

Teachers' Difficulties in Enhancing EFL Students' Reading Motivation

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Abstract: One of English teachers' major concerns in teaching reading is students' low reading motivation. Studies show that most of EFL learners are not highly enthusiastic when the teachers have them read English texts. Likewise, there have been limited efforts done by the teachers to address this problem. This study was therefore aimed to investigate the levels of students' reading motivation, teachers' difficulties in enhancing students' reading motivation, and teacher effort to overcome the problems of motivating students to read. The participants were three EFL teachers and 12 students of junior secondary school in East Java. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation. The result of semi-structured interview revealed that most of students had low reading motivation due to their understanding of difficult words in the reading text. Added to this, the major difficulty of teachers to enhance students' reading motivation is related to increasing the interest, dedication and confidence of students in solving difficult vocabularies while reading English texts. This major difficulty reported by the teachers is in agreement with students' report on their low reading motivation due to their limited vocabulary. Then, the result of observation showed that rewards had different effects on students' reading motivation and the teachers should improve their efforts to enhance students' reading motivation. Hence, several strategies such as reward, metacognitive reading strategy, reciprocal teaching method, reading aloud to improve students' reading motivation were also suggested.

Keywords: *EFL Teachers' difficulties, reading motivation, EFL students*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' efforts in motivating students play important role in learning process. It is reflected on classroom activities so that raising the activities of the teachers is necessary. There is no exception in English Language Teaching (ELT) realm, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. EFL teachers have various problems, one of which is related to developing students' reading motivation. Thus, understanding the difficulties of EFL teachers to elevate students' motivation to read English texts is important. Since motivation encourages improvement in students' reading. A theoretical ground postulates that motivation is critical for reading development (Senturk, 2015).

Likewise, understanding EFL teachers' difficulties in improving learners' reading motivation is the avenue to reveal factors that impede the EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. Substantial scholarship shows that learners' motivation in reading

impacts on learners' reading comprehension skill (Takaloo & Ahmadi, 2017; Wigfield, Gladstone & Turci, 2016; Knoll, 2000). Thus, in a nutshell, comprehending EFL teachers' difficulties to develop learners' reading motivation is the foundation for learners' L2 reading development and comprehension skill.

Despite significance of understanding EFL teachers' difficulties to motivate learners in reading, the researcher taking into accounts the importance of the study to be conducted in Indonesian context. Emerging studies in Indonesia have only touched the students' motivation. For example, a study of Salikin, et.al, (2017) explored the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of EFL students in Indonesia to read English texts. Moreover, a study of Iftanti (2012) merely investigated Indonesian EFL students' reading habits. Therefore, there has been paucity of knowledge in the field on the difficulties of Indonesian EFL teachers to increase students' motivation to read English texts. Thus, this study seeks to extend our understanding of Indonesian EFL teachers' difficulties to improve students' motivation to read English texts.

Issues in regards to teachers' difficulties in language learning and teaching have recently received great attentions. A study of Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2014) reveals that EFL teachers face difficulties in grammar instructions such as explicit grammar teaching, error correction, the use of grammar terminology, and so forth. However, these difficulties are found greater faced by the students than the teachers. Furthermore, a study of Ali, Hassan, Nazli, Sarfraz, & Rehman (2015) on EFL teachers' difficulties teaching English in elementary level in rural areas shows that the teachers face serious problems such as limited ICT facilities, students' low interest in English, and so forth.

The studies of Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2014) and Ali, Hassan, Nazli, Sarfraz, & Rehman (2015) demonstrate that the voices or perceptions of teachers to face or reconcile the problems of learning and teaching are critical to be heard and responded. This is to ameliorate the quality of language education practices in the field. Likewise, it is an avenue for reflective learning and teaching for other language teachers. In this paper, the issue of teachers' difficulties is addressed. This study refers teachers' difficulties to the perceptions of EFL teachers to enhance students' motivation to read English texts, the problems that the teachers face and how they reconcile the problems.

Discussions on reading motivation are prolific and lead to one central point, that reading motivation is pivotal for the success of language learning. Reading motivation determines the favorable intentions, dedications, confidence, or the behavior of language learners to read L2 reading texts. This is based upon a study which shows the nature of reading motivation consisting of interest, dedication, and confidence of learners to read Cambria & Guthrie (2010). "An interested student reads because s/he enjoys it, a dedicated student reads because s/he believes it important, and a confident student reads because s/he can do it" (Ahmed, 2016, p.3). In addition, a research demonstrates that reading motivation is the drive of individual to read based upon the beliefs, attitudes, and goals for reading (Conradi, Jang, & McKenna, 2014).

Another existing concept of reading motivation widely used by reading motivation studies is from Wigfield & Guthrie (1997). In this taxonomy, the reading motivation encompasses eleven components: challenge, curiosity, importance, efficacy, reading involvement, social competition, recognition, grades, reading work avoidance, and compliance. Grounded from this theoretical framework, with the goal of enriching the

discussions of teachers' difficulties to increase reading motivation, the present study also explores the students' reading motivation.

The emerging studies on EFL teachers' difficulties only addressing the issues of grammar teaching and learning and teaching English to elementary students in rural areas, this study is thus perceived a fairly novel and original. This study concerns on the difficulties of EFL teachers to enhance students' reading motivation in secondary level. The research questions are therefore formulated as follows:

1. What is the state of reading motivation of the students?
2. What are the difficulties of EFL teachers to enhance that state of students' reading motivation?
3. What efforts have the teacher done to enhance students' reading motivation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative method was applied with the participants consisting of three EFL teachers and 12 students of junior secondary school in Ngawi, East Java, Indonesia. The EFL teachers were from grade VIII (two teachers) and grade VII (one teacher). Besides, the students were from three different classes, each from grade VIII and VII. Each class was represented by two students.

Observation was conducted in order to know the process of teaching and learning reading in the classroom particularly on teachers' effort to enhance students' reading motivation and students' response toward teachers' effort. The observations were conducted three times, once with the T1, once with the T2 and once with the T3.

In addition, semi-structure interviews were performed to reveal the state of students' reading motivation, teachers' difficulties to increase students' reading motivation, and teachers' effort to enhance students' reading motivation. The interviews were conducted twice, once with the teachers and once with the students, based on the guidelines of reading motivation from Wigfield & Guthrie (1997) modified and developed based on the context of EFL learning and teaching in Indonesia. Besides, the data analysis was referred to qualitative analysis from Thorne (2000) which involved comprehending the synthesizing, theorizing, and decontextualizing the phenomenon: the state of students' reading motivation, teachers' difficulties to increase students' reading motivation and teachers' effort to improve students' reading motivation. Furthermore, the data were coded as follows: "SRM" stood as "students' reading motivation", "TD" stood as "teachers' difficulties", "TE" stood as "teachers' efforts" and "T1" stood as "teacher one", "T2" stood as "teacher two" and "T3" stood as "teacher three".

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part was divided into three points i.e. the state of students reading motivation, teachers' difficulties in enhancing students' reading motivation and teachers' efforts in enhancing students' reading motivation.

The State of Students' Reading Motivation

The results of semi-structured interviews with the 12 junior secondary school students showed that 10 students had low reading motivation while the other two had high motivation. The students with low reading motivation thought that reading English texts were difficult, particularly in terms of understanding the meaning of difficult vocabulary and getting the main idea of the passage. Moreover, the students who had low reading motivation felt that English was a complicated language and the same words might have different meanings and pronunciations. One student also stated that she had low reading motivation because she perceived that the English reading materials/texts given to her were difficult. Only two students were found having good reading motivation. One student loved reading English texts while the other was due to the influence of parental language talk; the parents used English as a mean of communication in the house. The results of the semi-structured interviews were presented in Table 1.

| Code | English Reading Motivation | |
|---------|--|--|
| | “How is your motivation in reading English texts?” | Reasons |
| SRM.S1 | “still low if reading English texts” | “Difficult” |
| SRM.S2 | “if reading English texts, still low” | “sometimes, I feel difficult to read English texts, makes me overwhelmed and hopeless” |
| SRM.S3 | “low, so I need to increase” | “have many difficult words” |
| SRM.S4 | “low” | “the texts is difficult” |
| SRM.S5 | “ I think low, I need to improve” | “difficult to get the point of the passage” |
| SRM.S6 | “low” | “difficult to understand” |
| SRM.S7 | “I think low..,” | “I get many difficult words” |
| SRM.S8 | “lack of motivation in reading English” | “my English is not good” |
| SRM.S9 | “no motivation” | “the language is complicated” |
| SRM.S10 | “low...” | “the grammar” |
| SRM.S11 | “I have very good reading motivation” | “because my mother is very good in English, used English at home, so I love read.., read.., English” |
| SRM.S12 | “I just love reading English” | “because I want to have good English” |

Table 1. Students' Reading Motivation

Teachers' Difficulties in Enhancing Students' Reading Motivation

The results of semi-structured interviews with the three English teachers of junior secondary school show that the major difficulty of the teachers was to increase the favorable attitude of the students in reading. Particularly, when the students faced the difficult vocabularies, they were not patient to look for the meaning and therefore they were bored of the class and

reluctant to continue reading. The second one was that the teachers were difficult to read aloud English sentence with good pronunciation. The third one was teachers' difficulty to make students bring English dictionary to help them in reading English texts. The results of semi-structured interviews with these three teachers on their difficulties to enhance students' reading motivation are presented in Table 2.

| Code | What are your difficulties to enhance your students' reading motivation?" |
|-------|---|
| TD.T1 | "Students still do not understand the meaning of difficult vocabularies. It is difficult to increase their willingness to find out the meaning of new words. They are lazy in reading" |
| TD.T2 | "They are lack of interest in reading English. A lot students are also lack of good pronunciation in reading aloud" |
| TD.T3 | "Increasing students' effort when students face difficult words, for example the words 'enough', 'life', 'live', homophone words such as 'write' and 'right', 'wait' and 'weight'. The word 'enough' is different in spelling and pronunciation. The words 'life' and 'live' also different in the use. Then, the homophone words are same in pronunciation but different in spelling". |

Table 2. Teachers' Difficulties in Enhancing Students' Reading Motivation

Teachers' Efforts in Enhancing Students' Reading Motivation

The result of observation revealed that the teachers had limited effort on enhancing students' reading motivation. The learning activities seemed bored and monotonous. This situation arose due to inappropriate teaching technique. In addition the result of semi-structured interviews with the three English teachers showed that two of them (T1 & T3) gave rewards to the students. The rewards given by the first teacher (T1) to the students were in the form of expression such as 'good', 'you did a great job', and so forth. Then, the first teacher (T1) also asked students to read aloud the English text in turn and answer questions related to the text being studied. Moreover, the third teacher (T3) gave students gifts in the form of point or additional score to the students who could translate correctly and guess difficult words in the reading text. The last effort had done by the second teacher (T2) was giving students a task to translate the English text. The results of the semi-structured interviews about teachers' efforts were presented in Table 3.

| Code | "What efforts have you done to enhance your students' reading motivation?" |
|-------|---|
| TE.T1 | "I gave compliments such as 'good', 'you did a good job', 'great'. I also asked students to read aloud in turns and gave questions for the material or text being studied." |
| TE.T2 | "I gave students the task to translate text or dialogue" |
| TE.T3 | "I gave reward or gift in the form of point or additional score to students who could translate correctly and guess difficult vocab in reading" |

Table 3. Teachers' Efforts in Enhancing Students' Reading Motivation

The presented three tables reveal the teachers' difficulties in enhancing the students' reading motivation and the levels of students' reading motivation. Table 1 indicates that most of the students have low English reading motivation. The major factor contributes to this low state of reading motivation is from the difficulties of the students to understand the difficult words/vocabularies in the English reading texts. These difficulties are confirmed by an emerging empirical ground showing that learners who have knowledge of grammar and vocabularies will have good intrinsic motivation in reading English text than those who do not (Salikin, et al., 2017). Thus, vocabulary knowledge is critical in improving students' English reading motivation.

Pondering the students' low reading motivation is due to understanding the difficult vocabularies in English text; this result is an agreement with the opinions of the teachers on their difficulties to enhance the students' low reading motivation. Table 2 shows that the major highlight of teachers' difficulties is to raise the willingness of students to solve difficult vocabularies. In other words, the teachers have difficulties to increase the nature of reading motivation of the students, interest, dedication and confidence (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010) in solving difficult vocabularies.

In addition, Table 3 shows that the most frequent efforts done by the teachers to enhance students reading motivation are giving reward and translate the English text. However, the reward is given to the students who have done the correct things. Unfortunately, there was only one teacher (T1) who used teaching reading strategy (e.g., read aloud strategy).

Based on the result of observation, the T3 reward (e.g., additional score) seemed to work well in enhancing students' reading motivation. This could be seen from students' performance. They were voluntarily answered the T3 questions about the meaning of particular difficult words and the translation of some sentences as it gave additional score for them. On the other hand, the T1 reward (e.g., compliment) seemed did not work well. Most of students who got in turn to read the text seemed unwilling to do. Thus, it is assumed that not all type of rewards did work to enhance students' reading motivation. The effect of reward on students' motivation depended on types of reward used, the reward expectancy, the reward contingency, and the attributions made for receiving the reward (Chen & Wu, 2010).

Furthermore, the result of observation of the T2 indicated that asking students to translate the English text into Indonesia seemed could motivate them to read the text. Most of students opened their dictionary and discussed with other friends about difficult vocabularies. However there were some students who had conversation and made some noise. They relied their work on other students.

As a matter of facts, strategy is undoubtedly essential in learning process as it affects on students' motivation to read. There are several strategies that can be used to enhance students' reading motivation. A study of Meniado (2016) showed that metacognitive reading strategy had positive effect on students' reading interest/motivation. The result of t-value was 2.64 with (r) value 0.374 at 0.01 level of significance means that there was a positive correlation between reading strategy and reading interest/motivation. In addition, reading aloud has positive effect on students' motivation to read independently (Hemerick, Kari Ann; 1999).

In addition, Al-Nafisah and Al-Shorman (2011) stated that giving students opportunities to choose their preference topic of reading materials can also raise students' interest. Students' are more enthusiastic when they read what they like. Yet the reading materials they choose should be meet with the curriculum. Added to this, interesting and appealing texts from various genres will also contribute on students' reading motivation (Protacio, M. S., 2012).

Moreover, the study of Sahab (2014) stated that reciprocal teaching method improved students' reading interest. They encouraged being more communicative and active in the learning process. In addition, Gunawan and Ratna (2019) revealed that reciprocal teaching method lead students become more active during the learning process. They can answer the question directly after given by the teacher. Thus, reciprocal teaching method considered to be effective to increase students' reading motivation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The major contribution of this study to the knowledge field of teachers' difficulties and reading motivation research is the finding that students' low motivation in reading is due to students' difficulties in understanding difficult words/ vocabularies. This finding is an agreement with the opinions of the teachers on their difficulties to enhance students' low motivation in reading English texts. The teachers postulate that their major difficulty is to increase students' favorable attitude towards reading English texts due to their inability to understand the difficult words, and alleviate their boredom. In addition, some different efforts done by the teachers do not work well in enhancing students' reading motivation.

All in all, reward can be used as an effort to enhance students' motivation by considering types of reward that used, the reward expectancy, the reward contingency, and the attributions made for receiving the reward. Furthermore, several teaching strategies such as metacognitive reading strategy, giving students' preference of reading topic, reading aloud, and reciprocal teaching method consider being more effective to enhance students' reading motivation.

Suggestion

For other researchers who are interested in investigating teachers' difficulties, it is better to do observation in order to enrich the data of teachers' difficulties during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. For the teachers, it would be better to give rewards and support to the students both who can do the correct things and the others who have not been able to complete the task from the teacher correctly. In addition, teachers can provide extensive reading activity to make students' more interested in reading. For the junior secondary level, giving reading aloud activity is the right choice. It is suggested that the teachers read the text aloud so that students can learn from them.

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