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The Matters in Teaching Reading Comprehension to EFL Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the efforts that were being made by certified English teachers in teaching reading since reading is considered as one of the determiners of academic success. Descriptive qualitative research was used in this study; the subjects were two English teachers in Banda Aceh and the instrument was an interview guide. The interview questions were adapted from Fletcher, et al. (2012) that focused on curriculum, teacher preparation, teaching methodology, teaching instructions, authentic teaching materials, teachers' perceptions toward reading attitudes of learners, barriers in teaching reading, and teaching strategies for helping ineffective readers. The interviews revealed that the efforts made by the teachers played a pivotal role at assisting students to achieve reading competency. The attitude of students toward reading was also important in the teaching-learning process. The strategies of the teachers towards the students who were not reading effectively were not in line with the strategies as suggested by some experts: that the teacher should teach the students the strategies of how to read with interest, how to predict meanings, how to develop knowledge about the topic and so forth. These strategies were not implemented due to the situation and condition of the teaching environment. In brief, proper efforts by teachers to improve the learning environment could assist students to achieve better reading competency.

Keywords: Teacher's efforts, reading, teaching, barriers, strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous researches have proved that reading is a pivotal skill for academic success (Celce-Murcia, 2001). There is no block between readers and ideas in a text. Thus reading is invaluable for the learners of a foreign language who need to be

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exposed to the environment of that foreign language. During the reading process, learners are able to visualize and to relate knowledge from their first language in order to understand the English text.

The writers conducted a preliminary study at a senior high school in Banda Aceh which has a very good achievement record in English; SMA Lab School at Unsyiah. It is known as one of the respected schools in Banda Aceh. The school has had much success in English competitions, including in debates and speech competitions. This school has two English teachers who are certified. Certified teachers are those who are professional and certified as competent to run the teaching-learning process. As a result, this school was chosen for the conduct of this study. The writers believed that it was important to find out the attempts made by the certified teachers who were working with the students in this school to help them improve their reading skills. Additionally, one of these teachers was chosen as one of the best teachers in Banda Aceh in 2014. Based on this condition, the writers aimed to describe the efforts made by these two certified teachers in teaching reading to help the students improve their skills.

The writers hope that this study can be a guide for teachers to improve their teaching of reading skills. Therefore, through proper instruction of teachers in the teaching-learning process, it is expected that this can also assist students in improving their reading comprehension.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Certified Teachers

Indonesian ordinances concerning teachers (Law No 14 of 2005 of the Republic of Indonesia and Indonesia – MONE's Regulation No 16 of 2007) have established a program of teacher certification. This program is an attempt to improve the quality of national teachers. This certification program aims to improve all aspects of a teacher's competencies (Sutopo, 2011). The first one is *pedagogic competency* that ensures that teachers have basic knowledge about teaching methods. The second one is *professional competency* which is used to guide teachers in organizing a classroom to match the characteristics of their students. As teaching involves social interaction, it is also important for teachers to have good social relations with their students because they are part of their social life that needs stimulation to enhance the learning process. Finally, *personal competency* is the ability of the teachers to build their sensitivity towards the learners in the learning process.

2.2 Nature of Reading

Reading is defined as “extracting information from print” (Frank, 2004, p. 192). Reading is a process of installing new experiences in the mind. It needs intensive concentration in order to get the new experiences. It is a surface structure of language which does not directly represent meaning. The meaning resides in the deep structure of language, in the intentions of the writers and in the interpretations made by the readers.

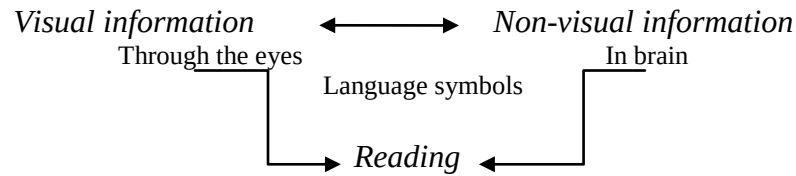


Figure 1. Two sources of information in reading (source: Frank, 2004, p.74).

Figure 1 shows that reading is making sense of and interpreting the symbols of language. Thus, it is pivotal for EFL learners to learn to read well because reading is an important skill to master since there is a great deal of literature and writing in English which can be acquired by students through reading.

2.3 Teaching Reading

Murray (1989, p.1) states that teaching is one of the most complicated human activities. The skills involved in teaching usually do not come naturally. Skillful teachers have a good understanding of the characteristics and backgrounds of learners. Therefore, as English teachers, it is pivotal to understand the psychology and cognition of learners because of their heterogeneous characteristics and backgrounds.

2.4 Teachers' Efforts in Teaching Reading

There are several aspects of efforts that teachers can do to assist students to improve their reading skills. Fletcher, et al. (2012) state that they can be done via: (i) the curriculum used in teaching reading, (ii) their preparations for teaching, (iii) proper methods of teaching, (iv) proper instructions, (v) authentic materials, (vi) the perception of the teachers toward the reading attitudes of their students, (vii) barriers in teaching reading and (viii) teaching strategies for poor readers.

The recent curriculum that the Indonesian Minister of Education has issued is the Character Curriculum of 2013. The main objectives have not been changed significantly. Only the ways to achieve and assess the learning process have been modified. English as one of the subjects in the curriculum requires that teachers integrate the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in their teaching. Proper preparations by their teachers may assist students in the learning process. Specifically for reading, Aebersold and Field (1997, p.5) state that reading material should relate to the life experiences of the readers. Therefore, preparations by teachers to integrate the reading materials to students' life experiences are an important part of the teaching process for reading.

The teaching methodology that the teacher uses in the teaching and learning process is also pivotal in assisting their students to comprehend what they read. Slavin (1995, p.9) says that the evidence from research on cooperative learning strongly supports the importance of the learning goals. Students as subjects of learning should not only have good interaction with the teachers but also with their fellow students. Thus, explanations should not only come from the teacher but also from their fellows. Therefore, the chosen methodology should create an active classroom atmosphere.

Proper instruction during the teaching of reading comprehension may support the reading achievements of students. Frank (2004, p.16) illustrates that students are not usually confused by written language until someone tries to instruct them on how to read. Thus, their reading achievements also depend on the instructions from the

teachers. Their reading achievements are highly determined by their attitudes and motivations toward reading because Ellis (1985, p.118) states that attitudes and motivation are two factors which determine the level of language proficiency achieved.

Moreover, teachers need to choose reading material that will suit the learners' knowledge backgrounds, experiences and needs because to learn to read is to learn to relate our previous experiences to the written signs. According to Frank (2004, p.83), "we do not live to acquire information but information, like knowledge, wisdom, abilities, attitudes, and values, comes with the experience of living". Thus, it is important for the teachers to choose authentic reading materials.

Contrasting the knowledge that learners have from their first language with English is a major challenge in teaching English. Moreover, poor reading competence of learners in their first language also impacts on their competence to comprehend reading in a second or foreign language. Antunez (2002, p.15) reports that second language learners who are not literate in their native language or those who have learned a different symbol system such as Chinese or Arabic may have difficulty in learning the sounds of spoken English. Initially, these students may be unable to hear or produce the sound in English. Therefore, creative and innovative strategies that are made up and used by skilful teachers in teaching reading can assist those students who are poor readers to become skillful readers.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Burns (2006, p. 22) states that, "The aim of qualitative (research) approaches is to offer descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts". It draws on the data collected by the researchers to make sense of human behaviour within the research context. As a result, this study focused on providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally, without experimental or artificial treatment.

This study focused intensively on the efforts of two certified English teachers at SMA Lab School, Banda Aceh, in teaching reading comprehension to improve their students' skills. The qualitative data for this study came from interviews with two teachers about the efforts they were making to teach reading comprehension. The main instrument for this study was the interview guide with questions adapted from Fletcher, et al. (2012); they focused on curriculum, teaching preparation, teaching methodology, teaching instruction, authentic teaching materials, and perceptions of the teachers towards the reading attitudes of the learners, barriers in teaching reading, and teaching strategies for poor readers. This study used three key stages to analyse the data namely, data reduction, data display and conclusion verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Curriculum

The results from the interviews showed that the teachers had taught using both curricula, i.e. the Content Based Curriculum of 2006 and the Character Curriculum of

2013. They said that the main content had not been changed or developed; only the way to achieve and assess the learning process had been modified. This is explained by TC1 during the interview (T refers to transcription, TC refers to teacher, whilst TC1 refers to the first teacher interviewed and TC2 refers to the second one):

T1: *Last year we still used the Content Based Curriculum 2006 because we were not required to use the Character Curriculum 2013, so we used Content Based Curriculum 2006. In the Character Curriculum 2013, the skills are taught integrated or separately. Actually in the Content Based Curriculum 2006 we taught these skills integrated even it seems separated, for sure, teaching was implemented based on a Genre Based Approach which means to teach other language components like grammar, we collect the grammar in the text. [TC1]*

Based on the interviews, it was clear that the teachers have had experiences with both curricula. The recent curriculum guided them to integrate the four English skills, and the previous one used specific points for the teachers because they taught by integrating the skills into specific points which they had to comprehend in detail.

4.2 Teachers' Preparation

Teaching is not a natural process. Based on the interviews, the teachers stated that their preparation was an important step before starting to teach reading. Before starting a reading class, they referred to the syllabus for the topic of the day. They did this so that they could organize their materials properly. Proper materials would help stimulate the previous knowledge of the students to help them understand the text for the new topic. TC1 said:

T2: *First, of course, we adhere to the syllabus...the materials that we should teach for students at the time, the materials for the first week and so on. So, after we understand about the material and topic, then we know what and how we should teach. [TC1]*

In addition, as it is a process of teaching reading, a genre based approach was used by the teachers in determining the text to be taught. TC1 said that the texts which were used in the learning process were not only from the text book but she also asked the students to look for suitable texts before the meeting. She said that with learners choosing the texts, it would be more interesting for them to read the texts. TC1 stated:

T3: *Since it is an English subject, we should teach reading based on the genre or text type required in the syllabus, whether it is narrative, report, analytical exposition or hortatory exposition in the second grade. After we know what text we should teach especially for reading, then I prefer to use the material out of the text book. I often choose the material out of the text book because in the text book the material is limited and it is also boring for me who have been teaching the same material for several years till we can memorize the title and content of the text. Thus, at this time, I often choose the material out of the (other) book and evidently, because the students are more interested than (when) we ask (them) to open the (text) book in which the material was there. [TC1]*

The teachers believed that properly organized materials were effective for the teaching learning process if it began with the basic part of the topic; it would stimulate the learners' previous knowledge to understand new texts about the topic. Therefore, they believe that proper preparations could help their learners achieve better reading skills.

4.3 Teaching Methodology

Additionally, based on the experiences of the teachers, cooperative learning was one of the most effective methods for teaching reading. This method provided many opportunities for students to work together to share understanding. Thus, it helps students make the transition to read in English. In cooperative learning, the students had to work together in groups, share opinions, and help each other to understand the material. The interaction between students with high achievement and students with low achievement can help a teacher in teaching. TC1 and TC2 said:

T4: *Recently, I often use cooperative learning model because based on my experiences, pupils who learn with cooperative learning show better achievement than those who learn with the conventional model [i.e. teacher-cantered]. [TC1]*

T5: *It is about the teachers' initiative, right? Yes, teachers decide based on students' condition for example at this school there are five classes of the first grade. The lesson plan for the first class does not have to be the same as (for) the other classes thus we have to know first the students' condition to really understand who they are and their level of competence. [TC2]*

The teachers added that in cooperative learning, the students were also encouraged to share ideas and have responsibilities to complete their tasks in reading activities. Thus, this condition helped students to be more interactive in the learning process. This was further explained by TC1:

T6: *The implementation of cooperative learning model in reading is good. Based on my personal experiences, group work benefits the students because they can help each other by working together in understanding the texts. [TC1]*

Therefore, the teachers as facilitators and monitors in the teaching process worked more on clarifying information rather than on providing information. TC1 and TC2 said:

T7: *Before I implement cooperative learning, students were easily bored if we ask them to read. Moreover, as I had told before (if) we always use the learning material from the text book; there is more challenge to face students' boredom. Our instruction should be varied since it is very boring to read the texts that are already available in the text books. As said before, I try to choose the material out of (other) books that is interesting based on students' background knowledge. Therefore, it will help students to be interested in reading therefore the instruction model and learning sources should always be varied. [TC1]*

T8: *We have to choose a story with the video. Then we ask the pupils to come in front of the class then we observe if they pay attention about the video or how do they feel about it, how to say some words, phrases or sentences, finally we relate it to the text. We instruct the pupils to determine the vocabularies found in the texts and for material collections, we ask them to look for other related text materials as homework.* [TC2]

The teachers believed that Cooperative Learning gave a good feedback toward learning for the students in which they were able to work cooperatively in the learning process. Thus, the proper choice of methodology by the teacher can create an active learning atmosphere in reading tasks.

4.4 Instructions

Both teachers stated that instructions played a very important role in teaching reading because instruction helped students to relate their previous knowledge to the information in a text. Therefore, it was easier for them to comprehend the text. TC1 and TC2 explained that:

T9: *The experience proved that instruction strongly determines the learning process and it is very important in learning all skills, not only for reading.* [TC1]

T10: *It is very important because in learning a foreign language, the pupils without proper instruction can get easily confused particularly in reading a foreign language.* [TC2]

The teachers' experiences showed that the instructions strongly influenced the learning achievements of the students, since they were teaching English as a foreign language, the instructions used by the teachers did not all have to be in English. The teachers often repeated instructions in Bahasa Indonesia in order to help the students to better understand them. Thus TC1 and TC2 said during the interview:

T11: *Unclear instructions can lead to a bad learning process because students cannot work as we want them to if our instruction is unclear. Sometimes, for example we want them to find implicit or explicit information, so, if our instruction is unclear they would probably look for something else because of misunderstanding. Thus, the result of the work would be incorrect. Therefore, instruction does not have to always be in English. Our aim is to make students understand. So sometimes we mix English and Bahasa to achieve that goal.* [TC1]

T12: *Without proper and unclear instruction, of course the pupils will get confused especially in reading.* [TC2]

In teaching reading skills, vocabulary instruction was a crucial part of the teaching process because it stimulated students to think what the task was about. TC2 also illustrated that in the first week she tried to introduce a text with vocabulary brainstorming, and pronunciation. Thus, as explained by TC2 during the interview:

T13: *The teachers have to give instruction on vocabularies of the week for two meetings. It has classification about the vocabularies of reading that students should comprehend so that they understand about the reading materials. For example, the word begins with vocal sound of "o". How does it sound? So we have to be specific, for example, in first week we give students the clarification about the use of the vocal sounds. Next week, we will focus to the advanced one. So the teachers also need to prepare the material about the vocal sounds. [TC2]*

In brief, the reading achievements were also related to the teachers' instructions. Due to this context, the instructions were usually given in both Bahasa and also in English to achieve the aim of understanding from the students in reading the texts.

4.5 Perceptions of the Teachers towards the Reading Attitudes of the Learners'

The teachers' efforts in teaching were not the only way to achieve the learning goals. The students as the centre of the learning process have an important role in achieving the learning goals. Before using the cooperative learning model, the students were bored when studying reading because the reading materials in the text books were monotonous. Thus, they tried to use other reading materials out of other books that were more interesting and more suited to the students' interests.

T14: *Students get bored if we ask them to read the learning materials from the text book. There is less challenge for them. So the instruction should be varied. I try to choose the material from other sources that may be more interesting to the students; I hope this can help students to be more interested in reading. [TC1]*

This problem was not only caused by the boring materials but also by the previous reading habit of the students which was poor. The teachers tried to solve this problem by asking the students to read works which had been written by previous students, and they were put up as exhibits in the class. This was clarified by TC1 and TC2 below:

T15: *Commonly students are less interested to read probably because our culture in Indonesia especially Acehnese are poor in reading. It may be caused by our environments, including family such as parents who are (not) accustomed to read. [TC1]*

T16: *We also exhibit the students' homework such as comics; right...for example, narrative stories like about the tsunami, Malin Kundang...we ask them to read and ask them to correct them if there are errors. [TC2]*

The teachers also added that the books in the library were very helpful to enhance students' reading interests. The library provided many kinds of books such as English novels, comics, encyclopaedia and many more. As stated by TC2 below:

T17: *Here we have books that support students to read...can also help the students to do their homework. If they want to learn about something, they can read the books in the library: - novels, comics, encyclopaedia and many more. Alhamdulillah [praise to Allah] they read them. [TC2]*

As an art worker, the teachers believe that the students are perfect creatures notwithstanding of some weaknesses. This is the point where every teacher needs to give more effort to overcome the weaknesses to assist each student to become skilled in reading. Innovative efforts by the teachers were very important to stimulate the interest in reading by each student.

4.6 Choosing Authentic Learning Materials

In choosing authentic materials for reading, the teachers tried to relate the experiences of the students to the schemata theory. This theory states that readers should have prior knowledge about the topic before they read. To acquire information about a topic from a text, a student should have some background knowledge about that topic. For example, for the *world champion* topic, the text that was taught was a story about world champions. Thus as TC1 said below:

T18: *We adapted students' experiences with the schemata theory that influence them in acquiring information in the reading materials. For example, recently it was about the Fifa World Cup topic or their background about the earthquake and tsunami. We can find and choose related materials.* [TC1]

This condition made it easier to stimulate the comprehension of the learners. Hence, teachers need to choose materials that suit the background knowledge, experiences, needs and interests of their learners. In this case, the teachers looked for interesting materials within the particular topic.

4.7 Barriers in Teaching Reading

The complexity of teaching reading has to be managed by teachers. The complexity is not only caused by the skills needed but also by the attitudes of the learners towards reading. Learners are the subject of the teaching process, if they are passive during the learning process, how can this complex skill ever be mastered? This was clarified by TC1 during the interview:

T19: *Like I have mentioned before, the biggest challenge is the motivation of the poor students to make them want to read. Moreover it is very crucial to teach reading because 70% of the questions (in the National Examination) are about reading, about 30% are about listening, and the structure is nothing anymore, which is the challenge. These students want to read if we give them tasks.* [TC1]

The interviews revealed that the efforts made by these two English teachers were different. The efforts made by TC1 were to choose the learning materials out of the text book and to choose materials related to recent issues in order to create more interesting learning materials. Meanwhile TC2 used the personal approach towards the students. Through this close relationship between the teacher and her students, it was very useful for her to see the students' difficulties in reading and the topics they wanted to learn. By doing this, she could find individual solutions for them. This was clarified by TC2 below:

T20: *Frankly, the weak students are not very challenged, but as they are diligent, we give them time for improvement...to look at how far they can learn. [TC2]*

T21: *For me, we have to have patience...that is the main need for a teacher, right? Since we are not the only one who they face in the learning environment thus we should understand about this. At least we should know who they are and where they are from, so their backgrounds are obviously different. Therefore we ask them to work cooperatively in the classroom; do not differ between A and B, even among the weak students in class, they all are friends. If they are united it will be easy to teach them because they may share with each other and, briefly, it is important for the teachers to look for solutions if there are any problems. [TC2]*

For these teachers, the difficulty in the teaching-learning process was not the barrier but the chance to be more creative and innovative in teaching. There was no limitation on improving the teaching process. They believe that facing barriers would help them improve in the future. In this case, the cooperative relationship amongst the students was one of the fundamental contributions to a successful teaching-learning process.

4.8 Strategies for Poor Readers

For creative and innovative teaching, the strategies had a significant role in the teaching process. The teachers explained that they tried to use a variety of models in teaching such as using the Jigsaw and the Two Stay Two Stray techniques. The Jigsaw technique is one of the techniques of cooperative learning which lets students work together in a group. Meanwhile, Two Stay Two Stray is also one of the cooperative learning techniques which allow a group of students to share their information to another group. Based on their experiences, this gave satisfactory results from the learning process in which the students worked in groups to finish reading tasks. Individual contribution in the group also played an important role because every student in the group was responsible to work on a different part or role; if one of the group members did not work, the task could not be completed. Therefore, each of them was encouraged to finish their separate tasks together. This was explained by TC1 as below:

T22: *One of them like I mentioned before that is the implementation of a cooperative learning model. It is based on my personal experiences that there are some models that give satisfactory results. For example, in reading it is very suitable to use Jigsaw or Two Stay Two Stray techniques. They are effective because in these models, all students must work and be responsible for their role in their group. If he does not work, then this will show in the result of his group work, because every individual needs to contribute to his group. If not, it means they are not serious to finish the task; therefore they have to work together. [TC1]*

On the other hand, remedial teaching was also the strategy used by the teachers to help the very poor readers. They said that it was very helpful to give remedial teaching after the Basic Competency had been taught whereby they would give particular treatments to the poor readers. This is explained by TC2 below:

T23: *After every assessment or post-test, it is a goof time for the teacher, especially for me, to conduct remedial for students who need them after school hours. I feel happy to give remedial to the ineffective readers. Here, we can motivate them, and further determine our strategy for the future so that our strategy can really help the students who read ineffectively. [TC2]*

From this situation, the teachers could learn how to teach poor students in reading to become more effective readers in the future. The teachers also stated that there were no limits to how much we can improve in the teaching process. TC2 also stated that their methods could be improved by understanding the students' problem and that they can learn to be better from those problems.

4.9 Discussion

After analysing the data from the interviews, it was found that the two teachers played a pivotal role in assisting the students to develop successful skills in reading English. This is in line with Bryne (2007) who states that a teacher is a major pillar for the reading achievement of learners. The teachers in this study were both the instructors and the facilitators for teaching reading and made many efforts to assist their students to achieve competency in reading. The teachers made preparations, getting suitable texts with materials to suit the knowledge, backgrounds, needs and interests of their students because students learn better if their reading lessons are based on their own experiences. This is as proposed by Aebersold and Field (1997, p.5) that readers' engagement in the reading process is based on their past experience both in learning how to read and in the ways reading fits into their lives.

In addition, giving instructions and choosing authentic materials are also considered as crucial parts in teaching reading, since proper instructions may lessen the difficulties in teaching reading. The teachers used both English and Bahasa Indonesia to give instructions in the teaching and learning process. These detailed instructions were aimed at assisting the students to comprehend the materials more easily. This is agreed by Frank (2004, p.16) who illustrates that readers are not usually confused by written language but poor instruction may also make them confused. Therefore, the reading achievements of learners are also related to the quality of the instructions given by the teachers.

The teachers illustrated that they chose the materials out of the text books (other sources) and sometimes, the texts used in the teaching process came from the students themselves. This was intended to use authentic materials which were helpful to encourage the reading skills of the students. Frank (2004, p.83) encourages this attempt as he says that "we do not live to acquire information but information like knowledge, wisdom, abilities, attitudes, and values, comes with the experience of living". The efforts of the teachers to choose authentic materials was an important step to assist the students in achieving reading skills because choosing texts related to the experiences of the students made the texts easier to comprehend. They made other additional efforts to teach reading successfully which included the methods used to teach reading, the treatments they used for poor readers and the strategies they made to improve learners' attitudes toward reading.

Cooperative learning was the most effective approach used by the teachers to create an active classroom atmosphere. This approach was appropriate to activate

learners' participation in the learning process because each student had their own separate responsibility to finish a different part of the overall task.

The teachers also preferred to use personal approaches and remedial strategies to help students who read poorly. From this process, the teachers could discover the kind of difficulties these students were having and also learn the topics that would interest them to read about. By doing this, the teachers tried to find solutions for these poor readers and to help them start to build better reading skills. By contrast, a scholar suggests (Papalia, 1987) that a teacher should teach the students about reading strategies instead of trying to improve their skills. Thus, the personal approach used by the teachers was due to the particular conditions in the teaching learning process since there were only a few students who read poorly. Therefore, for time efficiency, they preferred to talk to these students intensively, out of the class time, for example after school hours for about an hour. This was supported by Ramli (2012) that every teaching development does not have to depend on recent theories and concepts because every theory has strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the development of teaching methods will be better if they are developed in the light of the existing conditions especially the teaching-learning environment.

5. CONCLUSION

Briefly, the result of this study revealed that the teachers made various efforts to achieve success in teaching reading comprehension. Nevertheless, the attitude of the students towards reading was also a pivotal determiner for successful achievement of reading comprehension. Therefore, both the teachers and the students were primary determiners for achieving skills in reading comprehension. Thoughtful preparation by the teachers, clear instructions, proven methodology and proven strategy used in the teaching-learning reading process were able to assist their students to better achievements and competency in English reading comprehension.

Before the teaching-learning process started, the teachers made preparations. First, they prepared the learning materials based on the English syllabus developed by the school to fit the competency and interests of their learners. Second, they selected appropriate teaching methodology. Cooperative learning was deemed to be one of the more effective approaches that they used during the teaching-learning reading process. They found this approach to be suitable as it made the students more active because they had to work together in groups, had to motivate each other, and had to help each other in completing their tasks. Moreover, they not only got explanations from the teachers, but also from their friends within their own groups. Thus, this approach promoted student centred learning, in which the interactions were not only teacher-student, but also student-student. It also positively improved the reading sub-skills of the students because it helped them to increase their vocabulary by sharing meanings and knowledge amongst themselves within their group.

Instructions in teaching reading were also considered as a crucial tool to support learning English reading in the classroom. The teachers also mixed instructions in Indonesian, the national first language with instructions in English to help the students learn. It is noted that the first language or mother tongue for most students in Aceh is Acehnese, but they do grow up as bilingual (Acehnese and Indonesian) since the education from kindergarten is in Indonesian. English was used in exploring vocabulary

related to the reading materials while the Indonesian language or even the Acehese language could be used when the explanation in English needed further clarification to help further understanding by the students. Using English in the teaching-learning process was important for exposure. Thus, proper teaching instructions and preparations made by the teachers were able to help their students improve their skills in reading comprehension in English.

Furthermore, it was found that the teachers made creative attempts using materials from other sources as well as out of their text books and using personal approaches with students who had difficulties in the teaching-learning process to further enhance their performance in reading. The result of this study revealed that the teachers made a variety of efforts to achieve successful teaching. However, the attitude of the students toward reading was a pivotal determiner as well in successful reading achievements. Therefore, both teachers and learners were the main determiners for improving reading comprehension skills. In short, great results require a team approach.

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