

Exploring the Use of Drawing Task to Enhance Students' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study explores the use of drawing task in the implementation of task-based language teaching to teach reading comprehension. The result reported here is a part of an experimental study which sought to look at the contribution of different task types on the students' reading comprehension. One of the tasks was drawing task. This study involved one randomly selected class of the 10th year senior high school students in Padang (West Sumatera). The data were collected through reading test and observation. The result of the data showed that drawing task was the most successful task. It is indicated by the average score the students gained in the test; that is 95. The result of observation also revealed that drawing task was interesting for the students. There are some factors which may explain these findings. In addition to its attractive sense, Drawing Task offers more authenticity and creativity to the students to deal with their reading text and comprehension. This leads to high motivation and engagement in reading and doing the tasks. However, some challenges in Drawing Task implementation need to be taken into account such as preparation, task duration, and text types.

Keywords: *drawing task, reading comprehension task-based language teaching, TBLT*

Introduction

In regard with others, reading is key factor in successful language learning. Reading represents students' language ability in a unique way. Unless students are able to thoroughly comprehend reading passage by for example, stating details, reference words or retelling the story by using their own words, they are not considered as proficient language learner yet. Accordingly, reading with comprehension is important and it is an indication of successful language learner.

However, in order to achieve good comprehension quality of a text is still an issue, especially for foreign language students (Kartawijaya, 2017; Kasim & Rasiha, 2017; Italia et. al, 2018). To deal with this, meaningful task is said to be important in order to help the students to comprehend the text well. The use of meaningful task in the process of teaching and learning is conceptualized through a teaching method called task-based language teaching or widely known as TBLT. It is a method which bases on the use of tasks, either real-world tasks or pedagogical tasks, as the core unit of planning and instruction (Richards & Rodger, 2001:223), a method which consists of two concepts of task namely target tasks or real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks (Nunan, 2004:1), a method which tries to engage learners in real language use in the classroom by designing tasks (Willis & Willis, 2007:1), and etc. Despite of the numerous definitions, language teaching experts have agreed that the concept of task is important in task-based language teaching. In other words, teaching and learning process cannot be executed unless a meaningful task is designed and given to the students.

Task in TBLT is somewhat different with other common classroom activities. In TBLT, task should involve the use of target language (Richards & Rodger, 2001). Target language involvement in a task is important to enable and habituate the students to comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting using that language (Nunan, 2004). In addition to target language involvement, task should have engaged the students (especially in cognitive process), focused on meaning, had an outcome (non-linguistic one), be judged in term of outcome, had priority completion, and related to real world activity (Willis & Willis, 2007; Ellis, 2003:2-10). Based on these characteristics, it can be said in nutshell that task in TBLT perspective is an engaging classroom work which should have been completed within certain time. It involves target language use, focuses on meaning, reflects to real world activity, and had non-linguistic outcome (focus on meaning). Accordingly, task is apparently different from other common classroom activities.

There are numerous tasks which can be designed on the basis of the characteristics above such as listing task, ordering task, problem solving task, information gap filling task, reasoning task, task-based on text, and etc. (Willis and Willis, 2007). As for reading, one of the tasks which can be designed and used under TBLT framework is drawing task. Drawing is a real-world activity which is usually interesting. It involves target language use when it comes to explanation of some pictures, and it is focused on meaning. Thus, drawing task can be considered as one of tasks which can be used in teaching reading.

Drawing task is classified into Willis' (1996) creative task. Creative task requires the students to work either collaboratively in two to four or individually to perform and incorporate various task types such as listing, classifying, ordering, matching, reasoning, and etc. (Ellis, 2003:212; Willis and Willis, 2007). In addition, organizational skills are also required in creative task to get the task done (Mao, 2012). In drawing task, the students could work in pairs or groups to discuss the content of the text before starting to make relevant pictures which represents their comprehension. According to Pan and Pan (2009), the existence of picture in reading can enhance students' understanding of the text. In drawing, the students try to present the pictures based on their comprehension of the text. A simple prediction task can also be added into drawing task to predict, let's say, the ending of the story. Prediction leads to speculative discussion which gives the students spaces to use target language meaningfully. Organizational skills are important as to determine how the pictures might look like, what pictures to be drawn at first, what picture should be coming next, how the ending of the story should be, and etc. By stepping on these activities, students' connection and engagement toward the text can be maintained during teaching and learning process. It would result in their comprehension quality.

The present study is aimed at exploring the use of creative task, in this case drawing activity to teach reading comprehension to the senior high school students on the basis of task-based language teaching framework. It mainly concerns on how the implementation of drawing task under task-based language teaching framework, how drawing task could become the most effective task to teach reading comprehension, and what challenges that should be considered by teachers in implementing drawing task as a part of TBLT practice.

Method

This study used descriptive quantitative design in which the subject is measured once and are described based on numerical data. It is part of an experimental study about the implementation of task-based language teaching. It was conducted in one of senior high schools in Padang, West Sumatera. It involved one class of ten grader consisted of 36 students as the sample of the study. To collect the data, reading test in form of short answer response was used. In addition, observation using field notes during teaching and learning process are also conducted in order to see students' attitude toward the implementation of different tasks. The data were analyzed and then reported descriptively.

Results and Discussion

The Result of Students' Reading Comprehension score on drawing task

At the end of every meeting after implementing drawing tasks, the students were then given reading test in the form of short answer response test. Below is the result of reading comprehension of the students under the implementation of drawing task.

Table 1. The result of students' reading comprehension score analysis on drawing task

N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	Range	Maximum	Minimum	Sum
36	95	100	100	9	30	100	70	3420

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the number of participant is 36. The average score obtained by the students is 95. Median and mode are 100. Standard deviation is 9. The maximum score is 100 and the minimum score is 70. The range is 30 and the total score for 36 participants is 3420. In addition to above analysis, the students' reading comprehension score is also analyzed and presented into the following frequency distribution table.

Table 2. The frequency distribution of students' reading comprehension score on drawing task

		Interval			
		Frequency	Percent	Cummulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Valid	70-74	2	5.6	2	5.6
	80-84	4	11.1	6	16.7

Cont. Table 2.

90-94	4	11.1	10	27.8
95-100	26	72.2	36	100
Total	36	100.0		

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there are four interval classes for students' reading comprehension under drawing task implementation. There are 2 students (5.6%) in the first interval class, 4 students (11.1%) in the second interval and third interval class, and 26 students (72%) in fourth interval class. It indicates that the students' scores are mostly above the average score, i.e. 95. There are only 10 students whose scores are below the average score. Based on this data description, it can be said that drawing task is effective to teach reading comprehension.

In addition to the result of students' reading comprehension score under drawing tasks implementation above, observation in form of field notes was also used to qualitatively seek students' act of conduct during teaching and learning process. In this respect, the researcher acted as active participant observer who directly get involved and engaged in teaching and learning process. Based on the jottings on drawing task, it was found that, in the observation protocol of students' attitude, belief, interest, and value during the task, the students were very interested and getting so involved in drawing task process. They were actively engaged in content discussion of the reading passage. Most of them were focused on the task and how to get the task done.

Incorporation of Drawing Task into Task-based Language Teaching Framework

Based on the result, it can be seen that drawing task is effective to teach reading comprehension since most of the students scored above the average. In addition, based on the observation, it was found that students' attitude, belief and interest is very positive in drawing task implementation. These results can be explained through the way drawing task is implemented to teach reading. In order to get the best out of it, drawing task should be, at first, seriously prepared and incorporated with the framework of task-based language teaching. This preparation and incorporation is called formalizing the task (Willis and Willis, 2007). Ellis (2003:224) mentions that there is no single way of doing task-based language teaching so that there are some possible frameworks. However, the difference among the possible frameworks is spotted in terms of terminology only instead of components (Ellis, 2003:224). Thus, experts have agreed that a task-based language teaching framework generally involves pre-task (introduction), task cycle and language focus stages proposed by Willis (1996).

In pre-task, there are two important elements which can be done by teachers namely topic introduction and task introduction. In topic introduction, teacher introduces and explores the topic with the class, including highlight useful words and phrases related to the topic (Willis, 1996; Jiang, 2016). Teacher can ask students to do simple tasks such as classifying words and phrases, matching phrases with picture, brainstorming and mind-mapping and etc. Meanwhile, for task introduction, teacher should help the students to understand the task by giving clear instruction (Willis, 1996; Jiang, 2016). It is also important for teacher to demonstrate the task, or providing a recording or video of other people doing the similar task. This stage usually last between two to twenty minutes, depending on students' familiarity with the topic and the type of the task. As for drawing task, teacher can provide pictures or short video to the students related to the topic as part of topic introduction. In task introduction, teacher should give a clear instruction about what should be drawn and how the students draw their comprehension and prediction based on the text.

The second stage is task cycle. In this stage, there are three phases which should be conducted by the students namely task, preparation or planning and report. The starting point is the students conduct the task in pair or small group. The roles of teacher are to monitor and encourage the students (Willis, 1996), especially to communicate in the target language (Rozati, 2014). In preparation phase, students prepares a report to the whole class and deciding what to report, what they discovered during task completion, how they organize their report and what language forms used during report phase (Willis, 1996; Rozati, 2014; Jiang, 2016). The last step is the report stage where the students present their reports in front of the class and other students listen and compare with their own report. Teacher chairs the discussion and paraphrases the language form but not to explicitly correct it (Rozati, 2014). As for drawing task, teacher monitors the students and encourages them to discuss the drawing and the possible ending of the text to be drawn. In preparation and report phase, teacher directs the students to prepare the language they will use during the report of the drawing and the story, how they report their drawing to predict the ending part of the story and etc. Different prediction of the ending of the text will create opportunity for discussion between presenter and other students.

The last stage is language focus stage. It consists of two main phases namely language analysis or exercise and language practice. Language analysis phase is consciousness-raising activity whereas the students analyze the text and the language they elicited during task cycle which focus on lexical, phonological, or grammatical system analysis (Willis, 1996; Nunan, 2004; Jiang, 2016). In this respect, teacher can take notes of any grammatical mistake students have during task report activity. Meanwhile, in language exercise, the students practice words, phrases, patterns, and sentences from analysis activities (Willis, 1996). In addition, teacher can create activities or condition in which the students could practice the language they've analyzed (Rozati, 2014). As for drawing task, the students could conduct language focus activity based on the language they have used during report stage, or the language pattern they have found in the text as the source of drawing. In addition, to practice the use of the language, teacher should create activity which provides opportunities for students to practice the language they've analyzed.

Below is the example of how the incorporation of drawing task and task-based language teaching framework may look like.

Table 3. Lesson Plan of Drawing Task in Task-based Language Teaching Framework

No	Stages	Description
1	Pre task	Teacher introduces topic, source of the text, its original purpose, characters, and other relevant information to set scene and activate learners' prior knowledge, using background material if suitable. Teacher can also show the students about how some characters or scenes in the text may look like. It is meant to help the students in manifesting their drawing later on.
2	Task Cycle	<p>Teacher sets up the task for students to do in pairs. The task is "Drawing Task":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students read the text in which the ending part of the text has been withdrawn or erased. - Students are asked to comprehend the text and then predicted how the text may ends through drawing of relevant pictures <p>Planning and Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are asked to prepare how they report their task in front of the class. - Pairs show other pairs the result of their drawing and prediction of how the story ends, according to their version. - Other students are asked to give comments, opinion, suggestion about the presenter's idea, and are also asked to compare with theirs. - Teacher encourages the discussion but doesn't reveal the solution yet. - All students read the complete version of reading text to check their prediction and to see whose prediction is close to the complete story. - Teacher chairs general discussion.
3	Language Focus	<p>Language Analysis/exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students preview, observe their language production during the task or report stage - Teacher helps students recognize language rules and explain them how to use it properly <p>Language Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are asked to write items in target language to practice the form focus activity

Drawing task to teach reading comprehension

For some language teachers, bringing drawing task into senior high school students' classroom activity may be, to some extent, ineffective. Not only because it is stereotyped as childlike activity but also it is probably considered irrelevant in order to achieve the goal of language teaching and learning. In other words, the contribution of drawing as one of the modes of communication in language learning is usually considered underrated and is not highly valued (Kendrick & McKay, 2004). However, when it is seriously prepared, drawing can be one of effective tasks which can stimulate students' motivation and engagement toward language learning, especially in reading activity. In the present study, drawing task has been prepared and incorporated with the framework of TBLT to teach reading comprehension. The result revealed that drawing task is the most effective task to teach reading comprehension to senior high school students.

First and foremost, Drawing is kind of task which closely reflects to real-world at the level of “activity” (Willis and Willis, 2007:136) and situational and interactional activity (Ellis, 2003:6). People like to draw to either spend their free time or to simply satisfy themselves as a personal hobby. At this level, drawing task is considered as “situationally” authentic. In addition, in the process of drawing, people sometimes interact with others regarding things they are going to draw, how certain pictures may look like, what pictures they have been drawn and etc. At this level, drawing task is considered to have interactional authenticity. It provides opportunity for the students to use target language to make discussion, arguments, and explanation about a lot of things related to the drawings. Due to its situational and interactional authenticity, drawing task is considered beneficial, especially in enhancing reading comprehension quality. As argued by Willis and Willis (2007), authentic task is usually useful and motivating to enhance learners’ language skills development. Through discussions, arguments, and explanation in the process of drawings, the students could improve both comprehension toward the text and their communicative skills of the target language simultaneously.

Secondly, based on the observation, drawing task is interesting. It has attractive sense to the students (Altun, 2015), especially to those who are visual learners. In addition, drawing activity is simply interesting and enjoyable since it breaks the routine of language classroom mainstream (Gidoni & Rajuan, 2018) and it took less efforts for the students than having to complete a written summary after reading a text (Elliot, 2007). It is very common that many of reading classrooms assign the students with a very conventional way of teaching reading which usually ends up with answering some comprehension questions after reading a text. It decreases students’ motivation in reading activity. Thus, drawing task offers renewal to the students. It takes less effort since drawing is “situationally” authentic in which students have been very familiar with drawing activity through daily life experience.

Thirdly, drawing task engages students in conversation about the material presented (Elliot, 2007). In completing their drawing, students will actively interact with the pairs to discuss the content of the text or when sharing their drawings to the whole class. This provides opportunity for the students to use target language meaningfully. Moreover, drawing task also engages students in creativity which leads into participation and confidence in learning (Gidoni & Rajuan, 2018). Creativity is important in learning. Richard (2013) argues that creativity provides a powerful way of engaging the students with their learning. Drawing task engages the students with the text since it requires the students to pay attention to the details in the text, make inference from the text, and etc. so that they can draw relevant pictures. The engagement in creativity leads to high motivation in learning process.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that drawing task is very effective to teach reading comprehension to senior high school students. It is due to the fact that drawing task fulfills most of the criteria of task-like activity in TBLT. Drawing task is both situationally and interactionally authentic since it is conducted by most of the people in the real-world situation and provides opportunity to perform interaction. In addition, it is also interesting, and it engages students’ creativity which leads into high participation, motivation, and confidence in language learning.

Some Challenges in Drawing Task Implementation

Despite of the fact that Drawing task serves promising benefits and enhances students’ reading comprehension quality, it still has some challenges for the teachers who are willing to take this task as a part of task-based language teaching practice. The challenges are somewhat similar with task-based implementation in general. They can be described below.

The first challenge which constitutes the implementation of drawing task in the part of TBLT framework is preparation (Hao, 2016). Like any other task, drawing task needs extra preparation from teacher in organizing the task. The preparation includes topic selection, time management, students’ worksheet form and etc. Teacher should be able to estimate to what extent certain topics can be used and integrated with drawing activity. In addition, teacher should also be able to decide the form of students’ worksheet. Worksheet provided with column or template risks at restricting students’ creativity but seems to have important picture which representatively tell the idea of the text. Conversely, an empty worksheet (free template/no column) enables the students to draw as creative as possible but it risks at unnecessary pictures created by the students. Thus, teacher has to settle these preparation issues before implementing drawing task.

The second challenge in the implementation of drawing task is time management (Ganta, 2015; Hao, 2016). Time has been a nightmare for almost TBLT teachers who are less prepared and unfamiliar with the ability of their students in reading. Some students may need more time to comprehend reading text before moving on into drawing activity to represent their comprehension and to predict the ending of the story. Others may need less time to comprehend the text and directly involve themselves in the drawing process. Moreover, it is also possible that some students need more time both to read and to draw. Thus, teachers have

to be able to set the time at which they think and estimate that their students will finish reading the text or finish drawing the relevant pictures. In addition, teachers, in this respect, should also be able to select the text which is neither too easy nor too difficult for the students to read.

The third challenge is related to the students' objection and attitude toward the task (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). It is usually due to complexity or difficulty of the task (Ganta, 2015). Initially, most of the students were found to object the activity and become very shy or not so confident enough to show to others their creativity in drawing until they were told that the aesthetic aspect of their drawing was not pivotal. In the extreme case, students who are not visual learners and have low confidence may become very reluctant to start drawing. The teacher should thus encourage and help these kinds of student to build extra confidence toward the result of their drawing. Most importantly, teacher should emphasize that students' drawing will be judged in term of its relevance with the content of the text (the meaning), and how close their prediction is to the complete and original version of story.

Finally text type which becomes the main material source for the students to draw. Since there are some genres of text in English, it is important for the teacher to decide which genre is suitable to be incorporated with drawing activity. The purpose of this consideration is to keep drawing activity interesting and enjoyable to the students. Genre like narrative text which mainly involves students' imagination is the most appropriate genre to be assigned as drawing source material. Other genre like exposition text is simply inappropriate to be incorporated with drawing activity. Thus, consideration of text type is pivotal in drawing task.

Conclusion

Based on this study, it can be concluded that drawing task which had been incorporated with and implemented under task-based language teaching frameworks is effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension quality. Through the frameworks of TBLT, drawing task is formalized in order to get the best out of it. Drawing task has both level of authenticity (situational and interactional) which enables the students to simultaneously comprehend the text and improve their communicative skills in target language. In addition, drawing task has attractive sense and engages students in creativity to increase their motivation, participation, and confidence in the process of teaching and learning. Thus, the teachers can use this task as an alternative mode to teach reading comprehension. Despite of its effectiveness, some challenges such as preparation, time, students' attitude toward the task, and text type should become teachers' highest attention and consideration before coming to the implementation of drawing task.

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