

Online Children's Book to Encourage Extensive Reading in English Teaching in The Islamic Family Law Program Study of IAI Tasikmalaya

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ABSTRACT

The use of online children's book to encourage students in extensive reading is one of creative strategies since it can improve students' interests in reading. As English books that are difficult to find, many books are unaffordable for many people, and they also lack variety in terms of English levels and genre, online children's book that is provided in story weaver platform can help students to get a wide variety of reading materials. Therefore, this paper explores the author's experience in implementing online children's book to encourage extensive reading in English Teaching during one semester in the Islamic Family Law Program Study and analyzing the students' perception of the use of online children's book in extensive reading practice. The participants are students of the second semester who take English 2 course. In this research, qualitative is used as a research method. The result showed that the students have positive attitudes towards online children's book when they have to read extensively.

Keywords: Extensive reading, online children's book, students' perception

INTRODUCTION

Encouraging youth to be aware of literacy is not an easy thing. There are many challenges that must be addressed in order to keep an interest in reading activities. Iswandari (2019) stated that what we need to pay attention is our reading culture which is not yet at the level of understanding. We still receive information clearly from reading material without looking deeper into the things discussed in it. Not infrequently some people are trapped in information that cannot be justified.

Based on the problem, extensive reading is a way to help young people to more literate. Bamford & Day (2004) point out that readers in extensive reading read a lot of reading materials for information and enjoyment and they choose their own reading materials. Brown (2007) claims that extensive reading is carried out to achieve a general understanding of texts. Although readers read a lot of reading materials, they read for general information and overall meaning. Brown also points out that extensive reading is recognized as pleasure reading. He also claims that readers will stop reading when they think the materials are not interesting or it is too difficult. Many researchers have also shown that reading extensively does improve not only students' reading proficiency but also cognitive and affective factors (Boakye, 2017).

Practicing extensive reading for EFL learners needs creative strategies. Murtiningsih (2021) argues that bringing children's books to class and reading them aloud is one way to improve students' interests in reading, especially reading English books. Children's books usually come with pictures and fewer words compared to

short stories or novels. The teachers can read the book aloud in front of the class, with little to no dramatization when reading.

By using Google, teachers can find English children's books out easily to be used students in learning extensive reading in class. One of platform provides digital children's book is storyweaver. It is a digital platform that provides open access to multilingual storybooks for children to learn and practise reading. All content on the platform is openly licensed under the CC-BY 4.0 license and can be read, translated, versioned or printed at no cost to the user. The simple tools embedded on the platform can be used to translate stories into new languages or create new stories using the vibrant illustrations available.

Even though interests in extensive reading have shown exciting growth over the past decade. Extensive reading in students non English program can be challenging in many ways. One challenging issue is motivation in reading in Indonesian. It may mean that motivation in reading English texts may be much lower. Thus, English teachers' responsibilities in terms of motivating students to read are doubled. First, they have to improve students' general motivation to read books. Second, they also have to encourage their students to love reading English books. Krashen (2004) argues that when students' reading motivation in the first language is high, their reading motivation in the second and foreign languages will also be high.

Therefore, the current paper explores the author's best practices in employing online children's book to encourage students in Extensive reading practice. The discussion also

revolves around practical descriptions of online children's book and students' perception of the use of children's book in extensive reading classroom. Ultimately, the paper aims to address the following research questions:

1) How was the online children's book to encourage extensive reading implemented at English Teaching in The Islamic Family Law Program Study of IAI Tasikmalaya?

2) How was the students' point of view about the use of online children's book as a learning strategy in extensive reading classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading relies on the comprehension theory of Krashen Ng et al. (2019). The theory suggests that to learn a language and build up literacy, learners need plentiful language input from reading and listening. When learners understand the messages from reading and listening, they obtain the language acquisition. In other words, language input is a fundamental factor in language learning. Furthermore, Krashen et al. (2017) also recommend that input should engross language learners to know more about the language. In this condition, learners would have positive progress studying the language without conscious effort, for example, through reading books based on their interests or watching films and television programs.

Day and Bamford (1998), as cited by Boakye (2017), presented some characteristics of extensive reading. The first characteristic is the number of materials that the students read. In extensive reading, students read a large number of books. The students are also free to choose the books they wish to read, and they can leave the books if they decide not to continue reading them for any reason. The following characteristic is that the texts are within students' range of vocabulary mastery. It means that students have very low or no difficulties understanding the words they are reading. Thus, when students have to open a dictionary when reading frequently, the text may have been too difficult for them. As for the teachers, they are encouraged to provide simple and easy activities following up the reading.

Extensive reading has always been compared to intensive reading. While the two serve different purposes, extensive reading has been considered more fun and useful in learning because it allows students to have the independence to choose what to read (Nakanishi,

2015). On the contrary, intensive reading requires students to work on the materials selected by their teachers – which, in many cases, the difficulties are much greater than students' proficiency in general. For example, Nation (2009) asserted that graded readers used as extensive reading sources could improve students' lexicon.

In general, extensive reading has also been closely related to the improvement of other language skills, e.g., writing. Park (2016) found that students exposed to extensive reading experienced significant holistic scores in writing compared to those taught using 'traditional' writing classes, i.e., writing and grammar practice/instruction, and reading-writing activities commonly found in writing classes. In the study, students who participated in extensive reading activities demonstrated better use of vocabulary, mechanics, and language expression.

Extensive reading has also been identified as the cause of the improved reading attitude (Yamashita, 2013) and reading habit (Boakye, 2017). In his study, Yamashita (2013) exposed students to extensive reading for 15 weeks and revealed that extensive reading positively impacted reading attitude. Similarly, Boakye (2017) also found that extensive reading has improved her students' reading habits and that the students could transfer the reading strategies from the extensive reading to their academic reading. One important highlight is that the current practice that the writer has been doing may not be included in the extensive reading programs. However, the activity can be an initial strategy to encourage extensive reading. With this particular issue in mind, the current paper aims to provide one teaching strategy to initiate extensive reading in class.

Online children's book

Webb and Macalister (2013) researched whether children's books written in English were proper books to be used in extensive reading. They looked at the vocabulary sizes of books written for different audiences, e.g., children, language learners, and older readers. The results indicated that the vocabulary size in children's books was similar to the one used in older readers. They argued that graded readers were more well-suited for extensive reading than children's books and books written for older readers. While each type of book can provide opportunities for students to enjoy reading and learning more, children's books are authentic materials that can be used as a learning medium. These types of books can also facilitate

accidental vocabulary learning when reading.

Another research on using children's books in an EFL context was also conducted by Chen (2006). In this research, children's books were used to engage EFL university students in reading and writing stories. The majority of students were appreciative of the use of children's books and found that the learning experience was rewarding.

While research has shown that children's books may be able to engage university students, paper on the practice of using online children's books to encourage extensive reading, especially in EFL university contexts, has been extremely scarce.

Although both printed and online materials are used in Extensive Reading programs, the majority of the programs used printed materials (Jeon & Day, 2016). One reason why Extensive Reading programs do not use online texts widely might be that, until recently, online materials were mainly authentic materials, that is, materials written for first language (L1) readers.

A few studies that used online materials (Cote & Milliner, 2015) or both online and printed materials (Cheetham et al., 2016) have shown positive effects of Extensive Reading on learners' language proficiency and motivation. Actually, Jeon and Day (2016)'s meta-analysis showed that Extensive Reading studies that used web texts had a larger effect size ($d = .89$) compared to studies that used printed materials ($d = .47$), justifying the use of more online materials in Extensive Reading programs.

METHODOLOGY

This paper discusses two objectives: 1) How was the online children's book to encourage extensive reading implemented at English Teaching in The Islamic Family Law Program Study of IAI Tasikmalaya?; 2) How was the students' point of view about the use of online children's book as a learning strategy in extensive reading classroom?. To achieve the first objective of the study, the author do research-based subject in student of Islamic Family Law Program Study of IAI Tasikmalaya, especially students of the second semester who take Reading 2 course, participated in this study.

In the course design of English course, materials are discussed is applying grammar in newspaper and story book and reading comprehension. The materials are arranged in English teaching because result of test at first semester, students of Islamic Family Law Program Study are still not yet proficient in the

application of the grammar that they already have learnt, and when they are asked to read English text, their pronunciation is not yet fluent. It can be concluded that students' reading interest in English texts is still lack.

The author implements online children's book to encourage extensive reading for nine meetings. In every meeting, students are asked to find out one story from story weaver platform and one person is asked to read aloud in front of the class. The reading itself only takes a few minutes as the books usually contains few pages. During the reading, other students are asked to listen to the reader. At the end of the readings, the author will ask questions, i.e., what lesson can you learn from the book? What makes you like or dislike the book? What tenses is used in the book? Can you identify grammar in the book?, etc.

Furthermore, to achieve the second objective of the study, qualitative data were gathered from students' semi-structured interviews at the end of semester. Most of the interviews were conducted in English and only one was conducted in Indonesian upon the participant's request.

Relating to reading materials using online in a classroom, one of platform in Google is Story weaver. It is a platform that provides a free gateway to a never-ending collection of open source stories for children. Stories that tickle the imagination, inspire curiosity, and take children to places far and beyond. Stories that explore varied concepts in math, science, the environment, history, emotional intelligence and much more. Stories for the early readers and the more fluent ones in mother tongue languages from India and around the world.

Story weaver is not only provide children's book to be read but also it allows users to translate a story into a language of their choice using the easy to use tools on the platform. Another facility is it allows users to create their own stories and illustrate them with beautiful artwork. Choose from thousands of openly licensed images from well known illustrators. So while creating their own storybook has always sounded complex, and daunting, it is now makes it super-easy to write narrative, pick their illustrations, and publish their very own story – in minutes.

Supporting the core of extensive reading, this platform cultivates meaningful reading opportunities, so that the reader, especially who are learning English as a foreign language, may get their reading level, and the most important is

that they can explore the stories and can train their another skills such as translation and writing. Figure 1 is a screenshot of Story weaver.

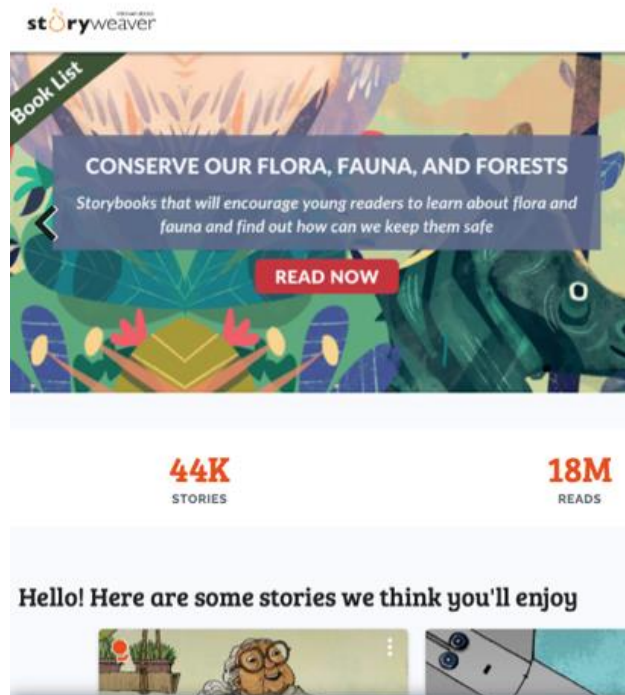


Figure 1
A screenshot of the storywaver

To examine the students' point of view about the use of online children's book as a learning strategy in extensive reading classroom, the qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Online Children's Book at The Islamic Family Law Program Study

In this section, the author would like to explore the practice of online children's book at The Islamic Family Law Program Study, particularly at the second semester who take English 2 course.

The starting times of Extensive Reading was the second semester 2021. The first time the author read an online children's book from storyweaver for my students, the author informed students that they were not required to do anything with the author reading the books. All they needed to do was to be quiet and listen to the reading. Apparently, it was not very easy for the students because some of them still talked among themselves. The author had to stop and waited. Other students would ask the conversing students to be silent because they knew that the author would not start until everybody was quiet.

Once the students were ready, the author started reading the story very slowly. The

purpose was that students would also be able to understand what was said, apart from enjoying the pictures on the books. As the book was read, the author ensured that all students could see the pictures on the books; thus, the author displays the story on the screen. The author sometimes stopped for a few seconds when hearing students at the back started talking to each other. "That was the end of the story" was the expression the author usually used to let students knew that the story had ended. The author closed the screen and ended the meeting. They did not have any activities following the reading aloud.

As time went by, the students started to get used to the reading aloud activity. In weekly individual students read selected online children's book from storywaver and there is one volunteer to read aloud in classroom. The activities ranged from predicting the story of the books and analyzing the lesson that they could learn from the story. The author started to ask them short, easy questions, such as 'What do you think the story is about?' or 'What is going to happen next?' or 'What lesson did you learn from the story?' The author did not have high expectations that someone or some students would answer my questions, but some students usually tried to answer the questions.

The students' point of view about the use of online children's book as a learning strategy in extensive reading classroom

It is common for teachers to ask for students' feedback on the whole learning process of the course. Students are usually asked to reflect on their participation in the whole activities, classroom instruction, and suggestions for future improvement of the course. The feedback session is usually conducted at the end of the semester. This particular activity aimed to obtain students' opinions on the teaching-learning process of the course and suggestions.

Regarding on students' point of view about the use of online children's book in extensive reading practice, all participants gave the positive responses. They shared that that they enjoyed online children's book, that online children's book made them more confident in reading, and that reading in English was useful. Some of the students' point of view were presented as follows:

(Excerpt I)

I : Do you enjoy reading on Storywaver? Why or why not?

P1 : Yes, because Quite easy to reading English language

I : Do you agree that Storywaver makes you more confident in reading? Why or why Not?

P1 : Yes i agree, cause that storywaver make me confident

I : Do you agree that reading in English is useful? Why or why not?

P1 : Yes i agree because that reading can train someone to be able English pronounce (Excerpt 2)

I : Do you enjoy reading on Storywaver? Why or why not?

P1 : Yes, because it's easy to read

I : Do you agree that Storywaver makes you more confident in reading? Why or why not?

P1 : yes I agree, because the sentence is easy to understand

I : Do you agree that reading in English is useful? Why or why not?

P1 : yes I agree, because it is an international language

The interview session also recorded the participants' comments about the reading self-selected easy books online helped improve their academic reading. The students shared different opinions about them. Some of the students' point of view were documented below.

(Excerpt 3)

I : Do you agree that reading self-selected easy books helps improve your academic reading? Why or why not?

P1 : Yes, Like my previous answer (Excerpt 4)

I : Do you agree that reading self-selected easy books helps improve your academic reading? Why or why not?

P1 : yes i agree like that

To summarize, almost half of the interviewees believed that online children's book benefited academic reading. The weekly practice of reading aloud motivated students to read more and improved their reading skills. However, in answering questions the students answered briefly without giving reasons. This is understandable because they are still lacking in English vocabulary.

In addition, the students answered the fifth interview question, "What aspects of Storywaver do you find valuable?" . Some of the students' point of view were documented as follows: (Excerpt 5)

I : What aspects of Storywaver do you find valuable?

P1 : To make easy To read (Excerpt 6)

I : What aspects of Storywaver do you find valuable?

P1 : easy to read and easy to understand

To summarize, the books in the storywaver and the easy access hooked students on reading. The readability level information made it easier to self-select books online. As a result, students read regularly, felt a sense of achievement, and formed a reading habit.

The interview session also recorded the participants' comments about the students' responses to the sixth interview question, "Which aspects of English language abilities have been improved through reading books this semester?" Most students mentioned more than one aspect of their language abilities that were improved through online children's book. Some of their responses were documented below.

(Excerpt 7)

I : Which aspects of English language abilities have been improved through reading books this semester?

P1 : train the tongue so that it is not stiff in speaking English

(Excerpt 8)

I : Which aspects of English language abilities have been improved through reading books this semester?

P1 : read every sentence correctly

Speaking and reading rate was the most frequently mentioned aspect of language abilities that was improved through online children's book.

The students' point of view revealed that although the reading aloud online children's book activity was very simple, many students enjoyed the activity because they found that the words used in the reading were much easier to understand. In this case, Webb and Macalister (2012) stated that graded readers are more suitable for extensive reading activity than children's books or books are written for older readers. However, it does not necessarily mean that language learners do not enjoy the books or learn from the books.

CONCLUSION

Two broad conclusions could be drawn from the findings of the current study. The first is that online children's book significantly can encourage students to read more because they contain fewer words, colorful pictures, and fewer pages. Apart from that, students can also learn

valuable lessons from the story told in the book. Second, online children's book could be implemented in English teaching due to its benefits on different aspects of language proficiency and one of creative strategies since it can improve students' interests in reading.

One suggestion emerging from the current practice is the choice of topics discussed in the books. Having topics in line with the ones discussed in the English course may result in better learning because students and teachers are still engaged in the discussion. In addition, further research to collect more comprehensive data, apart from asking students' opinions about the use of online children's books, will contribute significantly towards the body of knowledge in this particular area. For example, action research investigating the impacts of using online children's books on students' reading attitudes may be valuable. Last but not least, students should not take children's books for granted. Reading English books can be quite overwhelming and may discourage students from reading. Students should start from simple and easy readings to prevent their motivation from getting lower, and they can use children's books to begin their reading experiences.

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