PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING EFL READING IN INDONESIA: VIEWED FROM FIRST LANGUAGE (LI) USE TO CHECK LEARNERS' COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

In spite of widespread use of English in English Foreign Language learning, the use of First Language (L1) in EFL classroom is still indispensable to teachers and learners. The aim of this qualitative study was to discover teaching EFL reading in senior high school students that was assessed retelling activity (RTA) as a performance assessment by utilizing L1 as a checking device. Teaching EFL reading class is based upon the standards of performance assessment and the principles of the strands of learning English course that are incorporated in L1 use to check learners' comprehension. Two instruments were used in this study including questionnaire and interview of which each question covered behavior aspect and attitudinal aspect The findings of questionnaires showed that (1) almost all students encountered learning difficulties , consisting of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, translation, and text comprehension, in EFL use in their performance assessment, (2) almost all students encountered learning facilities, consisting of L1 meaning familiarity and text understanding, by L1 use in their performance assessment. These are supported by students' interviews that described (1) their learning difficulties in EFL use that consisted of word meaning and text understanding, (2) their learning facilities in L1 use that consisted of L1 meaning familiarity and text understanding.

Keywords: first language (L1) use, English foreign language (EFL) use, performance assessment, retelling activity (RTA).

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English, in Indonesia, is as a Foreign Language due to not widely used in learners' immediate social context (Troike, 2006:4). Teaching reading in Indonesia is as a teaching English Foreign Language Reading (EFL Reading) (Cahyono&Widiaty, 2006:37). Two types of learning EFL reading cover *learning to read* by learning L2 characteristics (Nation, 2009:6) and *reading to learn* by employing reading strategies (Boke & Hewitt, 2004:11).

Study about reading habit in EFL reading by Iftanti (2012:152-158) showed three reasons of Indonesian students' reading habit covered (1) only few EFL students who had a good reading habit, (2) EFL students' purposes to read English text because of English knowledge and skills, (3) students' motivation to read English text because of school assignment.

Hamra & Syatriana (2010:34) found some reasons of students' learning of EFL reading text difficulties included lack of vocabularies, learning support, knowledge of words, phrases, paragraphs, and text, application of reading strategies, reading skills and reading interest, reading amount, reading motivation and pronunciation difficulties.

Nation, K (2008:249-264) states two specific deficits of reading comprehension comprise (1) decoding difficulties for slow decoding process, (2) linguistic comprehension for lack of literal understanding.

One of the performance assessments in teaching EFL reading is retelling activity (RTA) (Gibson, Gold., & Sgourus, 2003:4) which provides learners with language production, organization of thoughts, and interpretation of personal prior knowledge (*Education, B.C.T,2004:2).*

2. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND L1 USE TOWARDS THE STRANDS OF LANGUAGE COURSE

Four goals of performance assessment comprise (1) judging the level of learners' competency in reading skill, (2) producing useful information about learners' knowledge, (2) monitoring students' processing skills, (3) engaging students in learning activities, (4) presenting learners' understanding of content area (Abedi,2010: 4).

One of the performance assessments for teaching EFL reading is retelling story which involves readers' integration and reconstruction in parts of the story to build story comprehension (Gibson, *et al*., 2003:1).Two advantages of retelling activities (RTA) comprise (1) students' comprehension advantage of getting the text understanding and oral communication, (2) students' assessment strategy advantage of knowing learners' understanding, essence of the story, vocabulary, and oral development (Rog, 2003:123).

Three reasons of L1 use in EFL classroom cover (1) the same L1 use among learners in EFL classroom, (2) the easiness of L1 use in communication, (3) EFL classroom activities in L1 use such as conversation, intensive reading, and discussion (Solhi&Buyukyazi, 2011: 860). Moreover, Hidayati (2012) found L1 use from Indonesian teachers in teaching EFL reading were to explain difficulty in vocabulary items, grammar points, and classroom instruction.

Meyer (2008:147-149) states five reasons of L1 use in EFL classroom comprise (1) L1 and EFL use as a language instruction (2) homogeneity of learners' language in EFL class, (3) L1 use as a comprehension check, (4) students' motivation for L1 use explanation (in Harbord, 1992:352), (5) students' requests for L1 use clarification to avoid misunderstanding and embarrassment.

Solhi & Buyukyazi (2011) found L1 use in EFL classroom covered: (1) the teachers' reasons of allowing learners' L1 use in EFL classroom included (a) learners' relaxed and confident feeling in L1 use, (b) learners' ability to explain unclear and difficult matters, (c) avoidance of learners' misunderstanding. (2) Teachers' reasons of not allowing learners' L1 use in EFL classroom included (a) inadequate learners' opportunity to practice EFL use, (b) learners' ability to develop EFL use and improve EFL use. (3) Teachers' reasons of L1 use in EFL classroom included (a) the same language between teacher and students in EFL classroom, (b) L1 use to explain difficult grammatical pattern and vocabulary, (c) L1 use to explain low level students, (d) L1 use to make learners' relaxed and confident feeling, (e) L1 use to check comprehension, (f) avoidance of ambiguity and confusion; (4) teachers' reasons of not using L1 in EFL classroom covered (a)learners' pronunciation correction and input, (b) learners' thinking skills and communicative competence enhancement.

English course explicates four strands covering meaning-focused input by using receptive skills to get message. Meaning-focused output is by using productive skills to express message. Language-focused learning is by using meaning-focused input and output to focus on message understanding and language feature. Fluency development based on previous knowledge of linguistics and content is by using receptive and productive skills (Nation, ISP, 2009:1-2).

Three aspects of the relationship between L1 use and four strands of English course are (1) L1 use and meaning-focused input and output by gaining L2 text by L1use (meaning-focused input) to reach L2 performance (meaning-focused output). (2) L1 use and language-focused learning by focusing on EFL linguistic feature by L1use (meaning –focused input & output). (3) L1 use and fluency development by discussing o recall information based on previous knowledge by L1use (Nation, P, 2003:5). L2 input t

3. METHOD

Descriptive qualitative design was used to describe and interpret learners' experience to determine the meaning of their experiences of each in their learning participation (Ary, *et al*. 2006:461) and to explore learners' experiences to develop detailed understanding of central phenomena (Creswell, 2012:16). This study involved 117 senior high school students in Batanghari, East Lampung.

Distributing questionnaires were based on method of group administration (Dornyei,2003:82) by utilizing response-keyed questions for subsequent questions (Tuckman, 1999:239). Semi-structured interviews to study specific situation to validate information from other sources (Julie, 2009:1) based the method of focus group interview were used to collect several individuals' understanding to get specific people's views (Creswell, 2012:218). Therefore, questionnaires were distributed to 117 students; meanwhile, interviews were conducted to 6 students.

Interviews and questionnaires consisted of two aspects covering (1) behavior questions to obtain learners' habit in the past time, (2) attitudinal questions to explore learners' opinion (Dornyei,2003:8).

Response counting technique was used to analyze questionnaires (Tuckman, 1999:271); meanwhile, coding technique was used to analyze interviews (Tuckman, 1999:270).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Utilizing First Language (L1) as a facilitating device for EFL reading class is presented in the findings in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to 117 senior high school students that are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Responses to Performance Assessment in EFL Reading Class by Utilizing L1

No	Question concerns	Yes	No
1.	Students' fondness for English when secondary school.	68%	32%
2.	Students' difficulties in learning English.	99%	1%
3.	Students' experience in learning reading by retelling activity in Indonesian language when secondary school.	79%	21%
4.	Students' experience in learning reading by retelling activity in Indonesian language in senior high school.	83%	17%%
5.	Students' easiness to understand a text in retelling activity from English text to Indonesian language.	97%	3%
6.	Students' motivation in retelling activity in Indonesian language.	90%	10%
7.	Students' difficulty in retelling activity using Indonesian language from English text to understand text.	17%	83%
8.	Students' easiness in retelling activity from English text by using English to understand text.	19%	81%
9.	Students' difficulty in retelling activity by using English	90%	10%
10.	Students' comprehension on English text by retelling activity by utilizing English.	13%	87%

Three questions in behavior aspects from question 2,3, and 4 and seven questions in attitudinal aspects from question 1,4,6,7,8,9, and 10 were equipped with reasons of each except question 2 and 4 due to the questions purpose for confirmation for students' learning English difficulty and retelling activity (RTA).

Most students (68%) stated they had liked English since secondary school due to their willingness to be able to speak English well. Meanwhile some students (32%) stated they disliked English due to their difficulties of vocabulary and sentences. The findings indicated that the students' English difficulties were linguistic comprehension as affirmed by Nation, K (2008:249-264).

Almost all students (99%) stated English is difficult subject due to their ignorance of vocabulary, pronunciation and their difficulties in grammar. The findings indicated that the students' EFL learning reading difficulties in linguistic feature which were confirmed by study by Hamra & Satriana (2010) showed students' learning difficulties in EFL reading covered vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

Many students (79%) stated they had been familiar with RTA since secondary school. Most students (83%) stated it was not their first time to perform RTA by EFL use. These findings showed that RTA in EFL reading learning was not a strange teaching technique for them.

All students (97%) stated RTA by Indonesian language provided them with easiness in understanding English reading text due to their L1 familiar meaning as an easier way to understand English reading text than EFL use. The findings indicated that the students' learning easiness in understanding EFL reading text referring to L1 word meaning familiarities which were affirmed by Solhi&Buyukyazi (2011:860) stated the reasons of L1 use in EFL classroom due to the same L1 use by teacher and students as an easy communication in conversation, intensive reading, and discussion in EFL classroom.

Almost all students (90%) stated RTA by Indonesian language provided them with high motivation due to their easiness in recalling reading content. The findings indicated that students' motivation for RTA by Indonesian language from their easiness in EFL text understanding which were confirmed by Meyer (2008:147-149) stated L1 use that could provide students with motivation and clarification to avoid misunderstanding and embarrassment.

Almost all students (83%) stated they did not find difficulties in performing RTA from EFL reading text by Indonesian language due to their L1 meaning familiarities. The findings indicated that RTA by L1use

providing learners with meaningful texts which were confirmed by study by Solhi & Buyukyazi (2011) found L1 use that provided them with unclear and difficult explanation ability.

Almost all students (81%) stated it was not easy to perform RTA by English language due to (1) their ignorance of vocabulary, pronunciation, and text meaning, (2) their difficulties in text understanding .The findings indicated that students' learning EFL difficulties in performing RTA in linguistic and comprehension which were confirmed by Hamra & Syatriana (2010:34) stated the reasons of students' learning difficulties due to lack of vocabularies, pronunciation, knowledge of words, phrases, paragraphs, and text.

Almost all students (90%) stated it was difficult to perform RTA by English due to (1) their difficulties in translating and understanding text and memorizing text (2) their ignorance of vocabulary and pronunciation. The findings indicated that students' learning EFL difficulties in RTA from text meaning and text understanding which were affirmed by Hamra & Syatriana (2010:34) found Indonesian students' difficulty in EFL text due to vocabularies and inadequacy of knowledge of words, vocabularies, reading text, and pronunciation.

Almost all students (87%) stated RTA by English did not show their text understandings due to their ignorance of vocabulary, words, text meaning and content. The findings indicated that students' learning difficulties in RTA by EFL use from text meaning and text understanding which were affirmed by Hamra & Syatriana (2010:34) found students' difficulties in EFL learning due to lack of vocabulary and knowledge of words, pronunciation difficulties, reading skills, and reading interest.

The results of the two aspects of the questionnaires about RTA are illustrated in Figure 1.

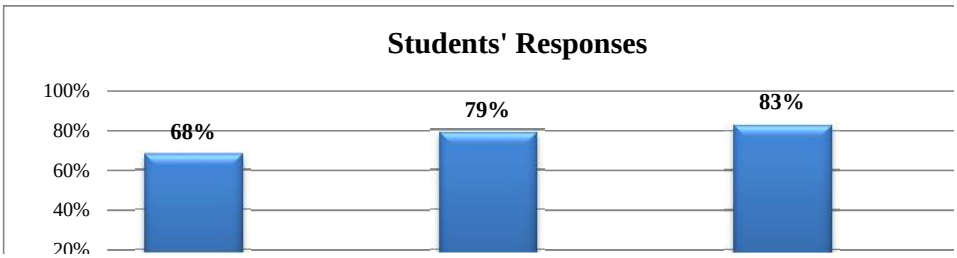


Figure 1. Students' Responses from Behavior Aspects

Findings on the students' responses from behavior aspects revealed that almost all students have been familiar with RTA but they still found it difficult to learn English. The results of students' responses from attitudinal aspects are illustrated in Figure 2.

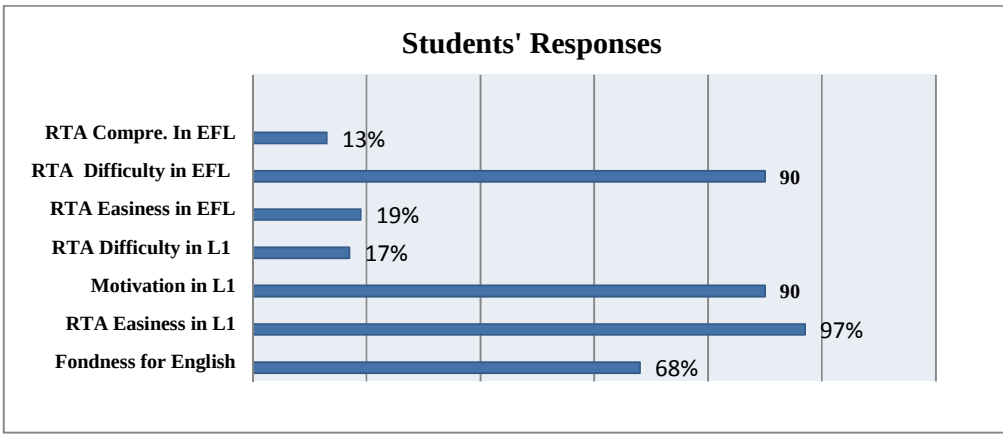


Figure 2. Students' Responses from Attitudinal Aspects

Findings on the students' responses from attitudinal aspects revealed that (1) almost all students found it difficult to comprehend EFL reading text by EFL use, (2) almost all students found it easy to comprehend EFL reading text by L1 use.

Semi-structure interviews were conducted to *focused group interview* which consisted of six senior high school students. Two aspects of interview questions, in which question 2 in behavior aspect and questions 1,3,4,5, and 6 in attitudinal aspects, were analyzed by coding technique that are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Responses to Performance Assessment in EFL Reading from Interview.

No	Questions Concern	Response	Coding
1	Students' difficulties in text understanding	Yes. The students' difficulty in meaning, vocabulary, and text understanding.	X Difficult -Easy - Other
2	Students' experience about retelling activity in EFL reading	I ever joined retelling activities when I was in secondary high school	X Ever -Never -Other
3	Students' easiness in retelling activities in Indonesian language	I felt easy to retell activity in Indonesian language because it would be easy to understand text.	X Easy -Difficult -Confused
4	Students' difficulties in retelling activity in English language	I feel difficult to retell activities in English because I found that vocabulary and pronunciation were difficult so that I could not speak English fluently	-Easy X Difficult -Strange
5	Students' comprehension in retelling activity in English language.	I could not understand it because I did not know the meaning and the story content,	-Comprehend X Not comprehend -Confused -Other
6	Students' preference retelling activity in Indonesian or English language.	I prefer Indonesian language because I could comprehend the text easily	-English X Indonesian -Other ..

Students' text understanding difficulties revealed that they still found it hard to comprehend EFL reading text due their difficulty in vocabulary, meaning, and text understanding. These findings were confirmed by questionnaire responses which indicated that almost all students (99%) found English as a difficult subject due the difficulty of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

Students' experiences about RTA in EFL reading class revealed that they had been familiar with RTA which were confirmed by questionnaire responses indicated almost all students (83%) found it not strange to perform RTA in EFL reading class.

Students' easiness in RTA by Indonesian language revealed that RTA by L1 use provided them with easiness. These findings were confirmed by questionnaire responses indicated that almost all students (97%) found it easy to perform RTA by Indonesian language due to their L1 meaning familiarities and text understanding.

Students' difficulties in RTA by English language revealed that they found it more difficult to perform RTA by English than by Indonesian language due to their vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning difficulty. These findings were confirmed by questionnaire responses which indicated that almost all students (81%) found it not easy to perform RTA by EFL use.

Students' comprehension in RTA by English language revealed that RTA by English did not show their text understandings due to their ignorance of meaning and story content. These findings were confirmed by questionnaire responses which indicated that almost all students (87%) found RTA by English which did not show their text understandings due to text meaning and text understanding difficulties.

Students' preference for RTA by Indonesian than by English language revealed that they preferred Indonesian language due to their easiness in text understanding. These findings were confirmed by questionnaire responses which indicated that almost all students (97%) found it easier to perform RTA by Indonesian than by English language due to L1 word meaning familiarities.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The use of L1 in EFL classroom was still needed by teacher and students to assist the students to check learners' understanding and clarify reading substance (Meyer, 2008:149-150). Two main findings of this

study revealed that (1) learners' difficulties in EFL use in EFL classroom covered vocabulary, pronunciation, word meaning, grammar, and text understanding; (2), learners' easiness in L1 use in EFL classroom provided them with their easiness in understanding EFL reading text substance to avoid misunderstanding EFL text and embarrassment.

With regard to EFL learning classroom interaction, it is suggested that English teachers should not force their students to fully utilize English in the learning classroom interaction for checking device in EFL classroom to avoid misunderstanding, confusion, and embarrassment. English teacher should employ L1 use to teach poor reader to guide their comprehension. As stated by Hidayati (2012), English teacher's L1 use in teaching EFL reading class can promote classroom interaction when explaining difficult vocabulary, grammar, and learning instruction.

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