Fostering Students' Positive Attitude Towards Reading Comprehension Through ReadWorks

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic of Covid-19 has resulted in school closure and changed the education activity into distance learning dramatically. English teachers are eventually demanded to call their students from online classroom. ReadWorks offers students to ignite their motivation in both reading practice and immediate feedback in order to accelerate comprehension growth. However, mediating technology into a learning activity is challenging, it allows for reliable internet access, disadvantaged background, digital literacy, and others to reflect different effects related to the students' reading process. Current sequential descriptive quantitative research aimed at investigating the students' responses towards ReadWorks and to what extent it assisted them to elevate the comprehension of text. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to thirty-eight students from Islamic senior high school who were taught by ReadWorks. The data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using descriptive statistics and categorized on the basis of the recurring themes. The findings revealed that the students dominantly gave a positive response to these online resources and instructions. It changed their attitude to the reading process in which ReadWorks contributed to reading. It included the systematic focus on vocabulary fluency, background building, controlling pace of learning, and training being independent reader. Although there were no significant score changes for the comprehension questions during the activity, they remained to answer correct questions posed by the teacher from the text discussion. In conclusion, it carries an alternative way to improve comprehension, since it has enormous potency to use to answer the future growing phenomena about reading.

Keywords: Positive Attitude, Reading Comprehension, ReadWorks.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, we have been looking at a significant increase in the use of distance learning following the closing of schools due to the Corona virus plague. Based on the official information, in 2020 the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) geared for all scenarios, including the use of online learning (in networks) for students as an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 transmission [1]. In an effort to keep students to study at home, English teachers have to prepare numerous supports to smooth the process. This issue can be viewed as a great motivator and opportunity for CALL integration. CALL (Computer assisted language learning) is a term in relation to the computer assistance as a part of language learning, primarily to present, reinforce, and test specific language topics [2]. It is relatively new and contains plenty of programs on the basis of this platform. Year by year, their number increases dramatically.

However, working together with technology, such as CALL, which is similar to other language teaching methods, requires careful planning. It has merits and demerits [3]. Computer or other devices and its associated language learning applications promotes learners more independence learning experience and allows them to focus on their studies at any time of the day or anywhere. More sophisticated, computer technology provides a lot of visual and verbal content that will be most remembered, it alleviates their learning worries and tension by repeating lessons as often as necessary [4]. Other benefits include accommodating the students' pace, guiding the correct answer, offering interactive learning, and so on.

Besides being powerful and stimulating aid, CALL is not free from weaknesses [3]. It is impossible to deny

that online access has barriers in either system or connection. Because everything is designed in advance, a failure during students' autonomous learning may result in the loss data and work, and they have to repeat some exercises from the beginning. Learners who are lack of experience in using a device may lose amount of time to print their responses. Some students argue that reading from a screen is more exhausting than do it from a printed document.

ReadWorks is a computer-based platform, online, which includes varied genre reading passages, vocabulary reinforcement, multiple choice and short written response reading comprehension questions for students to read with or without audio aid. It also offers teachers with data reports that might be used to track the students' reading progress. The perspective goal of this program is to foster students' motivation to read independently by providing them with both solo reading practice and immediate feedback. To reach that goal, students are free to select from a number of tests that the educator has permitted to follow based on their grade level or current reading level.

Reading comprehension is a cognitive process that requires the reader to make meaning, draw conclusions, and infer meaning from the written text in the formulating questions [5]. Being proficient at reading does not promise success for anyone, but success tends to much harder to achieve without being a skilful reader. As a matter of fact, the capacity to read, write, and think critically is now considered a minimum qualification for getting a job or enrolling in further education [6].

Despite its pivotal role, there is a variety of factors contributing to students' reading difficulties. The most obvious problems that can be easily identified from then till now are unclear teacher's instruction, identifying main idea, a lack of vocabulary, a lack of more detailed information, and forming conclusion or making inference [7]. Before the pandemic occurred, students had found it hard to comprehend a piece of written text in an online learning due to some reasons ranging from 1) understanding and mastering the new literacy skills and practices required for online research; 2) developing a special kind of digital wisdom that focuses on learning how to cooperate with the internet; 3) assuming new roles in digital culture for the students to actively participate and contribute new knowledge as members of their community; and 4) fostering good attitudes toward the use of internet in academic pursuits [8]. This is true, reading becomes considerably more difficult when done as a part of a full-time online study program. Not only is mastery of the foreign language required, but also build a habit to read the words on screen [9]. Reading a material in PDF format, which does not involve much direct interaction, makes students feel sluggish and disoriented. For most students, this makes reading a more difficult endeavour.

Several studies show that CALL or ReadWorks has an undeniable impact on the students' reading comprehension. From the empirical research, it was revealed that technology carried beneficial implications for students' reading comprehension [10] [11] [2]. The relevance studies on reading achievements using reading apps or websites also have been successfully deployed previously to reflect an emphasize on the students' positive perception in subject areas, such as online reading article [12], Boosky apps [13], web-based reading activities [14], and iPad reading apps [15]. Furthermore, numbers of study suggesting ReadWorks are restricted, even so it can lead to better achievement in reading comprehension [16].

The aforementioned theoretical frameworks and empirical studies indicate that assisting technology is flourishing for students' assignment in reading. Meanwhile, there has not been a study on students' attitudes utilizing ReadWorks for reading comprehension, particularly at the senior high school level in the recent situation. With these concerns in mind, the purpose of the present study was to investigate how students responded to the exercises and to what extent it helped them improve their reading abilities, which had been used for weeks in their EFL distance learning.

2. METHOD

The current research aimed at addressing to response the following questions:

1. Do students like ReadWorks? Why?

2. Do they think ReadWorks improves their reading comprehension? In what ways?

3. What are their opinions about ReadWorks?

Under those considerations, the design for this study was a descriptive quantitative research. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to thirty-eight X graders students of MA Al-Ma'arif Singosari in language studies major from 2020/2021 academic year. They were purposively selected to be participants since the teacher treated them using ReadWorks, and they got stable scores (reached at least 80% passing scores) as the additional materials to be discussed during the approximately 40 minutes zoom meetings. Almost all of them had a similar linguistic and cultural background, also have been studying English as a foreign language. The research instrument, then, was administered soon after they had received this reading apps for four weeks. The information gathered from the questionnaire was analysed and categorized based on the recurring themes that emerged from the respondent's responses by using descriptive statistical analysis.

2.1. Procedures of ReadWorks Tasks

In this study, students were requested to response the questions with the correct answers. They received an article to read before they attended the class and did the assignment by first logging into their student account. The teacher set the deadline for task submission; typically, the time limit was 3 days before the zoom meeting. Inasmuch, they could click on a tab at the top of the screen to examine essential vocabulary words, including the definition, sample sentences, and images. In addition, they could answer comprehension questions regarding the section and return to the material if they had trouble remembering it. Multiple-choice and short written response questions were among the varieties of questions set. After the meeting, they could look up to the score in the "Submitted Assignment" bar.

On the other hand, a teacher who assigned a ReadWorks article to be completed had to take into account and measure the Lexile, topics, and subtopics. Students could not find the text readability level to be too difficult or too easy, and it assisted them in selecting the appropriate level text for each grade. She/he was able to select whether the videos or audios were included so that students could play it anytime by clicking the tab. The score and percentage of successfully answered questions were provided by this reading online. She/he had to rate the short answer by using the indicated answer guide on a scale of 0 to 100 per cent. Meanwhile, the teacher had the option of providing intermediate constructive feedback to the students by creating a lengthy response to the question.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

How Students Like ReadWorks		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	5	13,2	13,2	13,2
	Neutral	11	28,9	28,9	42,1
	Yes	22	57,9	57,9	100
	Total	38	100	100	

Figure 1 How Students Like ReadWorks

Based on Figure 1, which depicts the final result, the majority of students (57.9%) responded positively to ReadWorks, according to the survey results. It was because they preferred ReadWorks webs, while over the 13.2% despised them. 29.9% of those targeted respondents had a neutral impression of this activity (they did not really like or disliked ReadWorks). The features and easiness to operate were the reason why they liked solo online reading platform for their first

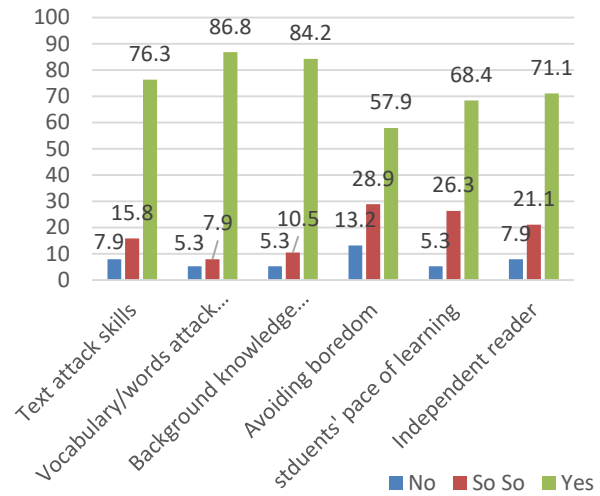time in experiencing learning by using an online reading material and its exercises.

Figure 2 Advantages of ReadWorks

In terms of the pie chart from Figure 2, it can be clearly seen that words skill was the most popular advantage in what ways did ReadWorks help reading comprehension where as 86.8% to gain qualification. The range number of 84.2% of respondents assumed that it was helpful for building the background knowledge. Besides, improving prospects of text skills came with 76.3% who said yes, followed by three last advantages, which were training them to be independent reader, increasing pace of learning, and avoiding boredom.

In the opinionnaire section asking about their opinion about ReadWorks, most of them keenly were aware that this reading solo platform was fun, practical, and training their learning self-reliance. An interesting response came from a student who thanked for giving them extra time to learn more about the text. She wrote "I am a slow learner and I life in a boarding house that give me less time to read the learning materials other than doing my homework. Learning from home with ReadWorks in my gadget, which I bring it the most, provides me a chance to prepare more thoroughly for the English class, so that I can try to actively participate in class discussion." Other students said "the feature of playing videos or audios about the text is very helpful, they will lead to pronounce like a native speaker do". It was also perceived that ReadWorks was a good way to get corrective feedback promptly for the incorrect answer. The last valuable reason to practice this web was the self-reliance, eight to the total number of respondents commented that working on the exercises independently and continually gave them more confidence to respond to the instructions, as this web allowed them to go back and forth the text as needed to support their answers. Under this circumstance, it could

be inferred that ReadWorks leaves positive manner with regard to the reading process.

3.2. Discussion

The facts on the field show that the integration of technology in leaning has been massively used in Indonesia under recent situations. Due to the massiveness of technology that has emerged in various fields and for various purposes, the use of technology in the context of learning may be less unique because of the large number and various issues that accompany it. Even so, the fact of this has not been discussed too much. Indeed, this study was conducted in order to provide empirical data to determine the extent to which the use of ReadWorks for reading comprehension contexts could improve and contribute to the English language learning. ReadWorks is not a new avenue, but it is not familiar enough to be applied in classroom learning. It looks promising if applied properly, but it turns out that there are several things that may need to be considered during its implementation. Thus, this study implies that ReadWorks was very likely to be utilized for the purpose of improving reading comprehension in the context of lower or higher-level education because it could be proven that there was a positive response from students at the high school level.

It can be seen that most students love to use ReadWorks during the learning. The features such as vocabulary and comprehension test boost their interest towards the careful planning activity in ReadWorks. As far as they know, this web is easily to operate, because they no more need to go the certain web or install certain apps which may reduce their memory. Meanwhile, the disappointing reality is that few of students do not like reading webs. Ranging from limited access to the internet to troublesome related to the devices while accessing the web leave behind the reasons why the dislike the web. ReadWorks contain a lot of topics, but their interest does not select to be assigned in the class.

Other benefits of ReadWorks as perceived by students were also found. The respondents said that ReadWorks did help them in some ways. To begin with, it helps them improve the micro-skills of reading, particularly the vocabulary and text attack skills [17]. Other elements to observe the students' attitude also highlight on the ability of the web in controlling students' pace, building background knowledge, being independent reader, and avoiding boredom. This dimension is modified from Faruq [18].

It was revealed from their response that they considered ReadWorks improved their reading comprehension in a way that it developed their vocabulary fluency. They commented that the vocabulary tab containing definitions and examples helped them understand the words better. The vocabulary task arrangement and design in ReadWorks describe the meaning with the emphasis on the words' synonym, antonym, and the like. A multimedia presentation teaches the students the most significant information in logical clunks, allowing them to retain it [19]. CALL integration tends to invest the rigid vocabulary memorization [10].The computer enables readers and texts to exchange more detailed and interactive information [2].

ReadWork did influence their motivation to read. It could be seen from their response related to how this reading web built their knowledge, trained them be independent reader, and accelerated their learning. The topic contained various theme and criteria based on the students' grade, and it obviously added or upgraded or developed their knowledge banking. Besides, since the completion of task was done solo, they could become accustomed to answering questions according to their own competency and judgment. This made the discussion sessions at an online meeting active because they believed in the knowledge brought into the remote learning. Then, their readiness and preparation to attend the class through reading the text days before the meeting held could control the pace of learning. Unfortunately, it is just that they feel hampered to transform and express what they already know in English. This finding is in line with Nobles et al. [16] and Hutchinson et al. [20] who believe that highly engagement of devices successfully engaged students' digital literacy, understand and good at using digital resources to exchange insights.

Overall, ReadWorks is a creative, functional, and confidence-building assignment. In order to keep away from stressful paper-pencil test learning, they preferred keeping going to study using gadget or remote learning. Moreover, plenty of respondents said that ReadWorks was a great idea to make them read a real-life oriented topic with unlimited time and places, they could do the assignment in either morning or midnight in anywhere. This is in line with [21], she claims that integrating digital devices has a favourable effect on reading results. As noted by [13], who finds that mobile apps have the potential to improve fluent reading performance in guided instruction. Confidence is unquestionably a role in successful learning [22]. Students will find it easier to study since they are enthusiastic about the activity, and this is an excellent opportunity to meet the learning objectives.

Despite their positive response to this activity, their total score did not reveal any substantial changes. Their average score from their first visit to ReadWorks until the end of the inquiry was 85.4 which indicate that the rise was not particularly noteworthy. This is due to their degree of getting bored to play with ReadWorks. Students expressed that they could not avoid the boredom; as long as they finished the assignment well-

done and they could answer the questions from the teacher or friends during discussion, they will not go further to review it.

Even though there was no significant effect on students' reading comprehension achievement in general, there was something positive about ReadWorks. Students left their opinions in the box saying that they would be pleased to use ReadWorks for their own, not controlling by the teacher, so that they could adjust and choose which materials they wanted to explore. Unlike other reading apps like BBC, TV411, Common Lit, or so forth, ReadWorks have conducted systematic planning for online learning. The questions pose also a bit distract their attention to choose best response. In long run, their positive attitude along with continuing interaction from teacher can eventually help them learn to comprehend more and better, as proven by [11].

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings of this study, ReadWorks can be utilized as a substitute for personalizing reading assignments in an online learning environment based on current conditions. As a result, their vocabulary fluency and motivation to read will improve, promoting their intrinsic desire to learn. Their motivation will improve if teacher and student are working together to discuss topics the students love to. ReadWorks consist of nonfiction, fiction, and poem. Students that are highly driven are likely to enhance their reading skills over time with consistent practice. Future researchers may invite different methods, subjects, or level of proficiency to apply ReadWorks in respect to the growing phenomena of language learning difficulties, particularly in the reading comprehension matters.

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