

ON LINE READING ACTIVITIES IN READING CLASS FOR STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH AT IAIN BUKITTINGGI

Melyann Melani

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bukit Tinggi
melyannmelani@gmail.com

Abstract: Most foreign language (FL) readers have a more limited opportunity to develop automaticity in reading since classroom is the only meaningful place where they are exposed to reading. Automatic process in reading is the outcome of thousands of hours of meaningful input. It is something natural that most of FL readers are struggling in reading since most of them only spends a limited amount of time reading. As a matter of fact, reading strategies and skills, something important for automaticity and fluency in reading, are needed as a tool to access knowledge and to participate in the globalization era where English is used as a medium of communication. Asking students to be involved in an on-line reading activity rather than asking them to go to library or assigning them to read a lot number of text is more motivating and challenging for the students. This is due to the fact that internet has become an inseparable part of the life of most university students nowadays. They can access internet through cellular phone or wireless facility around campus area. Internet is a source of potential benefit in language classroom provided that the availability of free teaching and learning resources and activities that can be used in reading class. This article is going to describe some on-line reading activities that can be used in reading class.

Key Words: On Line Reading Activities, Reading Class

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by the globalization era where English is used as a medium of communication. People use English to interact in globalization era and it had a major impact on school systems around the world and the demand of reading in second or foreign language. In order to be successful in life, modern society must be good readers. It is possible to say that reading skills are not a guarantee for someone's success, but success will be harder to achieve without becoming a skilled reader.

The challenge for educators in this era is the ability to keep up with the advancement of technology. Teachers in Fl settings use computers and internet more frequently to facilitate teaching and enhance learning experience. Internet provides a lot number of sources of information which can be freely accessed by both teachers and students. Internet can be used to facilitate reading instruction since it can somehow improve motivation and participation of the students.

Most Reading classes in University level with students majoring in English in foreign language setting as it is at IAIN Bukit Tinggi lasts for approximately 100 minutes in a week. In those classes, students normally work with short text with close guidance from teachers. Teachers design reading class in such a way that they need to allocate time to activate students' background knowledge, to ask students to read the text, and they also need time for several other activities related to comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and other skills like speaking or writing. When we examine closely, the actual time that students spend reading is not more than 30 minutes in a week.

The limited amount of time that students spend in the classroom to read has lead the writer to encourage her students to read as much as possible outside of the classroom when they want to be fluent readers. Fluency is related to automaticity in reading. Automatic process in reading happens as a result of thousands of hours that someone spends in reading. Thus, relying only on classroom reading will not be sufficient when someone wishes to be fluent readers. On line reading activities can be used as an alternative medium to facilitate students to be better readers and eventually to be fluent readers since it provides numerous graded reading resources followed with several activities accompanied with individualized feedback on students' performance. This article, therefore, discusses theoretical background on using on line reading activities, what reading activities are available and how to use them in reading class.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of "reading" seems easy to understand and some people never realize the complex process that happens when they read. At certain situation, people unconsciously read things. They read instruction in an airport or on the street or they read information about a product they plan to buy in a supermarket. Other people, on the other hand, consciously read things like when they read a chapter of a book instructed by a teacher or an employee reading a document for job presentation. What most people are not aware of is what happen when they read and what do skilled readers do when they read.

Many people read different types of text with different purposes and there are different processes that take place when they read. In order to be able to read skilfully, it is important for readers to perform certain processes by using specific skills and strategies. Sometimes the term skill and strategies are used synonymously and sometimes they are used to describe the complementary relation. Both assumptions about skill and strategies show that the two terms are related. Afflerbach (2008: 366) clarified that skill is associated with proficiency of a complex activity and strategy is associated with a conscious and systematic plan. Nunan (2003: 77) also makes the distinction between strategy and skill when he stated that strategies are conscious actions that learners take to achieve a desired goal or objectives, while a skill is a strategy that has become automatic. Therefore, it is possible to say that strategies are actions that readers do consciously to solve problems when they read and it becomes skill when they do it automatically. For example, using context clues to guess the meaning of an unknown word can be both recognized as skills and strategies. The first time readers use context to guess the meaning of difficult word, they are using reading strategies since they plan the action consciously to figure out a meaning of a word by doing something. After sufficient practice of using context clues the student can finally use context clues automatically in guessing the meaning of a word without any systematic planning of how to use context clues.

Transforming strategies into skill is possible when teacher teach reading strategies explicitly and provide sufficient practice in using reading strategies outside and inside the classroom. An increased comprehension is expected to happen when reading strategies are taught explicitly and effectively (Paris and Hamilton, 2009:49). In teaching reading at IAIN Bukittinggi, the writer focused her attention on teaching reading strategies explicitly in the classroom in an intensive reading program. On-line reading activities are carried out by the students outside of the classroom as a means of practicing what they have got in the classroom. On line reading activities is important since it provides the students with the opportunity to practice on using reading strategies and to help students to develop automaticity. Grabe (2010: 28) stated that automatic process in reading is the outcome of thousands of hours of meaningful input. On line reading activities may also help FL readers since they may not have the same recourses outside the classroom to develop their reading skill; consequently their reading development in general may unfold more slowly Hedgecock (2009:52). Since students should also be encourage to read as often as possible extensively and intensively, Harmer (2007:101), on line reading activities can be used as an alternative tool.

3.0 ON-LINE READING ACTIVITIES

The internet users in Indonesia according to the Ministry of Communication and Information has reached the number or 150 million people (Kominfo :2015) and the numbers are increasing every single year. Some of the users are collage students. The fact that most college students are using internet, is a source of potential benefit in language classroom. Internet is beneficial in language classroom provided that it offers a wealth of resources for students to become active learners, Isisag (2012: 235).

There are several benefits of Internet use in foreign language classroom. It includes; increased motivation and participation by students (Warschauer, 1996); more opportunities to interact with the target language and content area because students spend more time on task (Kasper, 2000); greater integration of reading and writing skills and opportunities to practice them in meaningful contexts; the possibility to implement a pedagogy based on problem solving and critical thinking (Warschauer, 1999); more self-paced autonomous learning that is learner-controlled rather than teacher-controlled. (Mak, 1995); enabling the learner-centered approach (Kumari, 1998) and making English lessons more rewarding and encouraging the new way to bring about creativity and enthusiasm for learning, (Alexander and Elena 2005).

On line is the condition of being connected to a network of computers or other devices. The term is basically used to describe someone who is currently connected to the internet. On line reading resources is reading material you find online. It can be an online newspaper, magazine or television website such as NBC or CNN. Peer-reviewed journals, WebPages, forums and blogs are also online reading resources. Therefore, using online reading activities are reading activities using internet in language classroom. Some sites that offer free on-line reading activities are:

- a. <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/student-activities/>. This site offer reading activities that can be accessed with internet. There are many different text with different activities provided for the students. They can choose text and activities that are interesting for them. The reading activities ranges from games, computer activities, interactive activities, listen and read activities to writing activities.

- b. <https://readtheory.org/>. This sites provide passages with different topic and those passages are followed with comprehension questions. The answers to the questions are provided at the end of the activities.
- c. <http://www.jumpstart.com/parents/activities/reading-activities>. This site is especially designed for children but it doesn't mean that university students cannot use it. It encourages creativity and imagination and it also develop reading skill.
- d. <https://www.education.com/games/ela/reading/>. This site provides reading passages followed with educational games. The games are not only suitable for children; it is also suitable for adult learners.
- e. <http://www.esolcourses.com/>. It is an online free English lesson. This site provide reading activities practice with free interactive reading lesson, reading exercises, quizzes and games. The students can also choose lesson that are suitable with your current English proficiency
- f. <http://www.englishcentral.com>. This links provide reading materials with different range of topics with transcript. The reading materials are usually shorter in length as compared to what is available in VOA. This link will be very beneficial for those who want to improve vocabulary based on the reading materials. Vocabulary exercises are available following comprehension exercise.
- g. <http://www.esl-lab.com/>. It is a link that can be used for free by student with many different topics. Not only that, this link also provide pre-reading exercises, reading exercise, vocabulary and grammar, post reading activities and online investigation. The exercises are also provided with scoring feature where student can check their answer.
- h. Other sites. There are many other sites that are not mentioned here. When one wants to accessed those sites, they can use search engine and type the key word on online reading activities.

4.0 READING CLASS

In a reading class, several types of reading may occur as suggested by Brown (2001:301). Intensive reading is explained as approaching the text under a close guidance of the teacher or under the guidance of a task which forces the students to pay great attention to the text, Nuttal (1988:23). The classic procedures of intensive reading are the grammar translation approach where the teacher works with the students, using the first language to explain the meaning of the text, sentence by sentence. Nation (2009:27) stated that if intensive reading is to be done well there are several other focus that can be explored. They are; first, cohesion, where students can practice interpreting what pronouns refers to in the text, what conjunction relationship between sentences are and how different words are used to refer to the same idea. Second, the focus is on information structure. Certain texts contain certain kinds of information. News reports, for examples, can describe as what happened, what lead to the happening, what the likely effects would be, who was involved, and when and where it happened. Students can be helped to identify these different kinds of information. Third, the focus of intensive reading is on genre features. The vocabulary, grammatical features, cohesive features and information all contribute to the communicative effect of the text. Intensive reading can focus on how the text achieves its communicative purpose. Finally, the focus of intensive reading is strategies. Intensive reading can be used to help students develop useful reading strategies. Students can also receive training of certain reading strategies. As for teaching reading at IAIN Bukittinggi, the writer had already

stressed the importance of reading strategy in reading, therefore, strategies are used as the focus of the intensive reading.

Carrel and Carson (1997:49) described that extensive reading involves rapid reading of large quantities of materials or longer reading for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language. The writer uses on-line reading activities to foster extensive reading. In the classroom, the students are taught reading strategies explicitly and outside of the classroom they are carrying out on-line reading activities to practice the reading strategies as well as an attempt to foster extensive reading.

5.0 CONCLUSION

One of the challenge that are faced by educators in this century is to be able to keep up with the advanced of technology. Using internet, as one of the distinguished characteristics of this century, in language learning is believed to be effective and has enormous advantages in the process of teaching reading. In teaching reading, on-line reading activities is also effective to be used to promote reading ability since it can motivate the students to read, provide opportunity to practice and develop learner's autonomy.

6.0 REFERENCES

- Afflerbach, P., Pearson, D., Parris, S, J. 2008. *Clarifying the differences between reading skills, and strategies*. The Reading teacher, 61 (5), pp. 364-373
- Nunan, D. 2003. *Practical English language teaching*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill
- Paris, S.G., & Hamilton, E.E. 2009. *The development of children's' reading comprehension. Handbook of research on reading comprehension*. New York.: Routledge
- Grabe, W. 2010. *Reading in a second language. Moving from theory to practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hedgecock, J. S. and Ferris, D. R. 2009. *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and context*. New York: Routledge
- Harmer, J. 2011. *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Longman
- Harmer, J. 2007. *How to teach in English*. London: Pearson Education Limited
- Brown, H.D.2001. *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Adison Wesley Longman, Inc
- Nation, I.S.P. 2009. *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing*. New York:Routledge
- Nuttal, C. 1982. *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. London: Heineman
- Carrel, P. L., Carson, J. G. 1997. *Extensive and Intensive Reading in EAP setting*. English for Specific Purpose Journal. 16, p. 47-60