

The Effectiveness Of Reading Guide For Enhancing The Non-English Lecturers' Reading Competence At Higher Education In Central Java

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Abstract: *This paper attempts to find out whether or not Reading Guide designed by the writers can enhance the reading ability of non-English lecturers at Higher Education in Central Java, Indonesia. Besides, it also tries to reveal the extent to which the lecturers could understand the language components found in the text. The method used in this research was experimental research with the population of non-English lecturers at Kopertis Wilayah VI, Central Java. Sixty three (63) lecturers from several universities were taken randomly as the sample. Two kinds of instrument for collecting the data, namely reading test and interview were used. It was found out that the mean score of the pre-test was 55,61 which is considered to be poor; meanwhile the mean score of the post-test was 75,68 and considered to be fair. When these two means were compared using t-test, it was gained the t-value of 9,119. Since the t-value is higher than the t-table 2.00 ($9.119 > 2.00$), it can be concluded that there is significant difference of the lecturers' reading competence before and after using Reading Guide. It implies the meaning that Reading Guide is quite effective for enhancing the reading ability of non-English lecturers. Besides, it was also revealed that most of the lecturers had low motivation and negative attitudes towards reading activity, particularly reading English text. It could be possible to be a part of the reasons why their reading ability so far is poor.*

Keywords: *reading guide, English text, non-English lecturers*

I. Introduction

The ability to read English texts for Indonesian lecturers is very crucial to acquire for the fact that it is the only way of being able to develop their knowledge, science and technology. Eighty percent of the scientific books provided in the Indonesian libraries are written in English. Therefore, it is compulsory for them to have the ability to read English texts in order to be able to develop their knowledge, science and technology, and even their career. Unluckily, most of them have great difficulties in comprehending the message of the English texts. As stated in the article posted on Kaltim Post newspaper on August 30, 2004, the ability to read English texts of the lecturers who have already had the master degrees was still low. This can be seen from the low achievement of their TOEFL test in which the average score was less than 300. This, the low TOEFL score, to some extent could be identified as the main reason why so far many of them could not continue their study abroad though a lot of fund from the Higher Education (DIKTI) was offered to them. Besides, the inability to read English texts could bring a big serious impact to the development of the lecturers themselves that they will not be able to write scientific papers where it is the prerequisite for their rank promotion. As a lecturer, in order to be promoted to a higher rank of their profession, he or she is obliged to be able to write scientific papers published in international journals or accredited national journals.

With reference to the inability of the lecturers to read, the writers were inspired to develop a Reading Guide that may help them read an English text successfully. Based on the preliminary research, the problems they usually encountered during reading English texts are the inability to guess the meaning of the vocabulary, the grammar and the inability to find the main idea of the text or inference. The Reading Guide, therefore, was developed based on their problems, their needs and their wants that consists of among others the tips to find the main ideas, to find the supporting details, how to understand the message of the text through context, to identify the cohesive ties that make the text coherent, how to read graphics and academic writing etc. It is expected that by studying this Reading Guide, the lecturers are able to read the English text well. So, with this Reading Guide, the writers did an experiment to the non-English lecturers at higher education in Central Java with the main objectives of finding out: (1) the lecturers' reading competence before and after being given Reading Guide, (2) to find out whether or not there is significant difference between the lecturers' reading competence before and after being given Reading Guide, and (3) to find out the language components in reading text that are difficult or easy to be understood by the lecturers. Besides, the writers also wanted to see the extent to which the degree of motivation and attitude of the lecturers towards their reading English text activity.

II. Literary Review

1. Reading

Reading, as defined by Harmer (1991: 16) is a skill or receptive activity, where readers get information from the reading materials. While Grabe and Stoller (2002: 9) state that reading is the ability to draw a meaning from the written text and interpret it appropriately. These two definitions imply the meaning that reading is basically understanding and interpreting the text in order to get some specific or detail information. It can also be inferred that reading is a reciprocal process where at least two people are involved, the reader and the writer; the reader is trying to understand and interpret the ideas the writer put in the text. However, Murcia and Olshtain (2000:119) state that it is an interactive process involving three participants: the writer, the text and the reader. The reader decodes the message by recognizing the written signs, interpret the message by assigning meaning to the string of words and understand what the writer's intention was.

With reference of how to get the meaning of the text, Leipzig (2001) suggests 3 principles to be kept in mind namely to: (1) identify and understand the words in the text or words recognition, (2) construct and understand the words (3) coordinate the words and interpret them so that there is an accurate understanding. Meanwhile, Nation (2001: 339) as well as Richard and Julian Bamford in Harmer (2001: 210) state that a text can be understood by the reader when it is written using specialized vocabulary and grammar that exist at the level of the readers' ability. To our understanding, specialized vocabulary may mean technical vocabulary where words that have special meaning in certain field of study. For example, the word *bugs* in biology may have different meaning in computer program. Therefore, it is highlighted that specialized vocabulary may contribute to the understanding of an English text; the more the readers are familiar with the technical words used in the text, the better the understanding of the text will be. However, Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 76) argue that the understanding of the English text depends very much on the words the readers acquired. It is claimed that only those who already acquired at least 200,000 words will be able to comprehend sophisticated texts. Grabe (2010: 277) on the other hand, states that understanding main ideas and exploring the organization of a text are essential for good comprehension. Thus, it is apparent that reading is a complex activity (Schmitt 2010: 216) where readers are not only required to have a certain amount of vocabulary and grammar mastery, or to find the main ideas in order to be able to comprehend the text but also to engage in processing phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and discourse levels. Therefore, Brown (2004: 206) further suggests that in the evaluation of reading skills, it should include an understanding of the basic ideas, expressions / idioms, phrases in context, grammar, supporting ideas, and vocabulary. He also gave an example of reading skills assessment using the readings and questions in the TOEFL.

In addition to the factors that affect the reading ability, Murcia (2001: 189) states that family, social, and cultural backgrounds may also influence the ability to read. Some families that have little facilities for reading, such as with little reading materials and do not encourage independent reading will not facilitate the learners to have reading ability. Social and cultural background, like Indonesian culture that place more emphasis on speaking than reading, greatly affect the activity of reading. This culture seems to be very potential to entail the lecturers' negative attitude towards reading activity where books provided in the libraries are rarely read. Due to this condition, it is suggested that lecturers should build a habit on reading academic works in order to have wider horizon on their knowledge, science and technology. Academic works include among others: thesis, journals, reference, technical reports, textbooks, editorials and opinion. At last, by being able to read academic works, they will be able to produce scientific papers published in international or national journals that would be necessary for promoting their career.

2. Reading Guide

Reading guide here refers to a book that can help readers navigate reading material and help them to comprehend the main points of the reading text and understand the organizational structure of a text. Noticing that most non-English lecturers in Indonesia find difficulties in reading English texts, while the ability to read in this case is badly needed for their career, it is therefore, the writers tried to develop a Reading Guide that may help them comprehend the English Texts they read. This Reading Guide was developed through research by finding out what the lecturers need to know and the problems they encountered during reading activities; so, based on the findings, the Reading Guide contains the tips of how to read an English text, such as, to find the main idea in a paragraph, to find the meaning of words through context, to identify the cohesive ties that make the text coherent, to read graphics and to read academic reading text. With these tips, it is expected that their ability to read English text will be much better and finally they can write scientific papers that can be presented in the international conferences or published in international journals.

III. Research Method

This is an experimental research with one group pre-test post-test design. In this study, the researchers implemented a model of reading guide for non-English lecturers at Kopertis VI of Central Java. The population

of this study is the non-English lecturers at Kopertis VI of Central Java. The researchers took 63 lecturers from several universities as the sample. Two kinds of instruments were used namely reading comprehension test and interviews. Reading test was taken from the TOEFL test consisting of (1) Reading Comprehension, (2) Grammar and, (3) Vocabulary. The TOEFL test was used with the consideration that it can measure the ability to read scientific texts of the lecturers. Second, its system has already met the international standards either for its validity and reliability. Meanwhile, interview was used with the intention to perceive the perception of the lecturers' attitude and motivation towards reading activity.

The data were analyzed by using t-test in order to find the difference between the lecturers' reading competence before and after being given the model the Reading Guide.

IV. Findings And Discussions

It was found out that the mean score of the pre-test (before being given the Reading Guide) was 5,61 and the mean score of post-test (after being given Reading Guide) was 75,68. It indicates that there is a difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. However, to make sure whether the difference is significant, the data were further analyzed using the formula of the t-test as follows:

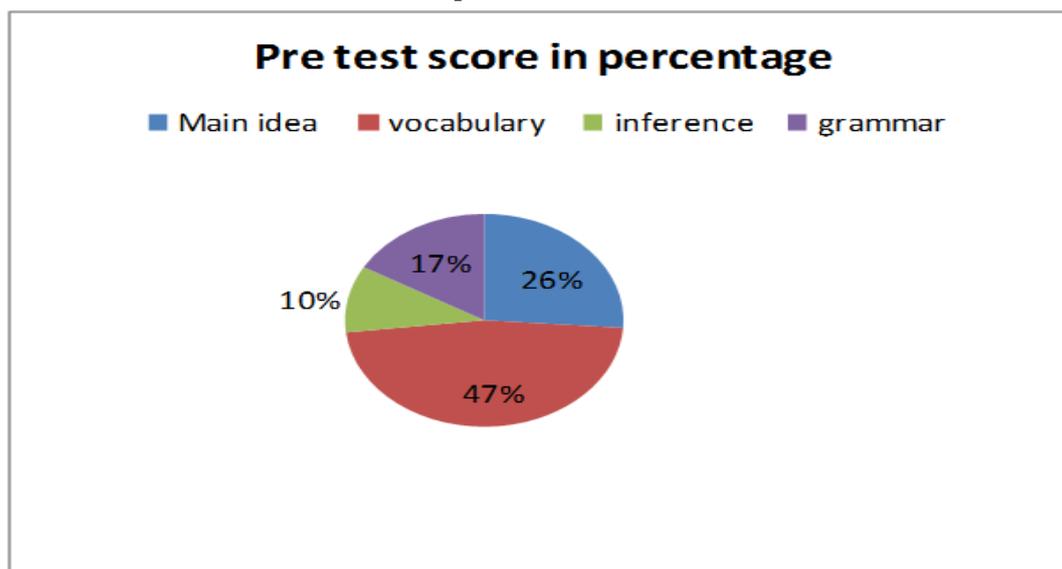
$$t_{value} = \frac{M_2 - M_1}{\sqrt{\frac{SD_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{SD_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

When the data were analyzed using t-test, it was found out that the t value was 9.119 and when it was compared to the t-table, the t-value was higher than the t-table $9.119 > 2.00$. So, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between before and after being given the Reading Guide. In other words, Reading Guide can enhance the reading ability of the lecturers.

When compared to the lecturers' mastery on the language components and finding the main idea during reading activity before using Reading Guide, it was found out: main idea 26%, vocabulary 47%, inference 10% and grammar 17%. This can be shown in pie graph as follows:

The pie chart of the language components in the pre test

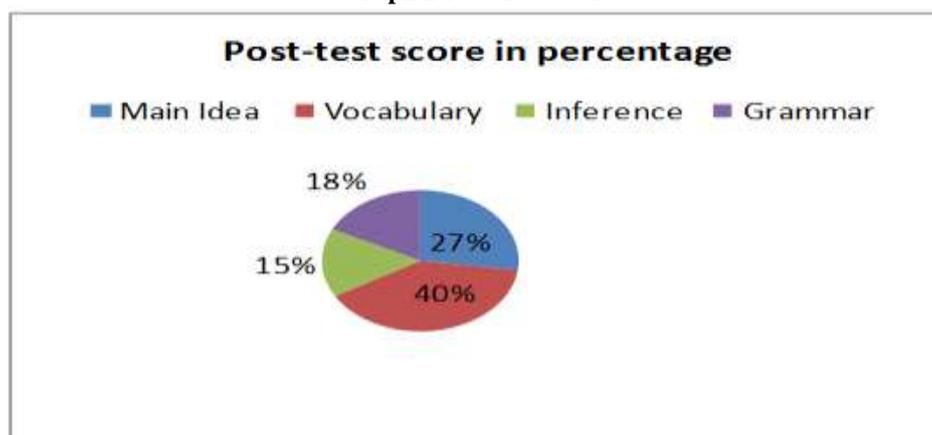
Graph 1. Pre-Test Score



From the pie chart above, it can be seen that the highest percentage of the language components that contributed to the reading comprehension is on vocabulary (47%) and the lowest percentage is on inference (10%). It indicates that in comprehending the English text, the lecturers were facilitated by their vocabulary mastery (47%) and in finding main ideas (26%); while their grammar mastery (17%) and inference (10%) were very poor.

However, after using the Reading Guide, the percentage of the language components mastery was changing. Main idea 27%, vocabulary 40%, inference 15%, and grammar 18%. This can be shown in the pie chart below:

Graph 2. Post-Test Score



The changes of the language components mastery were quite varied though vocabulary mastery still dominates the reading competence (40%) and inference still gets the lowest percentage (15%). However, there is a decrease in vocabulary and an increase in inference, main idea and grammar. It implies the meaning that vocabulary mastery still contributes more on the lecturers' ability to read English texts and followed by finding the main idea, grammar mastery and inference. When the posttest score is compared to the pretest score, the finding of the main idea and inference increase a little bit but it can be taken as an indication that the lecturers' strategy in reading text does not depend too much on the vocabulary mastery and grammar but on inference and finding the main idea.

Based on the interview, it was found out that the lecturers rarely had an intention to read articles or scientific books written in English though they realized that it is crucial for their career. Even when they searched scientific books or articles for writing articles but happened to find ones written in English, they would put them aside or had no curiosity to read them. Thus, it can be inferred that in general, most of the lecturers have low motivation or have negative attitude towards reading activity due to their inability to comprehend the texts.

V. Conclusions And Suggestions

Based on the discussion above, it can be drawn a conclusion that Reading Guide is quite effective for enhancing the lecturers' ability to read English text for the fact that t-value is higher than t-table ($9.119 > 2.00$). Vocabulary mastery seems to contribute more on the understanding the meaning of the text followed by the ability to find the main idea and grammar mastery. While the lecturers' ability to infer the meaning of the text is quite poor. Why the lecturers' ability to read English text is poor or fair is due to the negative attitude or low motivation towards reading activity. They seem to be uninterested in reading whatever articles or books written in English.

It is therefore suggested that English lecturers have to have the willingness to create other Reading Guides that can help non-English lecturers to read English text. Considering that vocabulary mastery and the ability to find the main idea contribute more on the understanding of the text, it is of a great help for the lecturers to learn bit by bit to increase their vocabulary mastery through reading books and or articles in English and very often look up dictionary when they find difficult words. Through continual reading English texts will eventually enhance motivation to learn English and the negative attitude will gradually decrease. Besides, it is also of great importance for every institution to conduct regular training on reading English texts and writing scientific papers for non-English lecturers. With this kind of program, the lecturers will automatically bit by bit induce themselves to be better readers and writers.

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