

THE USE OF EXTENSIVE READING IN TEACHING READING

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Abstract: The study investigates benefits of using extensive reading in teaching reading and as well as students' attitudes toward it. A case study design as a part of qualitative research was employed in this study. The data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaire and interview. The participants of this study were a class of second graders in one of the public junior high schools in Bandung. The findings reveal that extensive reading was beneficial in teaching reading. There are five benefits found, those are building students' perspective that reading is a fascinating activity, creating enjoyable learning atmosphere, helping students in developing a wide vocabulary, improving students' reading comprehension, and increasing students' motivation in reading. In addition, most students had positive attitudes toward the use of extensive reading in their reading class. Based on the findings, it is expected to contribute to the teaching of English especially in the use extensive reading technique in teaching reading. However, in order to achieve maximum benefits of the technique, it is suggested that some aspects of the technique should be improved; these include the improvement of teacher's understanding of the principles and concepts of extensive reading, the insight of the importance of giving clear instructions, and the awareness of designing various activities.

Keywords: *Extensive reading, teaching reading.*

Introduction

Reading is a complex, multi-faceted activity, involving a combination of both lexical and text-progressing skills that are widely recognized as being interactive" (Loucky, 2005, p.1). This is one reason why students are likely to be hesitant readers (Kweldju, 2000, cited in Cahyono and Widiawati, 2006) because reading in a foreign language is not easy. Therefore, teachers need to find an appropriate technique to encourage students' interest

and to build their self confidence in reading.

One technique that can be applied in teaching reading is extensive reading.

Numerous studies have shown that extensive reading is beneficial in language teaching, including in English as foreign language (EFL) context (Iwahori, 2008; Tanaka, 2007; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003). However, studies related to the use of extensive reading especially in Indonesian schools level are still limited since reading

instructions in various levels of Indonesian school dominantly adjust to intensive reading (Cahyono and Widiawati, 2006). With the intention of filling the gap in the study about extensive reading, the present study intends to find out benefits of using extensive reading in teaching reading.

Literature Review

• The Nature of Reading

Reading can be defined as a process to understand the meaning of a written text (Richards and Schmidt, 2010). Alyousef (2006) enlightens that in a reading process, a reader will extract the meaning from a text by interacts dynamically with using various kinds of knowledge since “reading is a complex, multi-faceted activity, involving a combination of both lexical and text-progressing skills that are widely recognized as being interactive” (Loucky, 2005, p.1).

Reading receives a special concentration in many second and foreign language teaching situations (Richard and Renandya, 2002). However, many students are not used to reading English material because reading as foreign language context is not easy. This issue has been one of the reasons why students are likely to be hesitant readers (Kweldju, 2000, cited in Cahyono and Widiawati, 2006).

• The Nature of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is a technique in teaching reading which is defined as a situation where students read a lot of materials in their level in a new language; they read for general, for overall meaning, and for information at one with enjoyment (Day and Bamford, 2004). It is projected to build positive attitude toward reading, to develop good reading habits, to construct vocabulary and structure knowledge (Richards and Schmidt, 2010).

The concept of extensive reading is exposing students to an input-rich and enjoyable environment, with the intention that their language knowledge will improve and their enthusiasm to learn will develop naturally (Hedge, 1985, cited in Sheu, 2004).

In learning process, teachers take an important role that is to remain students’ motivation and create motivation in students gradually if there is none (Harmer, 2007, p.100). In addition, teachers’ roles in extensive reading program are “to develop students a life-long interest in reading and its application to their daily lives” (Sachs, 2001, p.10).

• The Benefits and Limitations of Extensive Reading

In its implementation, extensive reading has several benefits. The first one is the choice in reading material. One of the reasons why students take pleasure in

extensive reading program is that they can choose what they want to read (Day and Bamford, 2004). In extensive reading, students can choose reading material to be read by their own. They can provide reading materials by themselves or teacher can provide it.

The second benefit is developing students' vocabulary. In relation to this, Nuttal (1982, in Meng, 2009) states that "an extensive reading program is the single most effective way of improving both vocabulary and reading skill in general" (p.133).

Another benefit is that regarding to students' readiness to have activities in the classroom, because they have read the material before, they can follow the classroom activities related to extensive reading well. By involving students in the cooperative reading tasks, they might feel empowered to break out of the cycle of failure in reading (Shen, 2008). Therefore, students "might find themselves capable in reading and sharing with other learners" (Shen, 2008, p.120). Regard with this, Guo (2012) points out that several benefits from repeated reading exposure are "more positive attitudes toward reading, increased reading time and more active in-class participation" (p.80).

Further benefit of extensive reading is students' positive attitudes toward reading might increase. As Sweet (2000) states that an "effective reading instruction can develop engaged readers who are knowledgeable, strategic, socially interactive, and motivated" (p.6). Moreover, Sheu (2004) found that "... students were happy to be involved in the ER program, neither their views on learning English, nor their attitudes toward reading were improved" (p.221).

In short, Grabe as cited in Wilkinson (2012) discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading that are to build vocabulary and structural awareness, enhance background knowledge, develop automaticity, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation.

Apart from the aforementioned extensive reading's benefits, it has limitations. The limitation is that the lack of reading materials which are suitable with students' level. Not all of schools can provide English reading materials which are suitable with students' level, together with a variety of reading materials on a wide range of topics. To overcome it, for the orientation of extensive reading, teachers can provide reading materials for the students.

The number of students in a classroom can also become an obstacle in implementing extensive reading. Most classes in Indonesia consist of more than 30 students. Therefore, it will be difficult to handle a big number of students as every student might have a wide range of topics in their mind. To minimize the various topics of reading materials, teachers can provide particular reading materials to be chosen by students every week.

The next limitation is that there is no test. To evaluate and keep track of students' reading progress, teachers can offer follow-up activity after reading (Day and Bamford, 2004).

- **Extensive Reading Activities**

As explained before that in extensive reading, to evaluate and keep track with students' reading progress, teachers can offer follow-up activities after reading (Day and Bamford, 2004).

The basic activity in extensive reading is reading (Day and Bamford, 2004) meaning that that students will be assigned to read. To keep tract with students reading, teachers should encourage them to report back their reading in certain ways (Harmer, 2007) for example by employing reading journal.

Group discussion about text that students read can be utilized as follow-up activities in extensive reading. In relation

to this, Sweet (2000) suggests, student should be involved in group discussion where critical readers and learners are more likely to happen; students engage in daily discussions about what they read. Subsequently, students can share the result of their discussion to a classroom.

The next activity that can be utilized is reading aloud a favorite part. Harmer (2007) affirms that "yet reading aloud of a particularly exciting or interesting excerpt can be extremely motivating and enjoyable for a class" (p.117).

The activities which are explained above are some alternative activities in implementing extensive reading in a classroom. Therefore, if teachers establish extensive reading in a positive way, provide reading materials which are attractive and meet with students' level, and support the students in doing extensive reading, students will encounter reading for enjoyment and bring in the language learning rewards (Day and Bamford, 2004).

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was employed in this study. A qualitative case study can be defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive

reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (Merriam, 1988, in Duff, 2008) p.22). The study was conducted in one of the public junior high schools in Bandung. The participants were 36 students of second grade. Triangulation technique was used in collecting the data in this study. Triangulation combines “the strengths of one type of method and neutralize the weaknesses of the other” (Creswell, 2012, p.536). Accordingly, there were three instruments in collecting the data in this study; classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview.

Classroom observations were held for four meetings. Observation sheet and field notes were utilized to record notes about participants’ behavior and performance during the observation (Cresswell, 2012). The observation sheet was not utilized in the first meeting because there was no any follow-up activity related to extensive reading in the first meeting. The teacher just simply gave assignments related to extensive reading which were reading homework and completing reading journal. The follow up activities in the classroom included group discussion related to the text, sharing about the text and reading aloud favorite part of the text. In the process, the teacher provided some texts to

be chosen by students as their reading homework.

After the implementation of extensive reading, the close-ended and open-ended questionnaires were distributed to the students. In interpreting the students’ score of close-ended questionnaire, the interval score of questionnaire was developed (Sugiono, 2012). Figure 1 is the interpretation of interval score in scale.

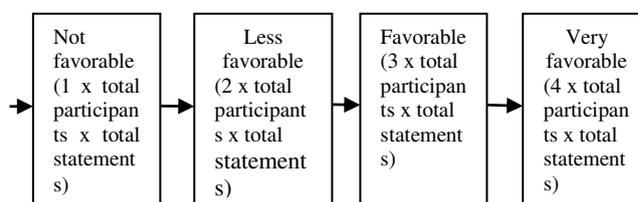


Figure 1 the interval score of questionnaires’ interpretation (developed from Sugiono, 2012).

As the last step, some students were interviewed to clarify the findings.

Data Presentation and Discussion

• The Benefits of Using Extensive Reading in Teaching Reading

The finding from the observation shows that most students seemed to enjoy doing the reading homework. The students chose the text to be read at home enthusiastically and also shared about their experiences in reading the text passionately. This finding is in line with

statement of Day and Bamford (2004) that students take pleasure in extensive reading program because they can choose what they want to read. This meaning that gives a free choice of topic in reading is important. From the result of observations, it can be seen that students' perspective toward reading was starting to change into a positive way.

The findings also reveals that the students seemed to enjoy follow up activities related to extensive reading in the classroom, because they had read the material before, so that they could follow the classroom activities well. The reason for selecting group discussion is as Sweet (2000) suggests, student should be involved in group discussion where critical readers and learners are more likely to happen; students engage in daily discussions about what they read. The data shows that the students participated actively in the group discussion to discuss and answer the questions related to text. Since they could discuss and verify their understanding of the text that they had read in the group discussion.

In sharing the result from group discussion, during the observations the students shared it passionately. This was because they had group discussion before about the text. The students encouraged sharing what they acquired from their

group discussion because they had read the text before and they also had group discussion related to the text. This suggests that several benefits from repeated reading exposure are "more positive attitudes toward reading, increased reading time and more active in-class participation" (Guo, 2012, p.80). During the sharing process, almost all of the students raised their hand. Regard with this Shen (2008) states that by involving students in the cooperative reading tasks, they might feel empowered to break out of the cycle of failure in reading and "find themselves capable in reading and sharing with other learners" (Shen, 2008, p.120).

In the reading aloud session, the students were asked to read aloud their favorite parts of the text and to share the reason why they liked that part. Harmer (2007) affirms that "yet reading aloud of a particularly exciting or interesting excerpt can be extremely motivating and enjoyable for a class" (p.117). The data shows some students who were indicated as motivated student wanted to read aloud their favorite part in every meeting although they had read it in the previous meeting since they had composed it before. What the teacher did was to give an opportunity to other students to participate in this session. The teacher gave the opportunity first to students who had not read their favorite

part, after that the teacher gave opportunity to motivated students. Regard with this action, teachers need to remain students' motivation and create motivation in students gradually if there is none (Harmer, 2007, p.100).

The result from the close-ended questionnaire also supported the finding from the observation. Some questions in the close ended questionnaire were related to the benefits of extensive reading (see appendix b, statements number eight, 10, 11, and 12). The finding shows that most students agreed with the statements that extensive reading helped them in developing a wide vocabulary, improving their reading comprehension, encouraging them in sharing the information from the text they have read, and increasing their motivation in reading. The findings were in accordance with one of the principles in teaching reading which is proposed by Sweet (2000) that an "effective reading instruction can develop engaged readers who are knowledgeable, strategic, socially interactive, and motivated" (p.6).

The result from open-ended statement, moreover, also confirmed the result from close-ended questionnaire. The data analysis of the first question in this questionnaire which was about benefits they obtain after the implementation of

extensive reading. In general, the data analysis shows that benefits gained by the students were acquiring new vocabulary, enjoying reading more, and being motivated to read English.

The next related question was whether their motivation in reading increased after the use of extensive reading. If they were motivated, what the reason was, and vice versa. Twenty eight students answered that they were motivated to reading, while eight students answered that they were fairly motivated. Whereas for the reasons why they were motivated and fairly motivated to reading English in general were because the texts were interesting, learning method and activities were enjoyable, there was reading homework and reading journal, and there was an opportunity to know English more.

The aforementioned findings were supported by the data from the students' interviews. Based on the data, the students perceived several benefits from the use of extensive reading. The extracts below are some examples of benefits perceived by the students.

Manfaatnya kata-katanya jadi nambah, trus ini apa sih, jadi rajin baca, banyak pengalamankan. (The benefits are my vocabularies get richer, and what is it, I am attentive in reading, (because) I could get a lot of chances to (in reading). (Student 2)

Hmm, jadi ga males buat baca teks bahasa Inggris. Ya jadi lebih ngerti, jadi lebih

tertarik untuk kerja kelompok. (hmm, I was motivated to reading English texts. I understand more, and I enjoyed group work.) (Student 8)

The students' answers above indicate that in general benefits perceived by the students were enjoying English more, being motivated to reading English, increasing reading comprehension, enjoying group discussion. This finding suggests that "... students were happy to be involved in the ER program, neither their views on learning English, nor their attitudes toward reading were improved" (Sheu, 2004, p.221).

In conclusion, there are several benefits of using extensive reading activities in teaching reading class were found, those are building students' perspective that reading is a fascinating activity, creating enjoyable learning atmosphere, helping students in developing a wide vocabulary, improving students' reading comprehension, and increasing students' motivation in reading. These benefits indicate that extensive reading activities were beneficial to teach reading. To coincide with these findings, Grabe as cited in Wilkinson (2012) discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading that are to build vocabulary and structural awareness, enhance background knowledge, develop automaticity, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation.

• **The Student's Attitude to the Use Extensive reading in Their Reading Class**

The findings from field notes and observation sheets shows that most of the students showed positive attitude toward the use of extensive reading activities in their reading class, especially for the class works (see appendix a). Therefore, if teachers establish extensive reading in a positive way, provide reading materials which are attractive and meet with students' level, and support the students in doing extensive reading, students will encounter reading for enjoyment and bring in the language learning rewards (Day and Bamford, 2004). On the other hand, the finding also shows that in the second meeting some students showed negative attitude (see appendix b). Some students did not participate actively in the group discussion. They tended to do another activity. In the next two meetings, nevertheless, most students seemed to participate actively in the group discussion.

For the homework which was to complete the reading journal, however, some students showed negative attitude. The finding shows that not all of the students completed their reading journal fully (see appendix a). This was because some students did not understand the instruction for completing the reading journal. Still, after the students were

explained again about the instruction, the finding that some students still did not complete their reading journal in the next meeting. This finding indicates that some students had negative attitudes toward the reading journal.

The data from observation were also supported by the close-ended questionnaire. To interpret the scores of the questionnaires, the interval score in continuity scale was developed. (Sugiono, 2012). The following figure is the interpretation of questionnaires' calculation in continuity scale.

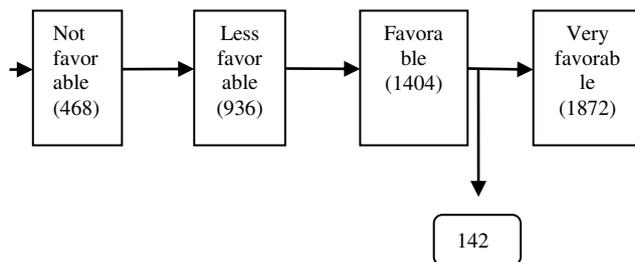


Figure 2 the questionnaire score in continuity scale.

Figure 2 shows that the total score of the questionnaires which is 1429 is on favorable position. It indicates that the students' attitude toward the use of extensive reading in their reading class was favorable or positive meaning that the students were pleased to be involved in the extensive reading program (Sheu, 2004).

The finding from the observation and the result of the questionnaire were

supported and clarified by students' interview. Based on the interview, all of the students stated that they were happy to have reading homework. Moreover, they also stated that reading journal was an important assignment. They also affirmed that they were happy to participate in doing group discussion related to the text they had read. Most students also engaged in reading. From nine students, five of them said that they did not feel bored if they were asked to read every week. Whereas, from nine students, three of them said they felt bored, and the other one said that he might feel bored. This finding indicates that teachers' role is needed here. In extensive reading, teachers' roles are "to develop students a life-long interest in reading and its application to their daily lives" (Sachs, 2001, p.10), in this case via extensive reading. Regard with this finding, the concept of extensive reading is exposing students to an input-rich and enjoyable environment, with the intention that their language knowledge will improve and their enthusiasm to learn will develop naturally (Hedge, 1985, cited in Sheu, 2004).

In summary, the findings above illustrated that the students had positive attitudes to the use of extensive reading approach in their reading class. The result

from the observation shows that the students showed positive behavior during the implementation of extensive reading in their reading class, especially for the class works, while for the homework to complete the reading journal, some students showed negative behavior. Additionally, the result from the close-ended questionnaires also shows that the students' attitude to the technique was positive or favorable (1429). The findings were also clarified by the students' interview.

Conclusions

This study focuses on the use of extensive reading technique in teaching reading. The aim of this study was to find out benefits of using extensive reading in teaching reading. Furthermore, this study also aimed to investigate students' attitudes toward the technique.

The study found that extensive reading was beneficial in teaching reading. Extensive reading helped the students to build perspective that reading (English text) is a fascinating activity. In line with this, the students' motivation in reading also increased after the implementation of extensive reading. Moreover, extensive reading helped teachers to create enjoyable atmosphere in learning. In relation to teaching reading, extensive reading helped the students in developing a wide

vocabulary and improving their reading comprehension.

In addition, most students had positive attitudes toward the use of extensive reading in their reading class. This was supported by the result of the close-ended questionnaires that the students' attitudes toward extensive reading were positive or favorable (1429, see Figure 2). The result from the observation and interview also supported this finding. The other research findings recognized a problem that might prevent the benefits of extensive reading if it was not averted. The problem was there were several students who did not complete the reading journal fully. However, the problem may be averted as teachers can create better instructional design.

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Appendix a

The result of the observation sheets

| Categories | | Activities | Meetings | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th |
| Homework | | The students did the reading journal. | * | - | - | - |
| Class work | Exploration | Students were involved in the class discussion about their experience in reading text. | * | + | + | + |
| | Elaboration | The students participated actively in group discussion. | * | - | + | + |
| | | The students were able to attend to group discussions for a reasonable amount of time. | * | + | + | + |
| | | The students were able to share what they got from their group discussion. | * | + | + | + |
| | | The students were able to read aloud the favorite part from the text. | * | + | + | + |
| | Confirmation | The students were able to know the aim of the text. | * | + | + | + |

*There was no activity related to extensive reading

Appendix b

The students' attitudes toward the use of extensive reading

| No. | Statements | Percentage for each statement | | | | Score for each statement |
|-----|--|-------------------------------|-----|-----|----|--------------------------|
| | | SA | A | D | SD | |
| 1. | I am not motivated to read English text if there is no assignment. | 20% | 47% | 33% | 0% | 93 |
| 2. | Reading homework is a fascinating assignment. | 25% | 69% | 6% | 0% | 115 |
| 3. | Reading homework is a beneficial assignment. | 36% | 64% | 0% | 0% | 121 |
| 4.* | I face difficulty in reading without teacher's guidance. | 8% | 61% | 28% | 3% | 81 |
| 5. | Reading journal is an important assignment. | 22% | 72% | 6% | 0% | 114 |
| 6.* | There is a lot of homework. | 3% | 39% | 50% | 8% | 95 |
| 7. | Group discussion related to the text that I have read is an | 39% | 61% | 0% | 0% | 122 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|
| | interesting activity. | | | | | |
| 8. | Group discussion encourages me in sharing the information from the text that I have read. | 28% | 64% | 8% | 0% | 115 |
| 9. | Extensive reading activity to read aloud a favorite part is an interesting activity. | 17% | 78% | 5% | 0% | 112 |
| 10. | Extensive reading activities help me in developing my vocabulary. | 30% | 67% | 3% | 0% | 118 |
| 11. | Extensive reading activities improve my reading comprehension | 42% | 55% | 3% | 0% | 122 |
| 12 | Extensive reading activities motivate me to read English reading materials. | 39% | 49% | 12% | 0% | 114 |
| 13 | I agree if extensive reading as a routine activity in my English class. | 28% | 44% | 25% | 3% | 107 |
| Total score | | | | | | 1429 |
| Ideal score | | | | | | 1872 |
| The percentage of total scores | | | | | | 76.3% |

Note: *Negative statement