English because they want to achieve their best performance in the class and get scholarship to study abroad in the future which is included in functional reasons of instrumental motivation. The difference on students' interest and motivation had emerged the difference on their attitudes and responses when the test was conducted. Therefore, the higher students' interest

and motivation in learning English will be reflected in their achievement in the inferential skill test.

Language skill is still being the major problem of students in learning English. Most students admitted that they found many difficult words in the test which are confusing. Beside the lack of vocabulary, the students did not also find easily in recognizing some sentences patterns and grammar. Whereas for some students, they join an English course and do some exercises to improve their language skill. Those skills are very important to help them in understanding a text. As cited in Srisang (2017), if the readers do not have good understanding about the text, the comprehension would not be complete and the inferences could not be drawn. Thus, language skill has contribution in determining students' achievement in inferential skill.

In addition, the findings revealed that students did not know well about what the texts on the inferential skill test are talking about. This makes them not excited in answering the questions. Similarly, they had to deal with many long texts that they had not ever got before at school, so that they become lazier and felt tired to read the whole text which were reflected in their scores of inferential skill test.

Due to the unfamiliar topic, the students do not have enough background knowledge to understand the reading texts. It could be proven by some students' statements who said that "the topics are not familiar for me". This implied that the minimum their knowledge will limit their inferential skill. In addition, although there were some students who admit they knew the topic, they still got hard to answer the test. This is in relation with the statement of Kispal (2008) who said that when students are reading, they find it difficult to access their knowledge. Furthermore, the findings also showed us that students also found it difficult to retell what they read to their friends. This implies that students had low comprehension about the texts and they did not have good inferential skill. Therefore, background knowledge and working memory influence the students' inferential skill.

Moreover, besides the result of the interview, it is very important to look at the students' age in which the research finding revealed that the students who are at age 14 to 15 years old got higher achievement both verbal aptitude and inferential skill test than the other ages. This means that the younger the age of the students, the better their achievement in inferential skill since they are good in receiving any information rather than the adults in learning English. This is in accordance with Harmer in Ghania (2013), the plasticity of the brain will be developed by ages and as we become older the brain's plasticity is reduced which may affect the ability in absorbing information as well as memorizing it. Thus, age has contribution in students' inferential skill in learning English.

Beside students' age, gender is also the factor that influence students' inferential skill in reading. Based on the research findings, it can be seen that males had higher mean score in both inferential skill and verbal aptitude although they are in the same level. This contradicts with Ghania (2013:12) who stated that females tend to have higher verbal ability compared to the males who are good at scientific field. Therefore, gender cannot be the determined factors for students in being successful in inferential skill.

In addition, the research findings of the interview also showed the personality of the students implicitly which can also take an impact since students with a good personality such as not being easy to give up when they face any challenges, not being nervous and being confident about their ability can be the factor that influence students' inferential skill achievement.

The last factor is learning styles in which most of students admitted that they really like to learn English by watching youtube, movie, taking-note which are related to visual learners. While the others prefer more listening music and any English recording to improve their language skill. In contrast, just a few of students who stated that they like to learn English by practising and being more active. This difference take contribution on students' inferential skill achievement since it is found that from the interview students' who are kinaesthetic learners were more anxiety when they had reading test of inferential skill since they could not stay for a long time to read the test.

## 9. Conclusion and Suggestion

There is a strong significant correlation between students' verbal aptitude and inferential skill in reading. Yet, in some cases, there is also a possibility, in which students with low verbal aptitude can achieve high score of inferential skill but it could not as high as students with high verbal aptitude achievement. There are some factors which influence students' inferential skill such as age, students' interest and motivation, background knowledge, topics' interest, working memory, students' language skill, personality, learning styles, and extended English course.

In addition, this research also gives some suggestion for teachers, students and the next researcher. It is expected to be reference for teachers to enrich their knowledge about their students' potency before teaching them, so that they can adjust their English lesson plan based on the data of students' potency. For students, it can increase their awareness about their potency so that they can explore and develop themselves actively based on their potency. It is also suggested for the further researcher to do more investigation whether there is a possibility for those having low verbal aptitude to achieve high scores in inferential skill as well as investigating about the other factors that may contribute to students' inferential skill besides verbal aptitude and also the correlation between students' verbal aptitude with the other subskill in learning language.

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