

POOR READING HABIT: AT GLANCE REFLECTION

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Abstract: English plays a very great role with the progress of globalization as a common international language for living in the 21st century. Thus, it is significant to promote the Indonesian students to acquire good literacy in both reading and writing in English. To achieve this, English which is comprised of language skills and components, in Indonesia, is learnt formally from elementary school to tertiary level of education. However, reading is as the basic underlying skill that people should have and the development of reading skills serves as the major foundational academic ability for all school-based learning. Yet, the length of study time and the important of English and English instruction does not promote the students' good reading habit yet. Reading has still been as the most difficult activity. Therefore, the teaching and learning of English, particularly on the teaching of reading need to be reconsidered. All elements of society, such as government, teachers, students, and parents are responsible for the improvement of this English language teaching and learning particularly to promote good reading habit.

Key word: reading habit

Although we know that English is an important language, but we have a problem to promote it. With the progress of globalization in the economy and in society, it is essential that Indonesian students acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language in order for living in the 21st century. This has become an extremely important issue both in terms of the future of the Indonesian children and the further development of Indonesia as a nation.

English in Indonesia is viewed as Foreign language that is learnt from elementary to tertiary schools. Even, nowadays, students of pre-school age such as play group (PAUD- Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini) and kindergarten have started to learn English. This is due to the awareness of the Indonesians on the importance of English as an international language. Learning English comprises of language skills consisting of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language components. However, reading is as the basic underlying skill that people should have. Cahyono and Widiati (2006) state that in the history of the English instruction in the Indonesian secondary school system, skills in reading texts written in English have been considered very important. English instruction in the school system in Indonesia aims at providing sufficiently well-

developed reading skills among Indonesians to read science-related texts written in English. Even, reading at the tertiary level is given in a series of reading comprehension (RC) courses which are intended to develop the students reading proficiency in English. EFL reading practices have been taken into account in an important role. Lyon (2001) states that the development of reading skills serves as the major foundational academic ability for all school-based learning. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) considers reading failure to reflect a national public health problem. This is supported by a survey of adolescents and young adults with criminal records indicating that at least 50 % having difficulties.

Reading is the most important activity in any language class. Reading functions not only as a source of information and a pleasure activity but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language. The development of reading skills serves as the major fundamental academic ability for all school-based learning. Without the ability to read, the opportunities for academic and occupational success are limited indeed. In line with this, Poulsten and Bruder (1976) as quoted by Hadi (2006) state that reading is the most important language skill. In countries where English is learned as a foreign language, the ability to read in English is usually considered as an important skill. Compare with other language skills, reading is viewed to provide a relatively stable foundation for the Indonesian students to develop their communicative competence in English. Students who face difficulties or even hardly ever have an opportunity of conversing English with the native speakers should have access to the literature and periodicals, or scientific and technical journals written in the language they are learning, English. Many will need these publications to assist them with further studies or their works. Others will wish to enjoy reading in another language in their leisure time. Ability to read in another language with direct comprehension and with fluency should be cultivated in progressive stages, and practiced at first with carefully selected materials which students can read with ease and enjoyment Rivers (1981).

Reading instruction at college level is full of mixed messages and inconsistency. This is supported by Ivey and Broadus (2001). One hallmark is an emphasis on students as individuals, yet teachers rarely differentiate instruction to meet students' need. Students are assigned to read increasingly complex materials, but teachers spend little time showing them how to be strategic. Students are expected to know how to read a wide range of texts, yet in school they are likely limited to teacher-selected class novels and textbooks. Teachers want students to be able to read critically, but they seldom allow them to initiate conversation about books. Most importantly, students are expected to become independent readers, yet they get limited opportunities to explore their own interests in reading, to read at their own pace, or to make their own decisions about whether or not to read a book.

In the Indonesian context, Renandya (2004) as quoted by Cahyono and Widiati (2006) states that EFL reading practice has been taken in a very important role, since the English instruction in the school system in Indonesia aims to provide sufficiently well developed reading skills among Indonesians to read science-related texts in English and reading abilities has always been the

primary objective of English instruction. Therefore, attention should be paid to reading, and studies have been conducted to bring about significant contributions to better understanding of reading processes.

The important position of reading instruction in Indonesia does not bring about the satisfying in-out classroom setting for reading practices yet. In addition, the length of study time which is usually started from elementary school or even pre-elementary school to high school does not promote the students' good reading habit particularly and their English proficiency generally. Reading has still been as the most difficult activity. As my own reflection as an English teacher teaching Reading Comprehension courses, I have found some barriers in relation to my students' difficulties in their reading comprehension such as lack of vocabulary, cultural bound, lack of motivation and negative attitude towards reading. Many students are likely to be reluctant EFL readers, although reading is considered to be an important language skill (Kweldju:2000). In addition to this, university students have commonly seen reading as uninteresting activity (Kweldju,1996), are known for negative attitudes and resistance toward reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth,1995). She, moreover, states that the reasons behind this lack of interest included students' limited background knowledge, inability to understand the content of the text, and complicated organizational structure of the text. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, encountering unfamiliar words can be a major roadblock in reading comprehension, especially if they happen to be keywords in a particular text (Kusumarasdyati at <http://www.aare.edu.au>).

Meanwhile, according to Rukmini (2004), as quoted by Cahyono and Widiati (2006), that the reasons behind the students' lack of interest included students' unfamiliarity with various genres employed in reading texts. Another constraint faced by the Indonesian students in their reading comprehension is teachers' teaching techniques. To read another language with direct comprehension and with fluency, it should be cultivated in progressive stages, and practiced at first with ease and enjoyment. Coming to this ideal step is not seemingly easy. However, an effort needs to be done in order to make this ideal step work well in the teaching and learning reading comprehension in order to reach the objective of EFL reading practice that is reading for comprehension.

Considering the above fact, the teaching and learning of English, particularly on the teaching of reading need to be reconsidered. All elements of society, such as government, teachers, students, and parents are responsible for the improvement of this English language teaching and learning. Government is responsible for making educational policies that support good conduct of the teaching and learning English, particularly to promote Indonesian students' reading habit. Although it seems that it is too difficult to do, we have to have beliefs that one important key to the success of teaching and learning English in Indonesia is to have (good) reading habit. Meanwhile, teachers are responsible for the real classroom process of conducting effective and successful teaching and learning English. To reach this great task, they have to continuously develop their professionalism. Moreover, students themselves should also have good motivation to always improve their learning process and achievement. Finally, these will not be sufficient to promote the success of teaching and learning

English in Indonesia without any parents' involvement in terms of financial support, motivational support to their children, their children's needs, the school needs including the perspective to the possibilities of curriculum evaluation and/revision, and subjects/courses availability in the school. Each element has its own important role and contribution to the success of teaching and learning English in the Indonesian context where English is as foreign language.

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