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INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTENSIVE READING (IR) WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS ON STUDENTS' READING ABILITY TOWARD ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST FOR STUDENTS OF STKIP PGRI BANGKALAN

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**INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTENSIVE
READING (IR) WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS ON
STUDENTS' READING ABILITY TOWARD ENGLISH
PROFICIENCY TEST FOR STUDENTS OF STKIP PGRI
BANGKALAN**

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Abstract: The current research investigates the effect of online intensive reading (IR) on students' reading ability on English proficiency test. Besides, students' perceptions on the use of online intensive reading were also studied. A number of credible journals indexed in SCOPUS are used to support online intensive reading. Eighty students are involved in this study into two groups in which 40 students to be assigned as experimental group and 40 students to be assigned as control group. Students' perceptions on online intensive reading were investigated after questionnaires had been spread. In addition, independent sample t test was used to find out the score difference between the experimental group and control group. A significant difference was found in the gained score difference between the experimental group with online intensive reading and control group with non-online intensive reading in which p value $.000 < \text{significance } .05$. in addition to the findings, It was found that students attained overall good perceptions toward reading journal articles related to suitability, reading pace, and motivation The result of this research is on educational implication that teaching reading with online intensive reading is found effective.

Keywords: *Online intensive reading, perceptions, English proficiency test*

INTRODUCTION

The goals of reading foreign language texts are fluency and accuracy. Fluency deals with reading pace while accuracy deals with structure of the text and vocabulary enrichment (Mart, 2015). While extensive reading closely relates to fluency, intensive reading correlates to accuracy. Intensive reading instruction which is frequently done in the class needs to be supported with some characteristics of extensive reading, especially for the wide variety of reading materials. Tendency of textbook use in the class can be reduced to get more reading exposure outside the class by reading articles provided online, for instance.

The reading development abilities really depend on learners' experiences in reading, habits, enjoyment, and variety of books read. Studies have found that when students read a lot outside classroom with their pleasure, they (a) have significant vocabulary learning and developmental stage that students learn about spelling and vocabulary enrichment (Soltani, 2011), (b) develop students' autonomy, expand English Proficiency, increase students' confidence in their ability in reading comprehension and reading rate, and improve students' memory and has better focus (Wardani , 2014).

Grabe and Stoller (2002, p. 13) advocate the view that students' abilities on reading texts may vary depending on the tasks, motivations, goals, and language abilities. Students' language abilities comprise lower-level processes (dealing with automatic linguistic processes) and higher-level processes (dealing with prior knowledge and inference abilities). These two abilities need to be trained for students in intermediate even advanced learners to read effectively and fast. Effective reading academic texts must use the two tools; lower level process and high level process to grab the meaning of the text especially when background knowledge is helpful on it. In order to achieve the goal of effective reading, students need to be exposed to a wide variety of texts which are authentic on their academic context. A study by Julian (2009)proposes that students need to be taught categories of analysis which are specific to academic discipline. Overall groupings of analysis to interact with academic texts can be concluded as follows: (a) reading purpose; (b) context; (c) author's thesis; (d) deconstruction of assumptions; (e) evaluation of author's arguments; and (f) consequences of author's arguments.

English language proficiency tests such as TOEFL test and IELTS contain reading sections acquiring the test takers to read several texts in a wide variety of topics. It widens the topic into several big categories comprising arts, humanities, life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences as it is mentioned by Educational Testing Service (ETS). In order to be able to do all of the questions, test takers need to read the text intensively with good reading pace. To face the reading section of the test, students need to prepare themselves by implementing good strategies to comprehend and to increase the reading pace in order to accurately and quickly answer the questions.

Teaching reading to prepare students for English Proficiency Test such as TOEFL can apparently use intensive reading carried out online. Open access of online journals can be a vast library accessed anywhere with internet. Internet sources have been more popular today for all skill teaching including teaching reading. A number of studies on using web resources for reading speed and materials have been conducted such as the use of concordances, electronic dictionary look-up, hypertext glossing, yahoo groups, and online magazine(Silva , 2009),(Lyutaya , 2011).

Intensive Reading is usually matched with Extensive reading since they complements one to another (Jacobs & Renandya , 2015). A number of researches have been accomplished to investigate and to test the effectiveness of ER as the helpful program for high speed reading like what has been conducted by (Dao, 2014) and (Wardani , 2014). ER was conventionally done with physical library available at universities or schools. However, in this digital epoch, it is possible to conduct ER though digital open sources through internet. Silva (2009) attempted

to implement the web-based program of ER through downloaded, printed materials with assignments of reading outside the classroom. Students were assigned to photocopy and read numerous articles from non-library reading materials sources such as magazines. This assignment is submitted in the form of portfolios. The problem when conducting ER is the time allotment which is relatively long to see the impact. How to adapt IR with ER is that materials taken from online can be brought to classroom. With the limited time, IR instruction can be carried out with that adaptation. So, that is why IR can support ER or vice versa.

Shifting offline to online intensive reading is a must in this 21st century with advanced technology around us. Shifting from traditional intensive reading to online resembles a challenging task for the educator in that the open web sources are massively varied. Exposure to that massive sources provided free in the internet makes it possible to use for educators to use for materials for training students how to read fast –on English proficiency test, for instance. Educators can adjust the reading materials to what topics might be found on the reading test such as education, psychology, arts, and so on. Students are more prepared when taking the test since they have trained themselves to high speed reading taken from articles from those wide open web sources. What they read is what they find in the test. In other words, there is a match between online intensive reading materials to what they read in the test.

Online sources as materials for intensive reading program enable students to choose any texts for learning. In training students to high speed reading through intensive reading program, educators should be aware that the essence of intensive reading is that it involves a large quantity of varied, self-selected, enjoyable reading at a reasonably fluent speed (Nation, 2008, p. 50). Students' interest needs to take it for granted based on their level of difficulty and topics they are interested in and understand (Harmer, 2007, p. 283). Text selection depends on the students' preferences.

Technology can apparently be used to support and to modify the ordinary model of intensive reading. On this study, the researcher attempts to investigate the effectiveness of online intensive reading on students' ability in reading toward English proficiency test. Besides, their perspective was also studied and later be presented in descriptive statistics.

METHOD

This study was conducted in a population of 140 students at 6th semester English Department at STKIP PGRI Bangkalan in the same batch of 2012. From 140 students in five classes, the researcher took 80 students for sample in random. The students are aged between 19 to 22 years of age with intermediate English proficiency. This research was conducted in a TOEFL preparation test course.

The researcher used web-based resources for materials of reading, i.e. online journal related to topics tested on TOEFL test. Students were given a reading log adapted from Lyutaya (2011) in which there are several important parts of the log comprising key vocabulary along with synonyms or definitions, summary, and reaction. Students were assigned to find the synonyms to widen their vocabulary. Then, they were instructed to make summary of the article. It

trains the students to synthesize and summarize what they have read. Reaction reflects on how the students give their opinions based on their understanding on the issue.

Topics for reading materials are included in the log into four journals indexed in Scopus and DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journal):

Table 1. Four journals indexed in Scopus and DOAJ

No	Name of journal	Website	Scope
1	TEFLIN Journal	http://journal.teflin.org/index.php/journal/index	Education
2	IPI	http://id.portalgaruda.org/?ref=browse&mod=area&area=90	Earth and planetary science
3	Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology	http://id.portalgaruda.org/?ref=browse&mod=viewjournal&journal=5539	Education public health
4	International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology	http://www.consortiacademia.org/index.php/ijrsp/issue/archive	Psychology

In eight weeks, students were assigned to make at least five reading logs with different scopes by choosing articles provided in the websites based on their interest on the titles, preferences, and length of articles. Students are given freedom to choose as they wish on what articles they are interested in. Level of difficulties may be the first reason on which article in certain journals they might read. There are four scopes of online journal provided by the researcher for students to conduct their intensive reading. Those four scopes appear the same topics as those in English Proficiency Test on reading section. Education, earth and planetary science, education public health, and psychology are chosen since they are popularly presented on reading test on TOEFL. The articles on the journals are accessible with the link provided. Students are able to download the articles freely without any charges.

Research Design

The present study employs true experimental design combined with survey to find out the students' perceptions towards before and after the implementation of online intensive reading. Among 140 students for population, 80 were taken randomly be selected as the sample. True experimental design is chosen since the researcher can apply simple random sampling instead of cluster sampling. Randomization on the whole three classes made it possible for the researcher to form the two new classes for sample.

Instrument

An instrument was applied on this research namely English Proficiency Test on the form of TOEFL-Equivalent test given on either on the stage before

and after online intensive reading had been applied. Test of Reading for TOEFL was given to the participants to collect data and the data was then compared using statistical calculation through SPSS 17.0. Besides, another form of instrument, questionnaire, was applied to figure out students' perception toward online intensive reading.

The questionnaire is aimed at gaining information related to students' perceptions toward intensive reading activities for their reading skill. There are a number of eight questions given in the questionnaire in the ease of feasibility of IR program to TOEFL reading, reading skill improvement, students' interest on the topics of journal, reading pace, and motivation to read. Through the reliability test, it was found that the Cronbach Alpha is 0.593.

The second instrument, i.e. reading test, was tested in another different class for its independence and gained reliable with Cronbach 0.639 through Pearson Product Moment in SPSS. There were 50 questions of reading comprehension questions in five texts with different topics. 55-minute time allotment was given to the participants of this tryout.

Instructional procedures

The participated students were randomly divided into 2 groups using simple sampling techniques. There are five classes considered population of this study as many as 140 students, all of which got the same opportunity to be the sample for control group and experimental group. In this research, the whole number of students chosen was 140, and they were taken 80 randomly to be selected as the sample. 40 participants were chosen for the experimental group and 40 students for the control group. In both groups, reading comprehension was taught, however, merely at experimental group were taught by implementing online intensive reading for the whole eight weeks. Control group merely received the ordinary instruction using printed materials from course textbook. Students in control group were given traditional instruction without any take-home assignment about reading journal articles. They learn reading strategies without any exposure to online IR program. In the end of eight weeks, they were compared to those in experimental group related to their reading achievement on test.

Data Collection and Analysis

The pretest and post-test English reading proficiency test and questionnaire in the end of intensive reading were given during the research period. It indicates that there are two stages of data obtained in which the first one is the score of English reading proficiency test and the second one is questionnaire to find out the students' perceptions. The first data gained were calculated statistically through SPSS 17.00 with independent sample test, as for the rest are calculated with simple statistical analysis. Independent samples T-test was used in SPSS calculation because the two groups were not related in anyway. Besides, there was only one test applied in the research for statistical calculation (Salkind, 2007, p. 219). The data obtained from questionnaires are presented in a bar diagram to enlighten visually to the readers about the results of each sentence.

Afterwards, the chart is explained in details on how the acquisition of each question.

RESULT

The following is the result of data result and analyses of experimental and control group for eight-week treatment using online intensive reading for EFL learners. For the whole eight weeks, students report for their reading. In the end, posttest was administered for both groups to compare the score mean difference.

Table 2. The result of posttest experimental group and control group

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.395	.532	-.77	78	.000	-3.350	.665	-4.674	-2.026
	Equal variances not assumed			-.77	77.627	.000	-3.350	.665	-4.674	-2.026

*alpha .05

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows that the Sig. is .532 is higher than alpha .05. It shows that the sample observed is homogenous and upper row of the table is considered. The next part, If p value is lower than alpha, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. If p value is higher than alpha so, H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected. The result shows that .000 is lower than alpha .05. The null hypothesis says that students who are taught with online intensive reading show lower score in English Proficiency Test than those without online intensive reading. Based on the obtained data, the researcher draws conclusion that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted in which $.000 < .05$. It clearly shows that online intensive reading gives positive influence on students' ability toward English Proficiency Test.

In the beginning of the IR program, almost all students chose articles in the scope of education instead of the others. This is due to they realized that they were from education department so that they felt easier to accomplish their first reading projects. They found that vocabulary they found were quite familiar without specific terminology on other fields of study. TEFLIN journal became favorite journal for students to explore the articles. Students' reading "journey" continued to other scopes in the next weeks till the end of the program. Earth and planetary science was not quite familiar for students because that is not their field of study. Yet, they needed to explore topics of popular science for their knowledge. Popular science can be found in the reading tests, especially in TOEFL reading. Various vocabularies in students' new scope in science could be gained such as *abyssal*, *liberation*, *magnitude*, *radioactive decay* and many more.

This vocabulary increase also came to the other scopes namely public health and psychology like *self-esteem, introversion, mental state, nerve*, and many more.

Different from those in experimental groups, students in control group merely studied how to answer the questions of TOEFL reading test. Basic reading strategies were taught but no exploration of the topics was conducted. Students did not have opportunity to access reading materials taken from journals like those in experimental group. By relying on 100-minute class, the traditional intensive reading could not be explored. Students' reading materials were limited to what they learned from the textbook. Students did not enrich their vocabulary like those in experimental groups did.

The following are the descriptive analysis of frequency and percentages of students' responses (items1-8). There are eight questions presented with the resulted data from questionnaire. Interpretations on each number of questions are given below the chart and table. They obviously show students' perceptions toward online intensive reading that showed positively after the program held.

Table 3. The frequency result of questionnaire on students' perception on online intensive reading

No .	Students' perceptions	Never (1)	Little (2)	Some-what (3)	Much (4)	Very much (5)
1	Online intensive reading is suitable to be used in a TOEFL reading course.		2	5	26	7
2	Online intensive reading is better tasks for TEOFL reading class compared with other ordinary tasks			9	7	24
3	Using Online intensive reading helps improve my English.			1	20	19
4	Online intensive reading is more helpful than regular reading book in improving my TOEFL reading.		4	14	7	15
5	Using Online intensive reading helps increase my interest in reading academic texts.		4	3	11	22
6	Online intensive reading is more helpful than regular reading book in increasing score in TOEFL reading.		4	1	15	20
7	Using Online intensive reading increases my reading speed.			7	15	18
8	Online intensive reading helps more in motivating me to read.		5	16	7	12
Total		0	19	56	108	137

In the end of the implementation of online intensive reading, a set of questionnaire was given to experimental group to figure out their perceptions toward it. This has a purpose that the researcher not only receives the data of score about the effectiveness, but also how is seen from students' mindset.

Question number one asks whether or not online intensive reading is suitable for teaching reading for English Proficiency Test preparation. Data show that as many as 65% respondents considered suitable to implement by answering much on the questionnaire, and only 2% responded little. This question checks the students' first impression after online intensive reading had been implemented.

60% students feel that online intensive reading is better than other ordinary tasks that they have received during the semester. This kind of task is like project based but without group work, but use individual work instead. Through the task, students can explore the content of journal and integrate reading and writing in the reading log which is integrated skills learning (Lyutaya: 2011) especially with writing. As a result, students feel that their English is much and very much improved in the questionnaire as many as 57% and 47.5%.

When asked if online intensive reading helps more than regular reading book in improving my TEOFL reading, students answered it variedly. 10% students answered little, 13.5% students answered somewhat, and 17.5% students answered much, and the rest 37.5 responded very much. This finding shows that other books used for daily reading can still be considered more interesting for some students instead of reading articles in journals. However, a number of 37% students responded helpful compared with traditional books.

More than half respondents responded that online intensive reading can help them interested more in reading academic texts. The open access journal can open up their information sources of articles provided with varied scopes and topics. As the implication for that, most of the students - 37.5% and 50% students-said they much improve their score in reading.

The reading log given for students' reading report contains information about the minutes spent for reading one article. It is followed up on questionnaire in which students asked about reading pace on question number seven. All students responded that they increased their reading pace with different improvement. 17.5% said somewhat, 37.5% said much, and 45% said very much. Reading pace will increase when reading habit is built. Intensive reading can be a way of it.

Last, students' motivation to read was also asked. Online intensive reading is considered giving motivation for them to read more outside the class, although not very significant. Only 30% students responded very much, 30% much, and the rests are in the option of little and somewhat.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this research support the previous ones related to extensive and intensive reading suggesting to incorporate literature into ESL/EFL classes (Tien, 2015; Ghiabi, 2014; Edy, 2014; Wardani, 2014; Tsai, 2012; Soltani, 2011; and Silva, 2009). Most of the studies focused on extensive reading with books from physical library and a few from internet resources. On this present study, the researcher would like to give exposure to students on authentic reading materials from credible online journal in a program called online intensive reading by making use of vast references obtained from global internet. In addition, the researcher implemented the intensive reading into academic texts tested in English language proficiency such as on the common TOEFL test. The academic texts can

be found in many websites of which students can download. The hypothesis testing shows that the articles based on their interest and level of difficulty. This is also supported by Silva (2009) that electronic texts can be easily read off-line through the computer screen, downloaded and printed from internet webs.

Through the findings, online Intensive Reading is effective is due to several reasons. First online IR gives students exposure to written text materials rather than just relying on textbook materials given by the lecturer. Exposure means what access the students can explore their reading materials from the journal links given by the researcher. Second, students can gain comprehensible input from the logs given by the researcher. List of questions in the reading log is dealing with main ideas, inference, and summary. Also, a number of key vocabularies are inserted in the logs. That is why the third advantage of this IR is increasing vocabulary, especially in academic context. Fourth, students become more confident when they are reading extended texts since the assignments they are doing is relatively long articles around 10 pages. The four benefits are the proof that IR conducted online can trigger students to read more with better understanding.

Despite difficulty the students cope when reading the academic texts, students' perceptions on this online intensive reading are overall good proven from responses of each question in questionnaire given. This present study included descriptive statistics related to their perceptions in order to provide the readers portraits of what the students think after they have been given such reading assignment. In conclusion, online intensive reading can make them interested more in reading, especially academic texts. It can motivate them to find out more through the articles and eventually enhanced their score in reading on TOEFL test. Yet, there are some weaknesses need to be mentioned: the sample size was 80 learners; if the sample rises the result may be different. Besides, the time span acquired for this study was only two months.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Reading for English language academic texts in higher education institution is popularly taught and assessed through English proficiency test. TOEFL test as the popular test for academic English has reading section in which lecturers have to implement great strategy with the goal that students could achieve high score. Compared with traditional reading strategy, online intensive reading can be an effective way for gaining higher score in reading skill. Popular journals used on the intensive reading help students acquire many things such as reading pace, vocabulary enrichment, and motivation to read.

The purpose of the current research was to investigate the effect of online intensive reading on students' reading ability in English proficiency test. The hypothesis testing confirms that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted meaning that students who are taught using online intensive reading have better score in TOEFL reading score than those taught without online intensive reading. It shows us that online intensive reading was found having effect on students' reading ability in English proficiency test, especially in reading section.

Another result from questionnaire found that from students' perspective, the strategy of online intensive reading is suitable to implement at, increase reading speed, and make them motivate to read more.

Further research is suggested longer time span for reading to study online intensive reading for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. This is due to ESP is the scope of specific English needed special treatments for the content of text in certain disciplines.

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