

EXTENSIVE READING; SOME SUGGESTIONS TO ITS TEACHING PROCESS AT STAIN TULUNGAGUNG

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Abstract: Extensive Reading possesses a very strategic role not only to improve the students' schemata and language skills, but also to shape the students' learning culture and attitude. Through reading a wide range of topics, the students will develop their knowledge on various issues. Besides, their varieties of language will also get improved since they will acquire new vocabularies and expression and their correct use in some contexts. Besides, a enjoyable and fun reading activities will finally motivate them to read more books autonomously. This new habit will help a lot in improving the students' self-learning enthusiasm. This article discusses some characteristic of extensive reading and some practical suggestions to improve the quality of the running Extensive Reading course.

Key Words: Extensive Reading, Teaching Process

Unlike the reading comprehension courses, extensive reading course is less well known and popular among the students as well as the lecturers although it is considered as the highest level of reading comprehension courses. It, evidently, can be shown from the posture of English curriculum at STAIN Tulungagung, -and also of other English departments at various universities, that Extensive Reading is commonly offered after the students complete the four Reading Comprehension courses: Reading Comprehension 1, Reading Comprehension 2, Reading Comprehension 3, and Reading Comprehension 4. In other words, the four reading comprehension courses are considered the pre-requisites of the Extensive Reading courses in which the students may not take this course before completing them.

As the result, Extensive Reading becomes a haunting course for its supreme distribution among the reading courses and a mistakenly pre-judgment as the most complicated reading course which presents uneasily digested materials. In addition, Extensive Reading is viewed as the continuation of the preceding reading courses. Consequently, it fails to attract more supporters among the students and the lecturers to seriously develop, and finally go immerse in, a more interesting extensive reading program.

Besides, from the teaching learning practice conducted by the lecturer, it can be described that the major classroom activities is that the students are instructed to read any kinds of stories selected by themselves and then are

presented to the class. This kind of teaching technique seems boring for the reason that there is no variety of activities along the semester.

There is, basically, wide dichotomy between the Extensive Reading and the Reading Comprehension Courses in term of the instructional objectives, the materials discussed, the reading resources, and the teaching techniques. This article is trying to propose alternative in conducting the Extensive Reading at universities.

CHARACTERISTIC OF EXTENSIVE READING

This section presents some characteristics of an Extensive Reading course which are developed form Day and Bamford (1998:7).

Students read as much as possible

In an Extensive Reading class, every student must read as much as possible perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom. The running Extensive Reading seems doesn't support this idea for some reasons: the students' learning attitude, the number of students in a class, and the limited time allocation of Extensive Reading course.

It is commonly indentified that the students are lack initiatives and self-autonomy to learn. It can be proven from any condition when the lecturer comes late or is absent from class. No learning activities will be possible since they always wait for the lecturer's instruction to read and learn their books. The students' dependence to the lecturer's presence is very high. Such kinds of learning attitude, of course, may not meet the objective of the Extensive Reading to provide the students with enjoyable reading activities. Therefore, certain changes of classical-based learning must be taken into consideration.

The number of the students in a class also affects the success of the Extensive Reading course. If the number of the students in the Extensive Reading class is too many, for example, therefore, the frequency of individual to share their reading, and the time allocation to read books become limited. With such number of students, the distribution of opportunity to read is fewer than those of less number of students.

At this university, the Extensive Reading course is offered as a two-credit-course which is taught once a week for about a hundred minutes each meeting. Comparing to the objective of this course to make the students read as much as possible, surely a hundred minutes a week sound really insufficient. If the number of minutes is divided by the number of students in a class, therefore, every individual will have opportunity to share their reading to class more or less only two minutes. In a month the students will only have eight minutes to share their reading to the class. This amount of time is surely still far from the ideal in which the students possess plenty time to read.

Changing the course into a more credit course is really impossible to be done, considering the posture of the curriculum. The alternative can be chosen is by reducing the number of students in the class, from forty into five or ten.

A variety of materials.

Ideally, the Extensive Reading course is supported by a library or a self access center which provides a variety of materials on a wide range of topics. The availability of the wide range of topics is as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways. Rationally, the students' interest and enthusiasm in reading can be improved by providing sufficient number of books and wide range of book choices. It turns out that the institution fails to provide those minimum facilities in reading courses.

So far in the running Extensive Reading course, the students are expected to bring their own short stories. What happened then is that the students will try their own effort to fulfill their need of English short stories. They will count on book stores which don't provide them enough English books but only some English translation of Indonesian folklores.

One way to meet that problem is by utilizing electronic books which, nowadays, is much more accessible. The students may utilize the internet to download varieties of material provided freely in the internet. The material can be in the form of e-books, newspaper article, journal, leaflets, or whatever they are interested in.

Students select what they want to read.

In the Extensive Reading course, the students are free to select any pieces of texts they want to read, and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them. So, the students may change the books they are reading in middle of course periods. This changing is allowed only with the reason that the books are not within their interest.

Something to be worried in this case is that when the frequent changing is used as the students' excuse not to seriously read the books. It is something quite common that most students are not fond of reading any books, even books in their own first language. Therefore, sometimes they will feel discouraged and demanded if they are instructed to read books in English and will find any possible excuse to escape from their responsibility to read and share their reading.

The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.

The purposes of reading are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the students. As the result, teachers may not uniformly defined one single objective of the Extensive Reading class. The students may set up their own reading objectives based their interest and the information they are intrigued to know more. As well as they can get pleasure and maintain their motivation in keeping reading books, it is enough for the teachers.

Reading is its own reward.

No test is administered in the Extensive Reading class because it is not intended to measure the students' comprehension toward the text. There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading. The Extensive Reading is not intended to check the students' comprehension of the information from the text, both general

and specific information. The students' enjoyment, pleasure, and their willingness to read have been a valuable reward for them. Therefore, teachers are supposed to think about psychological reward which may encourage the students to read more and more and to find themselves deeply immersed in reading activities.

Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students

In terms of vocabulary and grammar, it is suggested to provide the books or reading materials which are within the linguistic competence of the students. Easily read books may initiate further curiosity of the students to read more and challenge them to try out more difficult books, and issues out of their interest. But, too easily understood topics may also decrease the students' curiosity to know further. Likely, too difficult topics may also prevent the students from taking a look upon the books.

Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult. Besides, the use of dictionaries may change the students' orientation in reading books, from just enjoyment reading books to seriously study of vocabulary, which in turn will make them frustrated when they fail to understand the topics.

The teacher is a role model of a reader for the students

In the Extensive Reading course, the teacher is not 'somebody else'. The teacher constitutes a role model of a good reader for his/her students. Therefore, the appropriate teachers of this course must be the ones whose reading habits are excellent, be able to influence others to be active readers, be able to advocate the community to develop a reading community at school, and be appreciative to any effort shown by the students to learn to enjoy reading books.

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON RUNNING EXTENSIVE READING COURSE

In the following it is presented some practical advices to improve the running Extensive Reading Course adopted from Bell (1994).

Maximize Learner Involvement

A number of logistical hurdles have to be overcome in order to make an collected at the end of each reading session. Considerable paperwork is required to document the card file system, reading records, inventories, book reports and in maintaining and updating lists of titles. Students should therefore be encouraged to take an active role in the management and administration of the reading program. In the Extensive Reading program, students gained a strong sense of ownership through running the reading resources in an efficient, coordinated and organized manner.

The Reader Interview

Regular conferencing between teacher and student played a key role in motivating students to read the books. This enabled effective monitoring of individual progress and provided opportunities for the teacher to encourage students to read widely, show interest in the books being read, and to guide

students in their choice of titles. By demonstrating commitment in their own reading, teachers can foster positive attitudes to reading, in which it is no longer viewed as tedious, demanding, hard work, but as a pleasurable part of their learning.

Read Aloud to the Class

Reader interviews may be conducted with students revealed the popularity of occasions when the teacher read aloud to the class. The model of pronunciation provided acted as a great motivator, encouraging many students to participate in classroom reading. Students gained confidence in silent reading because they were able to verbalize sounds they previously could not recognize. This resulted in wider reading by some of the weaker readers in the class. Often thought of as bad practice, reading aloud should play a full part in motivating the emerging reader to overcome the fear of decoding words in an unfamiliar script.

Student Presentations

Short presentations on books read played an absolutely crucial role in the program and students frequently commented on the value of oral work in class for exchanging information about the books. The reader interviews revealed that most of the book choices made by students resulted from recommendations made by friends and not by the teacher. This demonstrates that given the right preparation, encouragement, sense of ownership and belonging, an extensive reading program will achieve a direction and momentum governed by the learners themselves; a large step in the promotion of student independence and autonomy.

Written Work Based on the Reading

Effective reading will lead to the shaping of the reader's thoughts, which naturally leads many learners to respond in writing with varying degrees of fluency. Elementary level students can be asked simply to write short phrases expressing what they most enjoyed about a book they read, or to record questions they wish to ask the teacher or other students in class. With intermediate students, book reports may be used, with sections for questions, new vocabulary, and for recording the main characters and events. At this level, summary writing is also a valuable practice because it allows learners to assert full control, both of the main factual or fictional content of a book, and of the grammar and vocabulary used to express it. Advanced students can be asked to write compositions, which, by definition, are linguistically more demanding written responses to the reading material.

Use Audio Material in the Reading Program

The use of audio recordings of books read aloud and of graded readers on cassette can be applied with the students in the Extensive Reading class, and is advocated for wide application. Listening material provided the learners with a model of correct pronunciation which aided word recognition, and exposed

students to different accents, speech rhythms and cadences. Student confidence in their ability to produce natural speech patterns and to read along with the voice of a recorded speaker is central to maintaining their motivation to master the language as a medium for talking about their reading.

Avoid the Use of Tests

Extensive reading programs should be "without the pressures of testing or marks" (Davis 1995:329). The use of tests runs contrary to the objective of creating stress-free conditions for pleasure reading because it invokes images of rote learning, vocabulary lists, memorization and homework. Extensive reading done at home should be under the learner's control and not an obligation imposed by the teacher. By their very nature, tests impose a rigor on the learning process, which the average student will never equate with pleasure.

Discourage the Over-Use of Dictionaries

While dictionaries certainly have a place in the teaching of reading, it is probably best located in intensive reading lessons, where detailed study of the lexical content of texts is appropriate. If learners turn to the dictionary every time they come across an unfamiliar word, they will focus only on the language itself, and not on the message conveyed. This habit will result in slow, inefficient reading and destroy the pleasure that reading novels and other literature are intended to provide.

Monitor the Students' Reading

In order to run an extensive reading program successfully, effective monitoring is required, both to administer the resources efficiently, and to trace students' developing reading habits and interests. A card file system may be used to record titles and the dates the books were borrowed and returned. Input from the monitoring process helps us to record students' progress, maintain and update an inventory of titles, and locate and select new titles for the class library. It therefore serves both the individual needs of the reader and the logistical task of managing the reading resources.

Maintain the Entertainment

This is perhaps the most important aspect of the program to emphasize. Teachers need to invest time and energy in entertaining the participants by making use of multimedia sources to promote the books (e.g. video, audio, CD ROM, film, etc.). They should also exploit the power of anecdote by telling the students about interesting titles, taking them out to see plays based on books, exploiting posters, leaflets, library resources, and even inviting visiting speakers to give a talk in class on a book they have read recently. In these ways, teachers can maintain student motivation to read and secure their full engagement in the enjoyment the program provides.

CONCLUSION

The above self contemplation and some constructive suggestions can be taken into the teacher's consideration to improve the quality of this course. Realizing the strategic role of this course, the Extensive Reading may not be neglected, and some serious efforts to develop the students' reading habit through this course must be initiated now on.

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