Using Writing Tasks as An Assessment in Extensive Reading in A University-Level EFL Course

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ABSTRACT

Extensive reading (ER) needs to be easy, enjoyable and lots of reading (Nation & Macalister, 2020). When learners read extensively, they read for pleasure and recreation, instead of studying vocabulary, grammar, idioms and looking up texts. This study seeks to assess students' understanding of ER through writing tasks, in other words, ER needs to be task-based. This study was a descriptive qualitative by using observations, questionnaires, and interviews as data collection. The participants in this study were students in the third semester of English education department at Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang who attended the extensive reading class. As a result, most students found it easy to use the writing task as an exercise, either while the student was reading the book or after they had finished reading the book. Second, the students were willing to be involved in creating portraits of the characters and writing illustration descriptions, including descriptions of the selected features. The research stages and results are recommended as a reference for teachers, lecturers and researchers in assessing reading literacy.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Assessment, Writing Tasks

INTRODUCTION

Extensive reading (ER) can be defined as casual reading that is done to help students enjoy and generally understand the subject when they are absorbed in books, magazines, and newspapers. Extensive reading, as defined by Suhartini (2012), is reading widely. In the shortest time possible, the object includes as many texts as possible. Hence, Nation & Macalister (2020) defined extensive reading (ER) needs to be easy, enjoyable and lots of reading. In this approach, the students read long texts and refer to a variety of supporting learning materials to enjoy reading and better understand the concept. Therefore, for long readings, the readers are searching easy and interesting text to advance their reading fluency and accuracy. The text is relatively simple and contains some unfamiliar words.

In line with this explanation, the students can choose their own

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books and materials on the subject that suits their interests. Also, there are no reports in class about what students have learned from reading. ER only helps to develop students' reading habits and make them greedy readers. Extensive reading (ER) is probably one of the best ways to acquire language implicitly (Renandya & Day, 2020). For that reason, it does not matter if the students recognize all the words to understand the concepts of the text. In a more general sense, when learners read extensively, they read for pleasure and recreation, instead of studying vocabulary, grammar, idioms and looking up texts.

At the higher level, the ER courses is designed to focus on improving students' reading comprehension. Bygate, Skehan, & Swain (2001) asserted task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective. Macalister & Nation (2020) added a perspective that there should be a focus on the message (that is getting the listener or the reader to understand), the task should be demanding but not too demanding, and there should be plenty of opportunity for such activity. It is short definition; all the words are important. Extensive reading should be more than just reading.

The assessment is clearly designed for early students learning to read. Assessing reading has been described as impossible (Brown, 2004). By showing the students' assessment, they can see what understanding they need to achieve higher grades. The researchers used this writing task to prepare for a higher level of reading comprehension. This is supported by Xu (2021) conducted research about Test Preparation Process for Writing Task. In terms of the processes for writing task as assessment, it shown, the students have proficiency tests, comprehensive, development skill and practice. Then, the students begin to interpret the text and work with non-linear narrative texts that use flashbacks and similar devices. They can create the same style of assessment to read the text. ER assessment is designed to develop reading comprehension and good reading habits. Therefore, the assessment should focus on the use of reading behavior and reading strategies, not the content of the book. As for the college English, plenty of researches have done to link task-based language teaching with reading. (Shen, 2005; Zhao, 2010; Li, 2011; Wei, 2011; Fu, 2015; Li, 2015). In other words, the solution is ER should be task-based in university level.

Preliminary study also exposed the Implementation of Authentic Assessment in Extensive Reading by Susani, R. (2018) in International Journal of Education. The researcher conducted extensive reading evaluation to recognize the meaning of difficult words, phrases and expressions. The data obtained show that the average overall reading comprehension of students was 80 in the very high category. It is recommended that writing task as an assessment applied in the teaching and learning of ER courses. The researchers conducted this research to find out that ER should be more than just reading and to assess the students' understanding of ER through
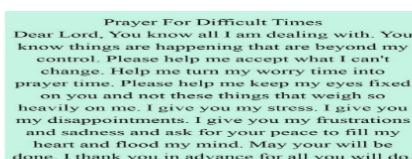
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writing tasks.

METHOD

The research employed qualitative descriptive methods. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), qualitative research is a descriptive, research. So that, data is collected using words or pictures rather than numbers. The extensive reading class was attended by fifteen students in the third semester of English Education Department at Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang, ranging in age from 18 to 21 years old. In addition to their classroom treatment, the students in the ER Class were expected to continue reading in their spare time, with a minimum of three pages per day of the books they chose. The researcher used qualitative approaches to analyze the data in this paper to identify and investigate how an individual or group develops their skill from time to time (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used qualitative approaches to analyze the data in this paper. The data is a description of the learning process based on observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The results of the observation, questionnaire, and interview were analyzed descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if an enhanced design of an Extensive Reading subject would result in significant improvements in learners reading literacy by using Writing task. There are many empirical studies on ER that have looked into the benefits of ER, but there are few studies that have looked into assessment techniques in ER, particularly with respect to different proficiency levels of students when it was widely used. (Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012). The present study thereby aims to examine the student's reading mastery by using writing tasks. At the initial stage, students are asked to read in detail the text given. Hence, if students really understand what has been conveyed in the text, students are asked by the lecturer to impersonate their side in the text by giving their position if they are be a part of the text on the story. Picture 1 is an example of a student's activity in the ER class.

Picture 1:

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In the picture above students are asked to explain "if you are God, will you granted this prayer above. In this case, students explained their answer based on their perception. In line with this explanation, students will consider the length and difficulty when selecting a text because excessive length or complexity may prevent them from enjoying the materials (Robb, 2013). Therefore, students are expected to have spirits and get easy to improve their reading skills through writing tasks. In the example of the image below, it can be seen the results of students' writing based on their point of view about the text. Even though this is a reading course, students can actively write down the results of their interpretation of the reading above.
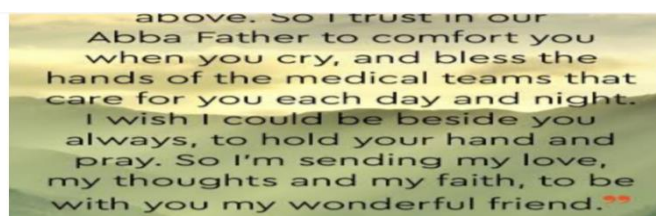
2. Write your interpretation from the text on the picture above with your own words

After reading the text above, we can see that this text is a prayer from a friend to another friend that is now sick. The prayer says he or she lays out their hope that the sick friend will know Gods touch and be healed. The writer or prayer trusts in Abba Father, that He is able to comfort the sick friend and bless the hands of the medical team.

In my opinion this writer or prayer of the text above really wants their friend to be healed. This prayer text is kind enough to hope and pray for his friend. The text itself is self explanatory, the prayer or writer is trusting God to heal his Friends. If I imagined myself as God, seeing this prayer will make me as God happily heal his or her friend.

Picture 2

Writing helps students integrate different sources of information and organize their thoughts; as a result, their thinking is more fluid, flex - ible, and tangible, "thus promoting conscious awareness and deeper comprehension" (Dorn and Soffos 2005, 47). So that, the results of using writing tasks to learn reading can improve their reading literacy. After implementing Writing tasks as an assessment in extensive reading in class, the researchers conducted interview with some of the students. The students stated that the implementation of writing tasks successfully could help students to be more enjoyable and motivated in Reading literacy like the following statement, "I am lazy to read too much books when do writing exercise I enjoy to read the text that my lecturer given to me. It might be because I am interested in method of learning, so I am challenging to read and understand deeper about the text.

The results of the observations showed that students could participate in ER learning more actively and the class atmosphere became more enjoyable. Students have the ability to read more so that they can see

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from various points of view. Students also added that by using writing tasks for learning reading make the students feel motivated and glad to learn reading, they sometimes get bored learning just by reading books, in here students can share their imagination and their feeling to share with other friends, so that the students provide a positive and active learning environment.

In addition, the researchers found an interesting perspective, supported by Green (2005) stated Extensive reading has for many years been seen as an important and motivating means of improving general language proficiency in a second language, the students had full of motivation when they described a text about the review of McDonald's movie by Bradshaw (2017). The students have to imagine as "Dick and Mac McDonald" founder and describe how Ray Kroc's fast-food system. The students were willing to be involved in creating portraits of the characters and writing illustration descriptions, including descriptions of the selected features.

The students described Ray Kroc's fast-food system as an inefficient way to run a business. Despite all of the things he has been through, he did not give up on making his fast-food system recognised by other people with moving from town to town. That was actually good, but it took a longer time for him to even recognised his own strength. In my opinion, the way that Ray was only waiting for someone to recognised his machine and depended on market demand was so–once again–inefficient. But if we have to see him from other perspective after his machine was recognised by McDonald, then actually we have to compliment him because of his persistency he could finally found something that he could snatched away from its owner and expand it as his–which is McDonald's company. As a result, most students found it easy to use the writing task as an exercise, either while the student was reading the book or after they had finished reading the book.

CONCLUSION

After the process of using writing tasks in Extensive Reading. Students can have the potential, ability and skills to collect, process and understand information for learning when doing reading activities. The researchers find that using writing tasks in Extensive Reading can help students improve their reading literacy. We can draw conclusion that the method can make reading activity more fun and enjoyable. It can be concluded, that teaching reading through writing tasks can improve the students' reading literacy.

Also, the research stages and results are recommended as a reference for teachers, lecturers and researchers in assessing reading literacy. The features might be noticed, first, the prompts put the student in the position of a character. They can remember information from story. They can request inference from the content of the story. By doing so, they

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can take advantage of their personal experience or they can be designed to facilitate the use of the target language.

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