

Students' Perception on Note-taking Skill and Strategy

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Abstract—Note-taking is an important skill that should be acquired by university students. However, it is not easy to do. The preliminary study indicates that many students are poor in note-taking. They do not know what to note. The preliminary also indicates that the advance of technology like smartphones makes many of them would rather take picture of the things they want to remember than take note. This study tries to reveal students' perception on their own ability in note-taking as well as portraying how the students see their own note-taking ability. By knowing them, lecturers will be able to plan better teaching strategies to make their students able to take note. Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion were used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to the students of English Department who have already got note-taking lesson in their critical reading class. The study reveals that in line with their note-taking methods knowledge, the students really apply the method whenever they take note.

Keywords—note-taking, perception, skill, strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Being able to make a good note is essential. Note taking is an essential skill in many information-transmission situations. Note taking helps students learn and learn to write (Boch & Piolat, 2005). The note taking action is part of the memorization process and results in the creation of a form of the note takers' internal storage (Kiewra, 1987). By taking notes, the load on the working memory eases and people can recall their memory better. Note-taking could help them to remember what they learned, absolutely important information. At the university level, note taking allows students to keep information from any sources, both written and spoken, that they might use later for academic purposes. Taking notes help students for their exams or for other needs in terms of saving time than reading all textbooks or articles again. Therefore, it is essential for the students to be able to make good notes. Related to how

students take note, previous studies found that a matrix method for note taking was more beneficial than an outline method (Piolat, in press; Robinson, Katayama, DuBois, & DeVaney, 1998). It was also found that making tree diagram or conceptual map is as favored as making matrix (Dye, 2000; Titsworth & Kiewra, 2004). Now that the technology is getting more advanced, EFL learners' way in taking note might change. Students might no longer use pen and pencil to take note. They might make notes in laptop or smartphone. They say that it is simpler for them. This shift of habit arouse curiosity whether traditional way of taking note is applied. It also questioned whether it is necessary to introduce note taking methods to students and whether they will apply a particular method taught or prescribed by their teachers. This study tries to provide answers for such curiosity.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Note-taking Skill

Some studies prove that note taking boosts achievement. It occurs because note-taking potentially serves both a process (the taking of notes is helpful) and product (the review of notes is helpful) function. According to Rahmani (2011) and Lee, Wang, Hamman, Hsiao, & Huang (2013), note-taking is effective to improve students' learning. They also state that students' academic performance is highly influenced by the frequency and quality of notetaking. Similarly, Carrell, Dunkel and Mollaun 2002; Faculty 2006; and Kiliçkaya & Çokal-karadaş 2009 state that note taking skill affects students' comprehension. In short, the better the students' comprehension is the better their note. Note-taking requires students to challenge their cognition. It is a complex process that requires students to extract, sort, and select information before establishing a good note. Without this ability, it is impossible for them to produce effective

notes. The more organized the note, the students' awareness and skills in applying note taking strategy is also higher.

B. Note-Taking Strategies

Traditionally, students have taken notes using a pencil-paper longhand medium. Advancements in technology, however, have increased the number of students who take lecture notes using a laptop computer (Fried 2008; Lauricella and Kay 2010) to the point where nearly one-third of college students record class notes on laptops (Aguilar-Roca et al. 2012).

Note-takers need to make effective notes because they are to reread their notes to recall their contents. Titsworth (2001) discussed different impact of ways of using notes (reading, highlighting, summarizing). Highlighting is considered better than merely reading, and summarizing is the best of the three (Kiewra, Benton, Kim, Risch, & Christensen, 1995).

Three skills are essential to enable students to take note. They are comprehension through note taking, notes production, and conscious management of whole activity (Stahl, King & Henk, 1991). Summary production is considered an indicator for comprehension (Vigner, 1991). Friend (2001) found that ability to extract, sort, and classify information is advantageous for students. The cognitive operations and the knowledge involved in note taking are complex and require note-takers to actively control their activity and strategy. This metacognitive knowledge allows students to plan, evaluate, and regulate their note taking activity. Romainville & Noël (2003) apply this metacognitive approach to note taking to help students prepare summaries.

There are four note-taking methods which are mostly applied at schools and campuses. They are concept mapping method, Cornell method, outline method, and charting method. Not all English teachers introduce those methods to their students. Such teachers believe that their students will be able to develop anyway and creatively although they are not introduced to note-taking methods. The teachers who prefer to introduce the method, on the other hand, believe that the students will be able to take note more effectively because they know the method that suits their needs. However, it is questioned whether the students decide to choose and apply the methods introduced by their teachers. This study tries to give answer to that question beside trying to reveal the students' note-taking strategies and perception on note-taking and their own note-taking skill.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the previous explanation, the study is then focused on four research questions as follow:

1. What is the students' perception on note-taking?
2. What is the students' perception on their note-taking skill?
3. What note-taking methods are applied and why do the students choose them?

4. What strategies do the students use in taking note?

IV. METHOD

The research used questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to English department students who have ever learned how to take note in their reading classes. Those students were taken as the participants because note-taking is one of the materials they learned in their reading class. Therefore, it is assumed that they have already known and tried note-taking strategies there. The data was obtained from the students' answers on the questionnaire and the FGD. There is no force to be the participants of this research. The potential participant candidates were asked whether they would be willing to join the study. The consent form is attached in the first page of the questionnaire. As many as 100 students were asked to fill in the questionnaire. Yet, only 97 students gave their consents and answered the questionnaire. To confirm the students' answers in the questionnaire, FGD was conducted. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The students' perception on note-taking

The first thing to be identified from the participants is whether they think that note-taking is essential for themselves. The result of the questionnaire shows that most students believe that making notes on important information from the reading materials they have read is important to support their learning. As many as 91% participants agree with it.

Further, 75% students who participated in this study state that it is necessary for them to use a particular note taking method. The selection of the method varies but all methods mentioned by the students were the methods they learned in their previous reading class.

B. The students' perception on their note-taking skill

Result indicates that most students are confident that they can make a good note. As many as 90% students perceive that their skill in taking note is good. Most of them are also sure that they can read and understand their own note when they read it again later. As many as 87% participants claim that they are always able to read and understand their notes well. Only 13% confess that sometimes they do not understand their own notes. Yet, the study has no supporting data which show the prove of the students claim. It seems that a longitudinal study needs conducting to prove whether what the students say was true or not.

Dealing with whether the students find difficulty in identifying important information from the text, it is found that 24% participants almost never find difficulties. However, 74% participants sometimes still get difficulty in it. Only 2% participants confess that they always get difficulties in selecting what to pick and put in their note.

C. The methods preferred and the reasons of their selection

The questionnaire and FGD result shows that most students use outline method in taking note. The table below described the students' preference of the methods.

TABLE 1. STUDENTS' PREFERENCE OF NOTE-TAKING METHODS

note-taking method	users
Concept mapping method	31%
Cornell method	15%
Matrix/charting method	2%
Outline method	52%
No particular method	0%

As it can be seen above, as many as 52% participants state that they usually use outline method. Thus, online method is the most favored one based on some reasons. The first one is it is considered simple. The students also state that it is easy to understand the note when they read it again in the future if it is organized in the form of outline. The most important reason is that they do not have to write many sentences when they choose to use this method. They simply have to write the points of what they have read.

The next method favored is concept mapping method. 31% respondents apply it. Most users of this method choose it because they are accustomed to use it. They said that they have used it since when they were on high school. Thus, this method turns to be the most convenient one for them.

Next, as many as 15% students prefer Cornell method. Those who choose this method said that it accommodates their needs to note as complete information as possible. The three columns (cue column, note column, and summary column) of this method help its user to organize their understanding of the text. By using the columns, the students believe that they understand the text better and later remember the gist of the text better as well.

The least favored one is matrix/charting method. It was applied only by 1% of the respondents. Most participants do not use it due to familiarity reason. Those who apply this method confess that they use it because they have been familiar with this method and have used it for long time. The majority of participants, unfortunately, do not find it familiar and easy to apply so that they choose other methods.

Although the questionnaire, provide an option and space for the students to write other method besides the four methods they have learned from their teachers, none of the students chose that option. They said that the methods introduced by the teachers help them to identify their note taking need and their suitable note-taking style so that they can organize their notes better.

D. The strategies the students use in taking note

Related to the use of technology, the finding is surprising. Although it was presumably assumed that the

students would use gadget to take note, the research finds that most students (93%) still use paper in taking note instead of using computer nor laptop. The students said that using pencil/pen and paper is more practical in making notes. Only few students stated opposite statement. For these few students, laptop is more convenient because the notes look more neat than paper notes.

When they were asked about smartphones usage in making note, they gave interesting responses. The responses are presented in table 2.

TABLE 2. STUDENTS' WAYS IN COLLECTING IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN READING TEXT

Smartphone usage	Users
Doing nothing	11%
Recording the text using video application	2%
Recording own voice which is reading the important information from the text	2%
Rewriting the important information using an application	30%
Taking the photograph of the important information from the text	55%

The students' answers are quite contrast with their prior answers related to the use of laptop. Different from that of computer/laptop usage, most students state that they use smartphones to help them to collect information for making notes. The answers indicate inconsistency. Thus, we cannot say confidently that most students do not use gadget in the process of making notes. However, it still can be concluded that majority seem to feel comfortable using traditional way of making note i.e. using pencil/pen and paper instead of using keyboard because the use of smartphone is mostly for collecting information only. The students are still willing to rewrite or paraphrase the information in papers rather than laptop.

Besides using smartphone to take the information photos. before making their notes, the students apply some other ways in finding and collecting valuable information from texts. The collecting ways are presented in the following table.

TABLE 3. STUDENTS' WAYS IN COLLECTING IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN READING TEXT

Strategy	Users
Highlight	55%
Rewrite it	28%
Underline it	13%
Writing short note in the form of word/sentence below/under it	4%

*it=important information in the text

As we can see in the table above, most students highlight the information which they consider important before they write the information in their notes. The students who highlight the information later should paraphrase or create their own sentences to supply their notes. It is actually interesting to know the relationship of the students' information collection strategy and their note-taking method preference. Unfortunately, the questions related to it did not come up during the study so that there was no data on how the information collection strategy relate to the note-taking method preference.

Although the number of students who decide to paraphrase or use their own words for the notes is dominant, the number of the students who simply rewrite the important information they found just exactly the way the information was presented in the reading text is quite high, too. As many as 28% participants do that. It happened because of two main reasons. The first reason is because the students think that rewriting what the author say just the way it is help themselves to recheck their understanding and interpretation of the information. The second reason is related to the task complexity. Paraphrasing means they have to spend more energy and thought in expressing their understanding and interpretation in effective sentences/phrases which will help them recalling what they learned later when they read the notes again. Hence, the students who do not want to find note-making complicated prefer to simply rewrite the words/phrases/sentences they find.

The finding above is in line with another finding related to the linguistic form the students use in making their notes. Most students do not write their notes in full sentences. There are only 20% students admitted that they write full sentences when making their notes. The rests (80%) stated that they do not write full sentences. Few students (9%) stated that they always use abbreviation in making their notes. As many as 80% participants sometimes use abbreviation and 11% stated that they hardly ever use abbreviation in making notes. Not only abbreviation, the students who do not write full sentences write their notes using symbols and drawing pictures too in their notes.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study proved that students who have been introduced and trained to take notes on important information from reading materials tend to be aware on the importance of making organized notes and be able to select and apply the note-taking models which suit their needs. The tendency to use the models that have been introduced and trained by the teachers is caused by the belief that the models lead them to produce more organized notes.

For pedagogical contribution, this study supplies an information for teachers that introducing, familiarizing, and conducting note-taking practices with all note-taking models would be beneficial for the improvement of the students note-taking skills. It also reveals that the selection of the model is mostly based on the students' convenient and familiarity, hence, teachers cannot force their students to use

a particular method only. However, in terms of practice, the students should be made familiar and understand all models because most of the times they do not use a particular method simply because the do not really know how to use it.

Another important thing found in this study is the fact that not many students use gadget in making their notes. Most students still apply more traditional way of note-taking i.e. using pencil/pen and paper. Practicality is the students' reason why they use this traditional way. Further study might conduct an experiment in which students are exposed with note taking practices using technology and in the end of the experiment the students are questioned to find out whether they still prefer to write notes using pencil/pen and paper to using laptop/smartphones.

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