ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the relation between drawing activity and reading comprehension compared to summarising and reading comprehension in reading fiction text. The relation between reading comprehension and drawing has been studied mainly in children and adolescents, and usually in science classes (Elliott, 2007; Leopold & Leutner, 2012; Schmeck, Mayer, Opfermann, Pfeiffer, & Leutner, 2014). However, the relation of this practice is rarely explored during adulthood (see for example Hock & Mellard, 2005). The study consists of one control group and two experimental groups. The control group, Group A, is asked to answer a list of questions right after reading. The two experimental groups, Group B and C, are asked to do summarising and drawing respectively before answering the same set of questions. Then, I give them questionnaires related to the activities they have done. I also invite six students for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Analysis of the data indicates that summarising is more effective than drawing in reading comprehension. However, drawing activity may be included in lesson plan as a variation of activities in reading classroom.

Keywords: reading comprehension, drawing, summarising, adult learners, English language.

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is the goal of reading activities. The relation between reading comprehension and drawing has been studied especially in children and adolescents, and usually in science classes (Elliott, 2007; Leopold & Leutner, 2012; Schmeck et al., 2014). However, the relation of this practice is rarely explored during adulthood (see for example Hock & Mellard, 2005) and utilising drawing for fiction reading comprehension is
understudied. This article will discuss the fiction reading comprehension in the second language (L2) using summarising and drawing activities in early adulthood or at university level. It is a common knowledge that university students do not have adequate reading skills to take part in the classroom activities (Poole, 2013).

One of the reasons for the lack of reading skill in university students is that they do not realise the strategies to comprehend their reading and they are unprepared to cope with the extensive readings at university (Baleghizadeh & Babapour, 2011; Kruidener, 2002 in McShane, 2005). It is also revealed that “little empirical research has focused on how college students read fiction, and thus little is known about the strategies college students use while reading fiction” (Poole, 2013, p. 93). Another reason is that the L2 learners do not have adequate vocabularies in L2 which may hinder their comprehension (Verhoeven, 2011).

Younger adults at undergraduate level are also prone to mind-wandering during reading comprehension task compared to older adults, and this is proven by Jackson and Balota’s (2012) research. They suggest that the reason may be that the younger counterparts perceive the task as less interesting and they also have lower conscientiousness (p.117). Therefore, it can thus be suggested that the reading literature programme should be combined with several reading strategies to make the class more interesting.

Despite the reasons which may impede the reading comprehension, however, several strategies have been discussed and implemented to enhance reading comprehension. For example, by using context clues and using pictures, tables, and figures from the text as well as utilising computer assisted activity such as using hypermedia texts (Garrett-Rucks, Howles, & Lake, 2015; Poole, 2013). Hock and Mellard (2005) also provide several strategies, two of them are creating visual images and summarising.

Summarising is one of the most popular means to enhance reading comprehension and also help students to “monitor their understanding” (Brown & Day, 1983; Hare & Borchardt, 1984; King, 1992; O'Donnell & Dansereau, 1992; Wittrock, 1990 in Nist & Simpson, 2000, p. 655). But in reality, “the basic skill of reading comprehension is frequently not explicitly assessed objectively in adults” (Proyer, Wagner-Menghin, & Grafinger, 2014, p. 369).

Another method to enhance reading comprehension is by drawing an illustration for the text as has been conducted by Elliott (2007), Leopold and Leutner (2012), and Schmeck et al. (2014). The studies carried out by these
To Draw or Not to Draw? An Evidence-based of Fiction Reading Comprehension in English Translation Programme, State Polytechnic of Jakarta. (Lidya Pawestri Ayuningtyas)

Researchers reveal that drawing illustration after reading science texts is beneficial to increase reading comprehension. However, most research in this area has only focused on science classrooms and scientific texts. To date, there are few studies that have investigated the relation between drawing after reading fiction texts with reading comprehension. This research will be an attempt to draw connection between these two areas.

At State Polytechnic of Jakarta in English Translation Programme, students are given various type of texts. Since the aim of the programme is to prepare the workers for higher demand in both translating and interpreting field (Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, 2015), the students are exposed to both literature (short stories, myths, fables, and novels) and non-literature texts (for example legal documents and report texts). The programme was established in 2015 and only has two cohorts to this date and each cohort only consists of one classroom.

With regard to the general lack of research in drawing activity for adults reading comprehension, this study, therefore, set out to answer the following questions:
1. Does drawing activity after reading task helps students to comprehend the fiction text and how does it differ with summarising activity
2. What are the students’ perceptions about the drawing and summarising activities and which activity do they favour?

In answering these questions, first I will review the relevant literature regarding the topic. Second, I will explain the method when doing the research. The data gathered from the method will be discussed in the next section. Finally, future research suggestion and pedagogical implication will be mentioned in conclusion.

METHODS

The fiction text that was used in this research is *The Popular Mechanics* by Raymond Carver (1981). It was a short story no longer than 500 words. The passage had a readability score of 5.4 on the Dale–Chall formula (readable for 5th-and 6th-grade students), and using Measure Text Readability calculator, the readability rating was considered as *very easy*. However, despite the easy readability, the theme was suitable for adult readers as it dealt with marriage and child custody, as well as the “more disturbing, more menacing, existential questions concerning both the nature of the parents' relationship to the baby whom they physically fight over and with the state of the baby himself” (Powell, 1994, p. 650) and the story was ended with
a gruesome conclusion (German & Bedell, 1988). The complex implication beyond the easy text and the vague nature of the story made this story suitable for the participants since they had not been exposed to such story.

There were twenty-seven students of the first-year cohort in this research, divided randomly into three groups consisting a same number of students. The research was conducted in one session of the classroom. However, in the previous week, the students had been asked to draw an illustration after reading comprehension and this activity, which was their first experience in doing so, was met with generally positive feedback.

To begin the process, first I gave the three groups copies of the short story. The students in Group A, the control group, were asked to answer a set of questions directly after reading. The students in Group B were asked to make a summary after reading the text, then they were asked to answer the questions. Finally, the Group C students were asked to draw an illustration from the text which they thought could illustrate the whole text for someone who does not read the short story, then they answered the questions. I also asked the students in Group C to state the reason why they decided to draw the picture.

The set of open-ended questions comprised nine open-ended questions and adapted Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) which would assess lower, medium, and higher level of understanding. The students also used close reading technique, which is a “deep analysis of how a literary text works” and to critically analyse the text using the information found in the text (The University of Wisconsin - Madison).

After the students had finished answering the set of questions, they were asked to fill in questionnaires using Likert scale and several open-ended questions about their general thought of the text, and their perception of their respective activity. After that, I invited six randomly-selected students, two from each group, for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). FGD is conducted to yield more information about the feedback quickly (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

All the data gathered in the process were analysed using qualitative data analysis from the presented data to answer the research questions. This method is used to understand the “social reality, which underlies any research findings” (Opie, 2004: 152). Qualitative data analysis depends on research’s purpose (Cohen et al., 2007: 461). As the purpose of my research is to explore the relation between drawing activity and reading comprehension, the most
appropriately way to do the analysis is by answering the data under research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This result focuses on answering these research questions:

a. Does drawing activity after reading task helps students to comprehend the fiction text and how does it differ with summarising activity?

From the self-assessment questionnaire, more than half of the students agreed that the text was easy to moderately easy to read, noting only one student thought that the text was really easy. They also could generally understand the text without consulting dictionary. The majority of the students also felt that they could answer the answer easily, despite the fact that only three students were confident with all their answers. All of the students always referred to the drawing and summary they made.

What is interesting about the data from the answer sheets is that there is one distinctive difference, the Group B students answered all the questions correctly. The first and third group did not answer all the questions correctly. A possible explanation for this might be that the Group B students paid attention to the details while writing summary, while the Group C only grasped the ‘big picture’ in their drawing activity.

The students from Group B wrote the summary in sequence by trying to write summary using 5W+1H questions (what, why, when, where, who, and how), even though not all 5W+1H questions were used. Group A and C students had a common mistake in answering the questions which assess the lower level of understanding. This echoed the results of past research that summarising causes the “depth of text processing” and engage the students with “the key processes of creating the macrostructure of a text and necessitate higher-level processing skills” (Marzec-Stawiar ska, 2016, p. 97).

If we now turn to the drawing activity, the students drew the pictures about the climax of the story. One of the students reasoned that she considered the picture she drew “is the main problem of the story” (Appendix 2 A). Another student in the same vein states that her drawing “is the point of the story” (Appendix 2 B).

Although the result in drawing activity is not encouraging, it should be noted that the students perceive drawing activity benefits them to remember the main point of the story and helps them visualise it.

b. What are the students’ perceptions about the drawing and summarising activities and which activity do they favour?
Although students view the drawing activity as “something new in the classroom” and “exciting”, they still think that both drawing and summarising activities “take longer time than answering questions directly”. They feel that answering directly is more time-saving, but they still want to do drawing activity once or twice each semester. One of the drawbacks of drawing activities for them is that they consider themselves to have a lack of drawing skill, although I ensure them that their drawing will not be assessed artistically.

However, all participants in FGD, including those in Group A, agreed that the drawing and summarising activity are beneficial for answering the questions. For example, one of the students mentioned that “Summary helps us in answering questions because we do not have to reread the whole text”. Nevertheless, most of the students in Group B in the questionnaires believe that summarising help them understand, with only one student disagree, claiming that “it [only] help others who have difficulties”. One of the examples of summary can be seen in Appendix 1.

One student also stated that “Drawing illustration helps us understand the whole story”. Therefore, while summarising helps students to comprehend the details of the story, drawing helps students to understand the main point of the story.

CONCLUSION

Prior studies have noted the importance of raising the reading comprehension in EFL learners. An initial objective of this project was to identify which one is more effective, writing summarise or drawing illustration after reading to help students in English Translation programme to help the students comprehend fiction text. Very little was found in the literature on the question of drawing illustration outside the science texts and this study helps to shed light on its effectiveness in reading fiction text.

In present classroom, drawing illustration after reading a text is very rarely conducted. Teachers may use the activity to make reading classroom more exciting. Furthermore, teachers may also conduct collaborative drawing in a reading class. Although it is revealed that the summarising activity is more beneficial in this study, the students’ perception of drawing activity is generally positive and can be included in lesson plan.

Two limitations of this study are the small number of participants and the length of the research. It would be more effective if the students were tested multiple times using drawing and summarising strategies in a sequence
of several weeks, as well as answering the questions directly to make the research more valid.

Taken together, given the lack of variety in reading classroom, a more interactive lesson plan utilising various activities such as summarising and drawing activities are the feasible alternatives to the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX**

**Appendix 1**

One day in winter season, there was a married couple fighting. The husband was putting his things into the suitcase in the bedroom, he is going to leave the house. The wife came to the room and yelled, she saw her baby's picture on the bed and picked it up, and the husband asked her to give the picture back, but she didn't want to give it back. It makes the husband angry and asked for something bigger the real baby. He tried to take the baby from her, but she didn't let go of the baby. They kept taking the baby from each other and it made the baby cry, but they didn't care and kept doing it.

**Appendix 2 A**

I draw this scene because this is the main problem of the story. The man and the woman didn't want to let go the baby, and it makes the baby scream and cried.
Appendix 2 B

The reason why I drew this part because, in my opinion, it is the point of the story. When a husband and a wife were in a big conflict, I want to tell the readers about the point of this story. Without the readers read the full story, they have already know about the main conflict.