

At-Turats

Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam

journal homepage:

<http://jurnaliainpontianak.or.id/index.php/atturats>

Islamic Student Autonomy in Learning to Read

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Abstract

Autonomous learning has been one of the issues that sparked other terms and being discussed in EFL field. It is believed that autonomous learning and reading comprehension is having a positive relationship. Many researchers also agree that autonomous readers have great ability to deal with difficult reading. Therefore, this article aimed to explore one of the most achieving students in English Language Education Department scheme in her reading activity. This article focuses on the four characteristics that needs to be gained by the learners to be autonomous; 1) Having capacity to make own decision concerning EFL reading; 2) Having capacity to control EFL reading 3) Having responsibility in EFL reading; 4) Having self-efficacy in reading”. The research unfolds the fact that during the reading activity, the successful student has the four characteristics.

Keywords: Autonomous Learning, EFL, Reading.

INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy or autonomous learning has been discussed for decades by many language educators. The terms that also spark varied from self-directed learning, independent learning, and. Thus, all the terms conclude the same definition that students are best learned by actively take control of their own learning. Additionally, the students not only take a full control of ones learning but also managing to stay responsible and motivated to reach the goal of their learning. In these process, there are two aspects that needed; metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences (Daunwong, 2007). Daunwong (2007) explains that metacognitive knowledge is the aspects that helps learner to plan, monitor, and evaluate the process of learning a language skill. The learners who are having the metacognitive knowledge also able to maintain and enriches their motivation to stay engaged with their learning process.

In the Higher-Education teaching and learning process, the methodology used is students-centred. Students-centred works as in which students are forced to be active in the learning process. Therefore, obtaining a great achievement during the process means that students are succeeded to actively manage their learning. Reading comprehension is one of the skills that need to be gained in the process. It is undeniable to find many college students that are unable to manage to read comprehensively on their own which shows that their autonomy in learning is lacking (Pang, 2008). In the tertiary level, students have minimal guide into strategies in their learning process. Therefore, during the learning process students should be

able to read many resources autonomously and gain a better understanding (Verdugo, 2004).

Knowing the urgency and benefits in becoming an autonomous reader, it is important to see deeper on Indonesian context. The present study aims to see college students learning autonomy especially in gaining a better reading skill. I will breakdowns the kind of activities that happened during the reading process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. STUDENTS AUTONOMY IN LEARNING TO READ

1) LEARNING TO READ

Reading is a complex process. It sounds narrow when reading be interpreted as a gaining information process only. Many experts define the reading as a combination of process. Urquhart & Weir (1998) define reading as “the process of receiving and interpreting information” from a text. Additionally, Wallace (1992) mentioned that reading involves some stages which are as followed; the capability of recognizing the word, understanding the meaning of the word, knowing the text forms, and finally interpreting the information provided. Further, Grabe (2009) explain the process in details. Grabe (2009) believed that reading process which occur in the working memory fluent L1 reading involves two processes of lower-level processes and higher-level processes. In the lower-level, the process that occurs are word recognition, syntactic parsing comprehension, and the encoding of meaning proposition. However, Grabe (2009) notify all reader that the ability of function all process does not directly lead reader to the reading comprehension. For example, in the syntactic parsing stage, one will have a clearer understanding of a text given if they can understand the two words or phrase rather than recognizing the word

unchained. This process is still far from comprehending a whole text given.

In contrast, Higher- Level processes involve “building a text model of reader comprehension and building a situation model of reader interpretation” and involves (Grabe, 2009). The operation of building a text model is an evaluation solely seeking what the author of the text tries to convey (ibid.). Differently, build situation model operates both evaluation and integration form the prior knowledge of the readers to the text (ibid.). Grabe (2009) extends that build situation model also can be addressed to the knowledge of varied text genre while the situation models are seek a point of view from the readers toward the text. These higher level processes needs a higher level of monitoring in helping reader to comprehend and understand the message (ibid.).

In the process, the reader can use either at the form of form of bottom up processing or top down processing. Grabe (2009) explains that the form of bottom up processing is the low level. The low level occurs as the reader recognizes words by word to gain understanding of a whole text. On the other side, the higher level occurs when the readers use both low level and high level. Hence, the process that occurs involves the activation of background knowledge, interpreting the meaning of the text, and word to word recognition. Additionally, Grabe (2009, p.14) mentioned many process that fluent readers encounters in reading; “A rapid process, An efficient process, a comprehending process, an interactive process, a strategic process, a flexible process, a purposeful process, an evaluative process, a learning process, and a

linguistic process”.

Furthermore, Arias (2007) mentioned some factors in choosing the text to be read. The factors that are closely related to students must suits the student’s L2 level, interest, purpose to read, needs, and lastly the background knowledge. Floris (2008) emphasizes the needs of authentic materials as he describes it as the source of motivation. The authenticity of the text will give students a real language use (Sánchez, Pèrex, & Gómes, 2010).

To extend, the reading activity is divided into two; intensive reading and extensive reading. Harmer (2007) defines intensive reading as an activity of reading that involves full guide from teachers in order to reach reading comprehension. Meanwhile, extensive reading is a reading activity that the readers do for fun.

2) STUDENTS AUTONOMY

The idea of autonomous learning has been introduced in 1971 and has started to trigger discussion and studies in language teaching and learning field ever since (Benson, 2001: 8). Dickinson (1995) defines autonomy as an attitude to be responsible for one’s learning. Additionally, Littlewood (1996: 428) strengthen the idea of autonomous learners as the learners who have capacity to make and decide independently.

Autonomy in learning a language plays an important role in making a learner to be proficient in language (Dafei, 2007). Benson (2001) elaborates the fact that the new era has significantly affect the theory and practice of language teaching and learning, and claimed that it is important tu guide the students to be autonomous in their learning activity.

Benson (2001) breakdowns the definition of being independent in learning as ability to decide the learning objectives, the learning contents and

materials, the technique for learning and for assessing the result. Additionally, Tabiati (2016) sums up the indicators of an autonomous learners in EFL specifically in reading skill as “1) Having capacity to make own decision concerning EFL reading; 2) Having capacity to control EFL reading 3) Having responsibility in EFL reading; 4) Having self-efficacy in reading”.

Learners’ self-efficacy beliefs is believed as the beliefs that benefits the learners as it boost thought and motivation (Bandura, 1999). Bandura (1981) defines self-efficacy as “people’s judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p.391). It means, self efficacy works as a belief that affects student’s motivation and behaviour to be a successful learner. Further, Klassen (2004) laimed that self-efficacy is a flexible concept.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used case study as the research method. McMillan and Schumaker (2006) emphasize that case study is designed to study in one phenomenon to understand in depth about certain phenomenon. Additionally, Cohen et. al, (2000) explains that the case study is made to observe a single unit such as a child, a group, or a community. Align with these ideas, this article will study one high-achieving student. The student has finished the bachelor degree program in English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty in Tanjungpura University.

The data collection used is in-depth interview. In-depth interview is the most vital techniques to obtain a qualitative data

(Holliday, 2002). The student were asked several open-ended question. The thematic analysis will be used to provide the result. Braun and Clark (2006) mentioned six steps in thematic analysis; (1) Familiarizing the data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes, (4) Reviewing potential themes, (5) Defining and naming themes, (6) Producing the report.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In order to find out the characteristics of autonomous learning that being applied by the student, the data obtained from the depth-interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. After performing the depth-interview to the participant, the data were transcribed and then

coded by the researcher. The themes were identified according to recurring the words and ideas on the data. At the end, these themes were highlighted and followed by discussion regarding to the theme provided. The results were as follow:

1) Decide the reading goals;

In tertiary level, the student needs to be able to read many types of text to answer or to finish a task given by the lecturer. Beside the book given by the lecturer, the internet is becoming the main sources for the student to get a better text to be read before jumping to the main text. This actually helps learner to comprehend the text better as the learner use the top- down process which is activating background knowledge.

In terms of learning English, I am aware that my English is not really good so I spare sometime to read English text online. I love to read English caption, or English tweets and quotes, slowly I am now can read a short story or long caption written in English.

The text given by the lecturer is really hard to read. I remember at first, I found it really difficult but as the time goes by I learn that there are a lot of easier text I can read from internet that helped me to read the given text from the lecture. Sometimes, the lecturer gives a task without any materials, and I browse internet to solve it too.

The student choose her own reading topic, and tries to find the text that fits her level. This activity helps her to comprehend the language better. She also stated that by keep doing the reading she can understand more difficult text.

2) Control the reading

When the student start to read by themselves, the student might find difficulties that can hinder or even lower their motivation to read. Not only challenges, the student also needs to ensure that they are learning something from their reading activities.

I love to challenge my self, for example today I will read one Tweet from Twitter and the next day I will tried to read longer sentences. I use dictionary too to help me understand the difficult word, and sometimes I use the word in my sentence so I can remember.

The student solved her challenges. One of the challenges uncovered is the difficult words. She managed to solve the problem on understanding the difficult word by using dictionary during her reading activities. She also worked and found that using the word can help her memorize the word longer. The more word gained, the better the fluency is.

3) Be responsible in EFL reading

Aiming to reach something and reading means that the student is taking the responsibility in the reading (Tabiati, 2016). It is not as simple as setting a goal and let the goal

work by itself. Aiming something in learning means that the learner knows the effectiveness of the learning activity.

I think I am responsible in my own learning to read because I finish what I started. I also ensure my self understand the text I read. Not to mention, I also succeeded in my project give by the lecturer and get a satisfying score.

The student explained that she feels responsible in her learning. She knows clearly that being responsible in reading means she needs to understand the reading text. Thus, she succeeded in achieving more tasks and challenges.

Activate self-efficacy in reading

Self-efficacy is defined as "the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997b, p. 3)." Therefore, the successful students perform well in managing her reading activity. She did well in learning as she confessed that her capability in reading increases. This also aligned with Pajares's (2005, p.345) definition that self-efficacy "is about learning how to persevere when one does not succeed.

I can say I maintain my reading activity like for example I ensure my self read some English texts randomly from twitter or Instagram. In my academic life, I failed to understand my texts given by my lecturer but I try my best to read them. I believe in the first year I found many difficulties, but I got better.

The students did perform well in managing her reading activity. She claimed that first year is the hardest. It shows when she starts to manage her learning activity. The beginning is never easy, but self efficacy works as a continuous process. Hence, if the students can learn her mistake and error and work to perform better continuesly, it

means she did have the self efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Being an autonomous learner has proven beneficial in advancing one's success in the learning process. Again, this article has unfolded the success story in Indonesia. The University has given the wide chance for the college students to be active in their learning. The methodology is far from teachers-centred which provide full guidance and control coming from the teacher. Therefore, in following the teaching learning process student need to be active, and being autonomous reader is vital. In being autonomous reader, the student needs to be able to 1) Having capacity to make own decision concerning EFL reading; 2) Having capacity to control EFL reading 3) Having responsibility in EFL reading; 4) Having self-efficacy in reading”.

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