



Empowering the Students' Reading Comprehension Through Multicultural Based Reading Task in EFL Setting

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Abstract. Learning a language means learning its culture. Culture appears through the interaction and the patterns of behavior, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding in the socialization process. In EFL setting, introducing multicultural understanding can be implemented by giving appropriate reading tasks. This research aims to explain how the Multicultural-Based Reading task is applied in reading, how the students' reading comprehension through the Multicultural-Based Reading task in EFL Setting; and how students perceive the Multicultural-Based Reading task. For collecting the data, the researchers used observation and semi-structured interviews. The research design is an explanatory case study. The research finding is that the students have improved reading comprehension and understanding of multicultural.

Keywords: EFL · multicultural · reading comprehension

1 Introduction

It is widely accepted that reading is an element of literacy which is foremost in learning. Through reading, people get new knowledge and develop their capacity to analyze information to study their subject. Then, reading as a cognitive process provides the chance for the readers to engage their mental process in understanding, learning and knowing the information from the text. Dorkchandra in [1] asserts reading is an essential language skill for ESL/EFL learners to succeed in academic purpose and professional development. In this 21st century, learning aims to enable the students to participate and participate in the world's life. Three new educational philosophies have been introduced: basic literacy, competency, and character qualities. Literary literacy, numeracy literacy, scientific literacy, financial literacy, digital literacy, and cultural and civic literacy are all examples of basic literacy that should be the axis in education.

In reading comprehension class, multicultural can be brought to promote cultural understanding. Multicultural reading allows the students to understand the various cultures along with their similarities and differences, which teaches them that learning a language is learning a culture. Barry [2] mentioned that reading is crucial for a good education. Five significant benefits can result from including multicultural literature in a

classroom reading program: multicultural literature aids pupils' understanding of human similarities. Literature may demonstrate how all people are interconnected since they have similar experiences, feelings, needs, and desires. Learners who read multicultural literature are better able to appreciate diversity. The study of diversity aids learners in being aware of how societal concerns impact everyone's daily lives. The education of learners is improved and enriched by multicultural literature. Additionally, multicultural literature advances our future.

In the EFL classroom, lecturers can teach some types of multicultural literature to develop students' multicultural understanding. Tompkin & Hoskisson in [3] stated multicultural literature consists of six kinds of literature, and each class gives a unique viewpoint and contribution to life. Six categories of multicultural literature: 1) folktales and other traditional stories, 2) historical fiction, 3) contemporary realistic fiction, 4) contemporary stories depicting the experiences of people who live with different cultures, 5) biographies that detail the contributions made by various groups of people from different cultures, and 6) poetry.

Based on that recommendation on multicultural literature in a reading program. The English teacher can integrate the multicultural reading task into their reading class. Previous research on multicultural reading tasks has been conducted by some researchers, such as [3–9]. Al-Jaf [4] researched multicultural children's short stories to improve students' reading and speaking skills. Research suggests how to teach using multicultural children's stories and how to conduct assessments. Then for teachers unfamiliar with multicultural children's stories, teachers can become learning partners where students become the centre of learning. Next, Seftika et al. [5] employed local culture for teaching speaking. The study explored students' speaking skills after incorporating local cultural material into learning. The study revealed that. Teaching English as a foreign language helps pupils better understand and appreciate the culture. Then, they better understand cultural variety because they place a higher value on the characteristics that let people communicate effectively in social situations. Using English to convey local cultural knowledge enhances pupils' speaking skills. Then, Aminullah [6] investigated the use of local cultural reading materials for EFL students. This study advised the creation of reading materials based on local cultures because they offer many advantages to students learning English as a foreign language. Next, Nasrullah [3] examined the effect of multicultural approaches on elementary school students' reading and writing comprehension. This study reveals that this approach impacts reading comprehension and writing achievement. It gives benefits to students' experience and cultural knowledge. For instance, they were improving cultural consciousness and social action skills. Then, Hartatiningsih dan Tristiana [7] developed multicultural-based reading materials for junior high school students. The study discovered that using well-known items with pupils from different cultural backgrounds helped them learn. The study's findings also underlined the need to consider students' needs and prior knowledge when creating instructional materials.

These studies provide comprehensive recommendations on using multiculturalism as reading material, assignments and activities in EFL classrooms. However, these studies primarily examine the use of multicultural both in terms of process and results. Previous research has not explained how multicultural application is based on the student's point of

view. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap. The researchers investigated how multicultural-based reading tasks were implemented in teaching reading and the outcome of multicultural-based reading tasks on students' reading comprehension and also examined students' perception of multicultural-based reading tasks. Thus, the researchers investigated the multicultural-based reading task in the extensive reading course. In reading activities, students learn various multicultural reading tasks. Therefore, this study explores how multicultural-based reading assignments are applied in the EFL Setting?; how is students' reading comprehension through the Multicultural-Based Reading task in an EFL setting?; how are students' perceptions of the Multicultural-Based Reading task?

2 Method

The researchers employed an explanatory case study design. The research was conducted on the extensive reading course of fourth-semester students majoring in English Education at one of the universities in Lampung, Indonesia. Students who took extensive reading class participated in this study. Then, six students participated in a research interview. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. The researchers used convenience sampling, recruiting those who were nearby and available to participate in the case study at the time [10].

In collecting data, researchers used field observations and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews used Indonesian for the convenience and comfort of participants. After obtaining the research data, the researchers analyzed data.

The researchers analyzed the data by following steps such as data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions, and verification [11]. (1) In the data reduction stage, the researchers did the transcription of the observation data. Then, the results of the interviews with students were also transcribed in detail. Furthermore, the transcribed data were summarized into categories and themes. (2) In the data display stage, the researchers presented information based on categories and themes. The data is presented in the form of narrative text. The presentation of the data makes it easier for researchers to check whether the conclusions are correct or need to be reanalyzed. (3) in drawing conclusion stage, the researchers concluded from the research that has been done. (4) in the verification stage, the conclusion is verified by reviewing field notes and discussing the research with colleagues. After verifying, the researchers wrote a research report.

3 Result and Discussion

Concerning how the use of multicultural reading problems in extensive reading impacts students' reading comprehension. It was discovered that the procedures for teaching and learning were effective. The speaker divided the class into ten groups of four students each for the purpose of teaching and learning. The lecturer then instructed each group to have a group conversation in order to understand the reading material and respond to the text-based questions. Different ethnic reading assignments were given to each group. They read about the "benefits and drawbacks of multicultural society" in the first group. The second discussion group focused on "A multicultural society." What is an

American” was the assignment for the third group. Are human rights universal? was the topic of discussion in the fourth group. The fifth discussion group focused on “living abroad.” “Multicultural Britain” was discussed by six groups. The sixth group talked about “A Trip to Europe.” The ninth group contrasted American and British “Christmas traditions.” The tenth group addressed “Thanksgiving Story-very Simple;” whereas the ninth group talked about “Mad manners and insane customs-true or false.” The reading material for the multicultural based reading task was entirely derived from worksheets on English ESL culture. The group representative discusses the reading text once the group members have finished reading and responding to the questions. The information from the group representative about the text should be summarized by the other groups. As a result, this multicultural reading assignment provides all of the students with fresh material and deep knowledge of multiculturalism.

The students are able to comprehend the reading text better because they participate in group discussions, which is one of the numerous advantages of these reading activities. Next, because the tasks assigned are diverse, the pupils will learn more information and knowledge. Through group reading exercises, the students are then able to expand their vocabulary and improve their reading comprehension. The test was administered by the lecturer to gauge the students’ reading comprehension, and the results indicated that they had achieved well.

Regarding the students’ perception of multicultural-based reading tasks, the researchers came up with the following finding:

The students’ responses to the multicultural-based reading task.

S1:

“The multicultural-based reading task opens my mind about diversity in the world.”

From this task, I got a lot of knowledge about culture.

S2:

“I am so interested in this reading task because I get a lot of information and interesting multicultural knowledge by reading.”

S3”

From this task, I have learned about many cultures from all over the world. It is very unique and wonderful.

S4:

“Learning about different cultures by reading makes me feel that I have visited many countries.”

S5:

“It is really awesome to know the different cultures in the world.”

S6:

“I get a lot of insightful information, knowledge, and experience about customs, food, and culture.”

The students’ difficulties on a multicultural-based reading task.

S1:

“I have difficulties understanding new vocabulary.”

S2:

“Knowing the general and specific information from the text is difficult when I face new vocabulary.”

S3:

"I get the difficulties in determining the main idea."

S4:

It is not easy for me to find general and implicit information from the text.

S5:

"I have difficulties understanding the text because it has many unfamiliar vocabulary and idioms."

S6:

"I get problems with vocabulary and determine the main idea and information from the text."

The students' impressions of multicultural-based reading tasks.

S1:

"In my mind, this reading task is awesome. I learned many new things about culture that is different from my country."

S2:

"This multicultural-based reading task has provided me with a wealth of new vocabulary as well as insightful knowledge about European culture."

S3:

"I learn well by reading collaboratively with my friends in a group, so, when i get difficulties in understanding the text, my friends help me."

S4:

"I really wonder about the culture in Britain; this is unique."

S5:

"I learn a lot, and diversity and difference are beautiful."

S6:

"This reading experience has taught me that learning multiculturally entails not only learning about culture but also about politics, ethnicity, food, language, and values".

"Then, this teaches me a lot how to appreciate the difference and nation diversity".

The students' opinion whether multicultural based reading task promote the student's reading comprehension.

S1:

"Yes, of course. The task given by the lecture about multicultural based reading task gives me chance to improve my reading comprehension since I should understand well about the reading text and able to answer the question based on the text.

S2:

In my humble opinion, the multicultural-based reading task promotes my reading comprehension because I must be able to answer the questions related to the text. With my friend, I do the task by discussing it to increase my understanding of the text".

S3:

I am not a good reader, but through collaborative reading activities on multicultural-based reading tasks, I am learning how to better comprehend the reading text."

S4:

I think my reading comprehension is increasing in doing multicultural-based reading tasks. besides that, I also have an increasing vocabulary."

S5:

“The most interesting thing I get from this reading task is knowing the various cultures.”

S6:

“I get a lot of knowledge from presenting the discussion results on a multicultural-based reading task.”

d. The advantages of multicultural-based reading tasks.

S1:

“The first advantage is that I get reading experience from the task.” So, it increases my reading comprehension and the second advantage is that I learn multilingualism by reading the text”.

S2:

“I get new information and cross-cultural understanding through multicultural-based reading tasks.”

S3:

“Through the reading process, this takes me from one country to another.

S4:

“Multicultural-based reading tasks not only increase my reading comprehension but also my vocabulary.”

S5:

“I can learn many new vocabularies and get a lot of information and knowledge from the text about multiculturalism.”

S6:

“Multicultural-based reading tasks are really important to know well about other nations’ heritage”.

Based on that research finding, multicultural-based reading tasks are effective for empowering the students’ reading comprehension. It is supported by the statement that learners can greatly benefit from culturally relevant reading resources [3, 6, 7]. It is because during the teaching and learning process, the lecturer exposed the students to various kinds of multicultural reading tasks. By discussing the reading task, the students can also learn the reading strategies used by the other students. Moreover, the students also have more vocabulary from the text. Furthermore, multicultural-based reading tasks also enrich the student’s knowledge and experience of multicultural understanding. It is in line with the previous studies that English language learners from a wide range of cultural backgrounds have gained a better knowledge of one another’s cultures [5, 13, 14]. Thus, the students are expected to be citizens who appreciate the nation’s heritage and diversity.

Concerning the students’ perception of the multicultural-based reading task, students have a good and positive perception. Based on the students’ responses, most of them are interested in multicultural-based reading tasks. Yet, they have some difficulties in this task. The majority of the students have problems with unfamiliar vocabulary and how to comprehend the text. To solve those problems, the students discuss them with their friends so they can get the solution. Moreover, they also mention that they are so impressed with these activities. Based on the students’ voice, the final multicultural-based reading task provides numerous benefits to their reading comprehension.

4 Conclusion

Multicultural based reading task can be implemented to empower the students' reading comprehension. Regarding the teaching and learning process, by using those tasks, the students have a positive perception. So, it is suggested that English teachers use it to enhance students' reading comprehension. The limited study on this issue indicates that further research on it is very recommended.

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