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PROMOTING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN READING CLASS

By
Agus Sholeh
sholeh_agus@unikama.ac.id

Dwi Fita Heriyawati
dwifita@unikama.ac.id

English Education Department
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Kanjuruhan University of Malang
Jl. S. Supriyadi No. 48 Malang – East Java – Indonesia

Abstract

Some students found that reading is a difficult subject for some controversial topic for years; nevertheless, learners' reading acquisition and awareness can improve the quality of their reading skill. To have good acquisition and awareness in reading, the learners need a long and continuous process. Therefore, the learners are required to have autonomy in learning reading, learner autonomy refers to learner responsibility to their own learning process. Autonomy as the ability to lake charge of one's own learning" and "playing an active role in learning". This study presents how to promote learner autonomy in reading class by combining learner-centered reading teaching and extensive reading teaching. Learner-centered reading teaching refers to inductive approach, while extensive reading teaching deals with deductive approach. Learner-centered reading teaching was carried out through group discussion, presentation and language awareness activities. Meanwhile, extensive reading teaching was done to review the learners' materials in presentation and reinforce their acquisition. Those two different approaches were applied due to differences on learner's characteristics and needs. The result showed some success in the practice of autonomy, indicated by changes on learners' attitude. However, many learners showed that they focused more on obtaining score than on developing their language acquisition. By implementing the approach, the teacher can assist learners to be aware of their ability to learn independently and equip them with the skill needed for long-life learning.

Keywords: autonomous learning, learner-centered in teaching reading, Extensive reading teaching

INTRODUCTION

"Reading" is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us. Reading can be silent (in our head) or aloud (so that other people can hear), furthermore, Hadfield, J. (1999) states that reading is a receptive skill, through it we receive information. But the complex process of reading also requires the skill of speaking, so that we can pronounce the words that we read. In this sense, reading is also a productive skill in that we are both receiving information and transmitting it (even if only to ourselves). "Reading" is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us.

Reading can be silent (in our head) or aloud (so that other people can hear). Reading is a *receptive* skill - through it we *receive* information. But the complex process of reading also requires the skill of speaking, so that we can pronounce the words that we read. In this sense, reading is also a productive skill in that we are both receiving information and transmitting it (even if only to ourselves).

Learner autonomy has been claimed to be an ultimate goal of education for a long time and has been identified as a complicated capacity that potentially has a great impact on personal growth and achievement (Benson and Dang, 2009). The autonomy positively affects language learning and it is no doubt that learner autonomy is a prerequisite for effective language learning. During the past decades, moreover, researches have claimed that learner autonomy can increase motivation to learn and consequently increases learning effectiveness (Sanprasert, 2010).

Learners commonly are not willing to take responsibility for their learning process and will not find it easy to reflect critically on the learning process. That is why there is a need for an attempt in ongoing classroom practice to promote learner autonomy. This paper describes how to promote learner autonomy in reading class by combining learner-centered reading teaching and extensive reading teaching.

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AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

Autonomous learning basically refers to learner responsibility to their own learning process, the term autonomy has come to be used in at least five ways: a) for *situations* in which learners study entirely on their own; b) for a set of *skills* which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning, c) for an inborn *capacity* which is suppressed by institutional education; d) for the exercise *of learners ' responsibility* for their own learning; e) for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning (Ridley, 1991)

Further Little (2008) defines that learner autonomy as a holistic view of the learner that requires us to engage with the cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and to worry about how they interact with one another. The cognitive dimension refers to the thinking and reasoning skill. This dimension is closely related to the brain activities in receiving, manipulating, and processing information.

Weiner (2000) states that meta-cognitive dimension is identified as general skills through which learners manage, direct, regulate, and guide their learning, i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In the planning phase, the learners identify learning goals and define how the goals can be reached. This phase is usually carried out before the learning process takes place. Besides, this phase can be done when the learning process is in progress that is called *planning-in-action.* If so, it is possible for the learners to change their learning goals and consider the method to reach it. Next phase is monitoring. In this phase, the learners monitor their own learning process. They monitor how they learn and identify difficulties they face. The last phase is evaluation, in which the learners evaluate the outcome of their learning process. The evaluation at this phase has three steps. Those are: 1) the learners examine the outcome of their learning process; 2) the learners define criteria for assessment; and 3) the learners apply the assessment and evaluation.

Affective dimension deals with learner attitudes. Attitude is a part of learners' perception about themselves, other people, culture in which they live, or culture related to what they learn. Attitude is also related to how the learners respond to what happens in their environment. Besides, the attitude is much influenced by learner motivation. The motivation can be classified into two kinds. They are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation comes from the learners themselves, while extrinsic motivation comes from their environment. Social dimension is related to learners' skill in communicating and interacting with others in their learning process. To be autonomous learners, they are required to have good communication skill. They need to interact not only with the teacher, but also with their peers or other learning resources.

In the reading class, not all of those aspects could be covered to promote the learner autonomy, particularly in sharing the setting of learning goals. Due to the policy of developing curriculum, the learners were not involved in designing the course program. Accordingly, the learning goals were taken from course syllabus available in English Department Kanjuruhan University. However, the learners understood the purpose of their learning program because the teacher introduced the syllabus at the beginning of the course. Besides, they were extensively informed about their responsibility in the learning process. The teacher also gave opportunities for the learners to take initiatives in doing' learning activities and selecting learning resources. Next they were trained to review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness. To promote learner autonomy in reading class, the teacher applied the combination of learner-centered and extensive reading teaching.

LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING IN READING

The concept of learner autonomy is closely associated with the concept of the learner-centered classroom. Lamb and Nunan (2001) define learner-centered classrooms as those in which learners are actively involved in their own learning and the decision-making process. The process starts with learners' awareness about preferred learning styles and approaches. The learner-centered approach does not mean leaving learners alone without teacher's support. Instead, the teacher's role is even more significant than that in teacher-centered instruction (Whisler, 1991)

The concept of learners centered in teaching reading also supported by Edwards (2004) introduces an action research process for the teachers who aim at learner-centered reading teaching; the teachers who want to encourage their students to find out a

grammatical rule for themselves come up with a principle that students should learn inductively. The inductive (rule-discovery) learning means the learners first study examples given by the teacher and works the rules out for themselves. On the other hand, deductive (rule-driven) approach means the reading rules are simply presented by the teacher. In other words, the deductive approach refers lo extensive reading teaching.

The inductive approach also promotes cognitive ability of learning. It helps the learners develop the skill to investigate and explore language autonomously. Harmer (2001) names the inductive approach "discovery learning" and points out that discovery learning may not be suitable for all learners because there are two types of learners: analytical and holistic. Analytical learners extract rules from examples and test hypotheses, while holistic learners learn best by doing little or no analysis; instead they learn by exposure to large chunks of language in meaningful contexts (Connell, J. P., & Wellborn, J. G, 1991). Therefore, discovery learning may not be suitable for holistic learners but suitable for analytical learners. Teachers should take learner variables into consideration. Every learner has different learning strategies and styles, and not all learners take a single approach.

In this study, the learner-centered reading teaching was carried out through group discussion, presentation and language awareness activities. Those activities were done in practicum classes. The learners in each class were divided into some groups of three or four learners. Each group was given particular topic to learn. They decided their own time to search the references from various resources and discuss the topic in group. The activities could encourage the learners to be active in the learning process, and train their teamwork skill. Nevertheless, there was a weakness because some learners did not learn actively. They only relied on other members who were active.

Having discussed the topic in groups, each group was responsible for presenting the discussed topic in a class discussion. To activate the learners in presentation activities, the teacher noted the learner participation. The learner participation in those activities was one of consideration in giving final score. By implementing presentation activities, the groups could learn each other; improve their self-confidence and speaking skills.

Next activities were related to learner's language awareness. Masats (2006) defines awareness as "being aware of something" and "knowing about it, either because you have thought about it or because you have just noticed it". In the context of second language learning, Stern (1992) cited by Masats (2006) argued in favor of developing language programs whose educational goals went beyond proficiency objectives and stated that there was the pedagogical need to introduce a general language awareness component into the language curriculum.

The language awareness activities in the reading class were done by the learners through reviewing their language performance written and orally. Learner's written performance was got from their activities in writing a composition individually. Afterwards, they identified any kind of errors occurred in their work and made correction to the errors. Meanwhile, learner's oral performance was taken from their conversation with their partner. Here, the learners make a conversation in pairs, and their conversation was recorded in a video. With the video, the learners wrote the transcript of their conversation. Next, they reviewed their performance by identifying weaknesses and errors in the conversation. Having identified the errors, they were required to make correction. From those activities, the learners were able to have reflection on and evaluate their learning process.

EXTENSIVE READING TEACHING

Extensive reading teaching that refers to deductive approach was done to review the learners' materials in presentation and reinforce their acquisition. It is necessary for the teacher to review and explain the topic more clearly lo ensure better understanding of the learners. Besides, it could be beneficial to give reinforcement to what the learners learned from their learning activities.

In addition, Shaffer (1989) investigated the deductive (extensive reading teaching) and the inductive (learner-centered reading teaching) approaches using different instructors, one Spanish and two French teachers. In the inductive learning process, students were required to express orally what they had learned about the rule in the

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lesson. It was effective for these instructors to confirm learners' understanding of the rule. The inductive approach was thought to be unsuitable for complex structures or, at least too difficult for weak learners. However, Shaffer's research findings suggested that the inductive approach worked efficiently for both the hardest structure and the weakest learners. Furthermore, the inductive approach enhanced active participation by students. Shaffer suggested that teachers incorporate both inductive and deductive approaches into their classroom in a meaningful context.

According to Dam and Legenhausen (1999), evaluation in autonomous language learning involving linguistic and other outcomes combines internal and external assessments. Internal assessment consists of surveys, learners' self-reflections, and teacher-learner talk. External assessment comprises such tests as reading, vocabulary, and discourse structure. In the autonomous classroom, learners are stimulated to develop capacity of critical reflection on their learning process; thus the focus is more on internal than external assessment. Based on the background of the research, this study focuses on "how autonomous learning work on students' extensive reading?"

METHOD

This study is qualitative because the data were collected by using observation, field note, and test. The goal is to raise learner autonomy in reading class, in which the teacher applied combination of learner-centered in teaching reading and extensive reading teaching by applying autonomous learning. Learner-centered reading teaching was carried out through group discussion, presentation and language awareness activities. Meanwhile, extensive reading teaching was done to review the learners' materials in presentation and reinforce their acquisition.

The participants consisted of 54 students of English Department Kanjuruhan University who enrolled the reading class. The data was collected through observation and personal documents. Observation was used to get data about learner activities in reading class, including group discussion, presentation and language awareness activities. The collected data that were analyzed qualitatively and comprehensively were personal

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documents, in the form of learner's written work and video recording, provided data about language awareness.

FINDING

In this study, the evaluation was conducted through observing learner's attitude during teaching learning process and analyzing learner's written and oral performance. Learner's attitude was observed during presentation, discussion, and language awareness activities.

Result showed some success in the practice of autonomy, indicated by changes on some learners,' attitude. Some learners showed positive change in the learning process. They were more responsible for their learning, had initiative to solve their problems, and "improved their reading mastery. However, some learners showed that they focused more on obtaining score than on developing their learning autonomy and language acquisition.

The teaching learning process of reading in English Department Kanjuruhan University was divided into two different activities. Those were a 60 minute for lecture or theory class and a 60 minute reading exercises. The reading class was enrolled by 54 of learners. In the theory activities, the whole learners joined the class altogether. Firstly, the teacher explains to the students how to do autonomous learning in extensive reading, and the practicum class was mostly carried out by doing written exercises provided on students' worksheets. That condition resulted in the learners who were less active and relied only on the teacher's presentation and instruction. Referring to some successes in the practice of autonomy those are on changes on some learners' attitude "more responsible for their learning, more initiative to solve their problems in extensive reading.

A very positive response given by the students regarding the implementation of this strategy. This is indicated by very enthusiastic students in following the learning process, students who have a weakness in understanding the content of reading greatly helped in Autonomous learning strategy. Some students who previously tended to be passive to more active and more excited when learning takes place because the activity in small groups are well-coordinated. By collaborating with members of the group, students can improve their

skills in understanding the content of reading.

The achievement of learning outcomes were analyzed based on the student's ability to understand the content of reading in the classroom when the autonomous learning strategies implemented and the results of the final test after the student autonomous learning strategies applied. Based on observations and the results of the students' final test, it was found that nearly subjects gained significant progress in their ability to understand the content of reading. It is based on the achievement and increases their value after the end of the tests carried out.

Almost all subjects (89%) managed to obtain better score since there are 3 student scored 60 and 65, 11 students scored 70, 7 students scored 75, 2 students scored 80. While the two students scored 85. In other words, more than 75% of the subjects reached a minimum value required for success in the classroom reading comprehension.

Final results showed that 89% of subjects managed to obtain good values. Based on the findings of this activity, it can be concluded that the application of Autonomous learning strategies improve students' understanding of the content of reading texts. Almost all subjects (89%) managed to obtain the good value.

Another proof of the progress of the students is a significant rise in the average grade. Before the Autonomous learning strategies implemented in the classroom, the average value of students is 64, with 80 the highest value and the lowest value of 50. After Autonomous learning strategies implemented in the classroom, the average value of students to 73, with 85 the highest value and the lowest value of 60. This indicates that there has been a significant increase in the ability of the students in understanding the content of reading after the application of Autonomous learning strategies in the classroom.

Discussion

The result of this study indicates the changes on some learners,' attitude since some learners showed positive change in the learning process, more responsible for their learning, had initiative to solve their problems, and "improved their reading mastery. However, some learners showed that they focused more on obtaining score than on developing their

learning autonomy and language acquisition. The implementation of autonomous learning strategy gives a lot of positive effects for students in the learning process in the classroom as what Reinders (2010) stated that the principles of learner autonomy could be a) Autonomy means moving the focus from teaching to learning, b) Autonomy affords maximum possible influence to the learners, c) Autonomy encourages and needs peer support and cooperation, d) Autonomy means making use of self/peer assessment, e) Autonomy requires and ensures 100% differentiation. Autonomy can only be practiced with student logbooks which are a documentation of learning and a tool of reflection, f) The role of the teacher as supporting scaffolding and creating room for the development of autonomy is very demanding and very important, g) Autonomy means empowering students, yet the classroom can be restrictive, so are the rules of chess or tennis, but the use of technology can take students outside of the structures of the classroom, and the students can take the outside world into the classroom.

Attempts to the process of autonomous learning have been strongly influenced by learning as a matter of supported performance and emphasizes the interdependence of the cognitive and social-interactive dimensions of the learning process. According to this model, the teacher's role is to create and maintain a learning environment in which learners can be autonomous in order to become more autonomous. The development of learning skills is never entirely separable from the content of their learning, since learning how to learn a second or foreign language especially in reading English text is in some important respects different from learning how to learn other subjects.

The key techniques of autonomous learning are: use of the target language as the preferred medium of teaching and learning from the very beginning; a) the gradual development by the learners of a collection of useful learning activities; b) and ongoing evaluation of the learning process, achieved by a combination of teacher, peer and self-assessment. Posters and learner logbooks play a central role in three ways: they help learners to capture much of the content of learning, support the development of speaking, and provide a focus for assessment. How to support the development of learner autonomy is also a key issue for self-access language learning schemes. Where self-access learning is not implanted in a taught course, it is usually necessary to provide learners with some kind of

advisory service: learner counseling is central to the self-access literature. The most successful self-access projects tend to be those that find effective and flexible ways of supporting learners; particularly worthy of note is the approach developed for post readers (Dam and Legenhausen, 1999).

CONCLUSIONS

This study can be concluded that the practice of autonomy changes on some learners' attitudes, some learners were more responsible for their learning were more initiative to solve their problems.

Students also very positive response because they were very enthusiastic when they do joining the extensive class, and students who have a weakness in understanding the content of reading also were greatly helped in Autonomous learning strategy, and were more active and more excited.

Good values were also obtained by 89% students, based on the findings of this activity, it can be concluded that the application of Autonomous learning strategies work on students' understanding of the content of reading texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendation are addressed to teachers or lecturers as educational practitioners in the field as well as other researchers for lecturers are experiencing problems in teaching courses which require students' understanding of the content of reading (Reading Skill) of the English text, especially on subjects reading comprehension advised to implement strategies autonomous learning as one method or strategy that is proven to increase the ability of students and provide many positive effects for students. In its application the appropriate measures must be implemented properly. For other researchers, it is suggested for other researchers to conduct studies on autonomous learning strategy in the other subjects that will further prove the effectiveness of this method in many subjects.

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