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THE CORRELATION OF READING SPEED AND READING COMPREHENSION IN XREADING

Ita Nur Ekasari
Universitas Negeri Surabaya
ita.17020084034@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Keunggulan *Extensive Reading* (ER) untuk meningkatkan penguasaan Bahasa telah diakui secara luas untuk mengembangkan kelancaran membaca siswa yang mana hanya bisa dicapai setelah mereka dihadapkan pada sejumlah besar teks tertulis. Banyak penelitian juga menemukan bahwa kecepatan membaca (sebagai indikator untuk mengukur kelancaran membaca) memiliki korelasi positif dengan pemahaman bacaan. Di era modern ini, ada pergeseran dari program ER berbasis kertas menjadi program ER berbasis online digital dengan bantuan platform membaca seperti XReading. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam studi korelasi karena bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah kecepatan membaca siswa memiliki hubungan dengan pemahaman bacaan mereka. Penelitian ini melibatkan 53 mahasiswa jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu perguruan tinggi negeri di Surabaya yang mengikuti program ER wajib melalui situs XReading. Hasil penelitian melaporkan adanya korelasi yang sangat rendah antara kecepatan membaca dan pemahaman bacaan (r = 0.062).

Kata Kunci: Kecepatan membaca, Pemahaman bacaan, XReading.

Abstract

The eminence of Extensive Reading (ER) to improve language acquisition has been widely recognized to develop students' reading fluency which can be acquired after they were exposed to a huge quantity of written text. Considerable number of studies also found reading speed (as an indicator to measure reading fluency) has a positive correlation with reading comprehension. In this modern era, there is a shift from paper-based ER program to digital online-based ER program with the help of digital reading platform such as XReading. This present study is categorized as a correlational study since it attempts to know whether or not students' reading speed have a relationship with their reading comprehension. This study involved 53 students majoring in English Education at one of state universities in Surabaya who take mandatory ER program using XReading platform. The result reported that there was a very low correlation between reading speed and comprehension (r = 0.062).

Keywords: Reading speed, Reading comprehension, XReading.

INTRODUCTION

Reading as one of the abilities that must be mastered in order to learn a language is critical to improving one's knowledge. When studying a language, the ability to read is essential since it is applied in every part of life, both inside and outside the academic setting. Reading in academic setting is defined as reading with the aim to improving one's academic knowledge and skills (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012), such as reading articles, books, and journals to gain information. In contrary, reading for recreational purpose is defined as non-obligatory reading activities that usually done in free time and out-of-school context in order to gain personal satisfaction from reading itself (Putro & Lee, 2017). It can be seen from daily activities such as reading newspaper, magazines, comics, and chatting online.

Reading as one of the signs of literacy, is described as a mode to decipher a written discourse (Iftanti, 2012) and reading comprehension is largely based on the amount of information readers can retrieve from a text, and the inferences and connections that they can make within and across texts. More than that, reading is also a process that involves both mental and physical activities (Rosyida & Ali Ghufron, 2018). One of the mental processes involved in reading is decoding, that is, turning the written form of a word into a familiar spoken form with a known meaning. It also plays as an important part in the process to obtain information (Rosyida & Ali Ghufron, 2018), a source of joyous activity and extending linguistic expertise (Iftanti, 2015). Thus, in can be inferred that reading is a complex process to acquire information and interpreting written discourse.

Teaching Reading

Reading is a skill that must be actively learnt and taught. The most common approach in teaching reading is by reading extensively and intensively. Harold Palmer may have coined the term Extensive Reading (ER) in 1917 (R. R. Day, 2018). ER, in his opinion, is distinct from Intensive Reading (IR), which he defined as the attentive and close reading of a book in order to study and understand FL grammar and translate it into the students' first language (L1). Meanwhile Laufer (1981), in her article categorized intensive method as "reading short text, through work on its language and reading problem" while extensive method means "reading long passages with almost no work on language, but tackling reading strategies".

According to Bamford & Day (1998), there are four ways to teaching second language reading: grammar-translation, comprehension questions, skills and strategies, and extensive reading. These approaches of teaching reading are not mutually exclusive and they might be used in any language courses or language classrooms depending on the necessity. The first third of the approaches above can be considered as intensive reading. It aims to help students gain a deeper grasp of lexical and syntactic structures by using short passages in textbooks (Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018). It is also in accordance with Renandya (2007), intensive reading in his view seeks to assist students obtain comprehensive meaning from text, improve their reading skills, and to expand their grammatical knowledge and vocabulary.

IR can be described as in-depth reading in which the material has to be read carefully and thoroughly, in order to obtain specific ideas with the purpose to help pupils improve their reading skills and academic knowledge. The IR approach appears to be the main strategy for teaching reading in many language classroom since it provides students with strong foundation in language skills (Renandya, 2007; Tagane et al., 2018). To be able to develop reading skill, IR with explicit instruction is indeed necessary. However, solely doing IR restricts target language exposure that leads to sluggish reading and will probably create unfavorable attitudes to target language reading as students always read challenging texts that they might not like (Suk, 2017). Many researchers argued that IR only is not enough because it will not make learners develop reading fluency and reading speed.

ER is the kind of reading approach in which students read and use vast numbers of reading materials to increase the reading fluency and reading speed of students. Without the demands of tests and marks, ER can be done wherever and whenever. Pupils can read as many books as possible and teacher motivates and tracks the students' development. Krashen (2004) described Free Voluntary Reading as the function of ER in language education where learners read because they want to, without book reports and/or questions at the end of the reading activity. Grabe & Stoller (2011) described extensive reading as an approach which learners read large quantities of material that are within their linguistic competence (p. 286). It is in line with Bamford & Day (2004), "extensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language" (p. 1). The two definitions shared the concept that learners read large amounts of text while doing ER.

Various terms are used to refer ER such as recreational reading, leisure reading, extracurricular reading, and voluntary reading, which share the definition of non-compulsory reading activities in spare time and outside school to get personal satisfaction through reading itself (Putro & Lee, 2017). Despite the various names, experts agreed that ER is the best methoed to improve language acquisition and reading extensively in the target language is an excellent vehicle for learning that language (R. Day & Robb, 2015). Researchers and teachers alike are drawn to ER due to its many benefits in learning a language and tried to integrate it more with IR as an approach to teaching reading in language classroom.

An ER program is an additional class booksheet linked to an English course in which learners are encouraged to read at their pleasure as many books in their own level, without the burden of testing or markings (Davis, 1995). Although ER program have varied names such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF), and Book Flood Program, the terms shares the same aim which is to read huge numbers of books and other reading materials in an environment that fosters lifelong reading habits (Renandya, 2007). It also believes that reading extensively in a language is the greatest way to achieve reading fluency. In an extensive reading program, students are competing only against themselves and do not have to worry about other students' progress. Instructor encourage and monitor the students' progress to ensure they read optimal numbers of books in mean time. The keywords are both quantity and variety so that books are chosen for their appeal and relevance to the learners' lives, instead of the literary value.

Students need appropriate reading material to ensure that extensive reading may be carried out fully (Bamford & Day, 2004). According to Day & Bamford (2002), there are ten principles for teaching ER, namely:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available.

3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The aim of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is usually faster than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
10. Teacher is a role model of a reader.

One out of the ten principles for teaching ER is learners read as much as possible. The larger amounts of text means that there are larger amounts of words read by the learners. According to Suk (2017), extensive reading provides learners with the suitable circumstances which they can practice reading consistently with longer text and thus obtain the skill to read long text at reasonable rate.

Reading in Digital Era

With the arrival of digital technology, the nature of text has been changed (Ghalebandi & Noorhidawati, 2019). Nowadays, digital reading is starting to become the norm. It is argued that since Kindle e-book reader was introduced in 2007, the notion of accessing and reading books in digital has grown widespread (Huang, 2013). Digital reading is reading off computer screen-based texts with static, non-interactive forms that gained or accessible through internet networks such as e-book, PDF file, and online newspaper (Coiro, 2011; Putro & Lee, 2017). Further, the digital environment also has impact on people's reading habit due to the amount of digital information available is growing and people spend more time to read electronic media (Liu, 2005).

Due to the shift in people's reading habit, it is expected that ER program also shifted from paper-based reading to digital-based reading. According to Kammerer, Brand-Gruwel, & Jarodzka (2018) text in digital form have become a common and essential aspect in many areas of life, including education. With the aid of reading platform such as XReading website, ER program can be implemented easily. Students can read through digital-based media such as computer screen, tablet computer, smartphone, and e-reader while teachers can easily monitor their progress.

XReading is an online digital library platform with hundreds of graded readers. This web-based library of graded readers was launched in 2014 and created for students to experience ER (Tagane et al., 2018). This platform includes a simple learner management system (LMS) which is easy to use to assist teachers in ensuring students accountability, monitoring and assessing their students' progress through the classroom page (Milliner & Cote, 2015). The system allows teacher to know which books their pupils read, how many words they read and how fast they read. Teacher can also confine the library to direct pupils to the most suitable books by their graded reading levels.

Students can access this online platform from their smartphones, tablets, and computers anywhere and anytime as long as they are connected to the internet (Tagane et al., 2018). They also can monitor their own progress as the system automatically tracked and recorded which and how many books they read complete with the graded levels, how long they spent time to read and listen to audiobooks, how many words they read along with their reading speed. After finishing a book, students take online quizzes to check their understanding of the book they have read and thus teachers can verify that the students are indeed really doing the reading task.

Reading Speed

One of the purposes of teaching reading is encouraging students to become a proficient reader which can read fluently. According to Samuels (1979), reading fluency refers to the capability to read with quickly and accurately. The importance of reading fluency has been studied by many researchers. A theory by LaBerge and Samuels (1974, cited in Therrien, 2004) stated that reading fluency issues originated from weak decoding skills of readers Eventually, poor readers spend most of their cognitive sources to decode words which left litle time for comprehension. Meanwhile, fluent readers decode words at a more rapid rate and more accurate, thus maintaining many sources for comprehension.

One of the aspects to measure reading fluency is reading speed. Reading rate or reading speed is defined as the measure of the number of words someone can read in a minute and inscribed as words per minute (wpm). A research by Fry (1963, cited in Bell, 2001) assert that good readers can achieve reading speed up to 350 wpm, fair readers read at 250 wpm, and slow readers acquire 150 wpm. For EFL or ESL learners, these numbers certainly cannot be used as a benchmark because English is not their primary language. According to Nation (2009), with easy reading materials that include no unfamiliar vocabulary or grammar, the average reasonable reading speed goals for FL and SL learners is 250 wpm. Furthermore, Nation also stated that 150 wpm is a good oral reading speed and around 500 wpm is a good skimming speed. He also indicated that reading at rates below 100 wpm is considered too slow and might have a detrimental effect on understanding.

XReading platform automatically record the students' reading speed while reading by dividing how many words in a book by how much time they took to read the book. In

IR, students tend to read slowly to find detailed information from the text. This is completely different with ER where learners read only for pleasure. As students read books and other reading material which they find easy to understand, their reading speed is usually become significantly faster. It is hoped that students can read faster when doing ER than when they are doing IR and eventually increasing their reading comprehension. The automatic LMS can help teacher to monitor the students' reading speed progress throughout the time they use this platform.

Comprehension

Comprehension is a very important part in developing reading fluency, as reading faster is useless if little is understood (Nation, 2009). There is a positive correlation between reading fluency and comprehension, as the better fluency is, the better measures of comprehension (Beglar, Hunt, & Kite, 2011). Some research in L2 settings have demonstrated that reading extensively may leads to improved reading abilities. Study by Beglar et al. (2011) also showed that pleasure reading groups may keep their understanding when their reading rates rise. Another research examining the effects of the ER method during a 15 week semester of Korean university EFL students revealed that extensive reading classes were more effective than control classes in terms of reading rates, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Suk, 2017).

However, faster does not always means better. A study examining the effects of reading speed towards comprehension from screen (Dyson & Haselgrove, 2000) found that the participants' level of comprehension is better at a normal reading speed (mean 244 wpm) than at their faster reading speed which is almost twice as fast as their normal reading speed. Berkoff (1979, cited in Sackstein, Spark, & Jenkins, 2015) argued that fast readers are not inherently efficient readers, or that slow readers are an inefficient readers. There are a lot of elements which may impact the reading rates and degree of understanding, namely goal of reading, text complexity, vocabulary load, reading experience and background information (Chang, 2017). It should be noticed that different reding purpose require different reading speed. As stated by Nation (2009), there are many factors affecting reading speed, including reading goal and text difficulty.

Many cognitive process that are involved in reading comprehension are hidden and cannot be directly observed, therefore assessment for reading comprehension is very challenging due to its complexity (Snowling, Cain, Nation, & Oakhill, 2009). As stated by Sackstein et al. (2015), reading assessment have been based on comprehension theory which refers to the several levels of understanding, namely literal comprehension, inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension. Literal comprehension is mentioned as a surface-level understanding which require readers to retrieve information that is directly stated in a passage, inferential comprehension requires readers to interact more to make inferences about things which not stated explicitly in the text, and evaluative comprehension requires readers to store the information in the memory and concurrently access information, knowledge or expertise from their long-term memory to assess, evaluate and increase the demands placed on their cognitive handling (Alonzo, Basaraba, Tindal, & Carriveau, 2009; Basaraba, Yovanoff, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2013).

As an out of school activities, teacher usually have a hard time to ensure students' accountability while doing ER program. With the help of LMS in XReading, teacher can monitor the students' accountability based on their general understanding shown in their quiz scores. The quizzes are consisted of several simple comprehension questions. Students must take the quiz after they finish reading the books in order for the system to accept that the students have completed the books.

Based on the background of the study, the researcher attempts to answer the research question: Is there a significant correlation between EFL students' average reading speed and reading comprehension quiz score in XReading? This study proposed two hypotheses: a) There is no significant correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension (H_0), b) There is a significant correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension (H_1).

METHOD

Regarding the aim of this study, the research design of the present research is to determine the relationship between two variables, thus the researcher used correlational study. The variables in this research were EFL students' average reading speed in XReading platform and their reading comprehension quiz score in XReading platform which means that this study investigated and explored the relationship between the variables.

This study involved 53 participants who meet the minimum words read requirement (60,000 words) in a semester while doing ER program using XReading platform. They were taken from first-year students majoring in English Education at one of the state universities in Surabaya. Purposive random sampling was used because this study proposed only freshmen students who take mandatory ER program to be selected as participants.

Records of students' activity in XReading platform is used as gathered documents because it consists of detailed information and students' progress of ER activity, including reding speed and reading comprehension quiz score. In collecting the data, the researcher asked the head of English Department for the records of students' activity in XReading platform. Before calculating the correlation between the variables used in this research, the researcher measured the normality test of data distribution. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to know whether the data distribution is normal or not. The researcher used this formula because the number of participants involved in this study is more than 50. The results of normality test data distribution showed the data were normal with a *p*-value = 0.200. According to Cohen (2007), the data distribution is normal if the *p*-value is more than 0.05. Thus, the data distribution within this study is normal because the *p*-value >0.05. In line with the result of normality test, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to find out the correlation between EFL students' reading speed and their reading comprehension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to find out whether there is a correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension while using XReading. In total, 53 students of English Education major participated in this study. Table 1 showed the descriptive statistic of reading speed and comprehension in XReading.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading Speed	53	15.0	238.9	134.215	40.2678
Quiz Score	53	70.0	97.8	87.319	6.4285

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation method was employed by the researcher to determine the relationship between reading speed and reading comprehension in XReading since the normality test data distribution resulted in a normal distribution.

Table 2. Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension in XReading

Correlation		
		Quiz Score
Reading Speed	Pearson Correlation	.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.661
	N	53

Based on the statistical correlation analysis in table 2 above, reading speed and reading comprehension showed a very low correlation with coefficient correlation (r = 0.062). Thus, this study accepted the null hypothesis (H_0) and rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_1). It can be inferred that the students' average reading speed in XReading platform did not have any significant relationship with their reading comprehension quiz score.

The reading speed variable used in this study is actually the average reading speed in a six-month period of using XReading. According to the principle of ER, reading speed is usually significantly faster not slower (R. Day & Bamford, 2002). Thus, this study did not explore whether the students' reading speed became faster or not throughout the time they were doing ER program using XReading.

The similar condition also applied to the reading comprehension variable used in this study. The comprehension score was retrieved from the students' average quiz scores which they get after completing each book they read. As one of the principle of ER, the aim of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding (R. Day & Bamford, 2002). The quizzes are consisted of several simple comprehension questions about the text they just finished. This can help teacher to ensure that students who have general understanding of the books they finished did read the books and not just flipping through the pages.

CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to explore the correlation between EFL students' reading speed and reading comprehension while using XReading platform. As explained above, there was no correlation between the variables. This suggest that students' ability to comprehend text and answers simple comprehension questions did not affected by their reading speed. This is in line with Berkoff's (1979, cited in Sackstein, Spark, & Jenkins, 2015) argument in which fast readers are not equal with efficient readers or that slow readers are inefficient readers. The students' background information and text difficulty are some aspects which can affect their reading speed and comprehension.

Suggestion

Based on the results of this current study, the researcher would like to give a few suggestions. Since ER activities

done by students in XReading platform is an out of classroom activities, teachers need to constantly remind the students to do ER in order for them to meet the minimum words they have to read in a semester. It is important to develop students' reading habit since the more they read, the more fluent they will become.

The researcher realized that this current study is limited on several aspects. Future researchers are suggested to conduct more comprehensive research where the data used are not merely from the average reading speed and average quiz score, but from the individual reading speed and quiz score from each book completed by students in XReading platform. Moreover, this study is limited only to freshman students at university level, the future research may select larger participant in different education level.

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