

## **The Implementation of One-Week-One-Article Program in a Reading Class: A Reflective Practice**

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DOI: 10.22236/JER\_Vol2Issue2pp84-88

This article presents my reflections on the implementation of one-week-one-article program. Fifty-three students participated in this program. Every week they presented the article they had read. I found that the majority of students actively participated in this program, showing seriousness in understanding the content of the article, the pronunciation of difficult words, and the flow of the presentation. This program at least promoted three aspects: students' motivation, cooperative learning, and their critical thinking. Even though this program was conducted for university students, it is likely to be working with students of junior and senior secondary school with some modification.

*Keywords:* one-week-one-article program, reflective practice, reading class

*Artikel ini menampilkan refleksi saya terhadap program satu-minggu-satu-artikel. Lima puluh tiga siswa berpartisipasi pada program ini. Setiap minggu mereka mempresentasikan artikel yang mereka telah baca. Saya menemukan bahwa mayoritas siswa aktif berpartisipasi pada program ini, menunjukkan keseriusan mereka untuk mengerti isi artikel, pengucapan kata-kata sulit, and alur dalam presentasi. Program ini setidaknya mempromosikan tiga aspek: motivasi siswa, belajar kooperatif, dan berpikir kritis. Meskipun program ini dilaksanakan untuk mahasiswa, program ini kemungkinan besar dapat juga dilaksanakan untuk siswa SMP dan SMA dengan beberapa modifikasi.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is a language component which plays an important role in reading, speaking, writing and even listening, so the mastery of this component is vital enough. Vocabulary mastery helps students recognize the meaning of phrases, clauses, or sentences. Besides this, it

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can help them understand reading texts, know the topic of conversation, and comprehend what is being listened. In short, with regard to reading, the vocabulary mastery is needed for students to know the intention of texts, providing them the opportunity to broaden their knowledge.

Contrary to the above notion, however, the mastery of vocabulary does not necessarily improve students' reading skills or guarantee that reading processes would be very easy. This is because reading (in a foreign language) is not only translating texts but also interpreting them. Another thing is that reading involves other aspects such as students' background knowledge, experiences, and previous education. Vocabulary is only one of many aspects to comprehend reading texts.

For students, reading ability is a must. Apart from knowing the subject they are learning, reading can greatly contribute to what they are going to write at the end of the course or study, especially for university students. For university students, exposure to reading during their education may form the habit of reading in life. This habit can create positive attitudes (Day, 2003), and people could become a learning society.

Reading in a foreign language, however, is still a problem for not only school students but also university students, particularly at a private university in the province of Banten, Indonesia where I am teaching now. Based on my observation, apart from not applying proper reading techniques, the students lack vocabulary. These two factors may contribute to their unwillingness to read a lot in a foreign language. Asking students why they seemed uninterested in reading, they told me that they did not know the meaning, did not understand the content of reading texts, were hard to focus on the topic of the texts, and did find difficulty to get detailed information and supporting details of the texts. What the students need are the strengthening of vocabulary (words, phrases and sentences) and the encouragement of reading exposure.

The above-mentioned problems gave me an idea to do a small-scale study implementing one-week-one-article program. This program let the students read articles and understand the messages they conveyed. The program asked students to read, discuss, and present the articles regularly. They had to choose their own article and shared it in the classroom. To sum up, the program - a small-scale study - attempted to investigate to what extent one-week-one-article activity contributed to students' reading ability, and this article is my personal reflections on the program.

## **PROCEDURE**

Fifty-three students participated in this program. They were students taking a reading course in the first semester at a private university in Banten, Indonesia. I was the lecturer of the course. The participants were from three classes (A, B, C). Their English competency was varied, ranging from pre- to post-intermediate level of English proficiency. A few students' English proficiency was considered 'elementary.' However, they were all senior high school graduates, who all got similar instructions and materials during their schooling.

This program lasted for two months. Since the reading course was twice a week and there were four weeks in a month, there were sixteen meetings. At least each student gave presentation twice. Before starting the program, I checked the articles proposed by the students. The aim of checking the articles was to make sure that the articles were not too easy, were

interesting enough for sharing and discussion, and possibly had positive ideas to widen students' horizons. I and students also discussed the topics of the proposed articles.

After we agreed with the articles, students gave presentation. During the presentation, I paid attention to some aspects: flow of idea, use of vocabulary, and understanding of the articles. I made notes of all students' presentations. Apart from observation, I also did interviews and distributed questionnaire.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE PROGRAM**

Based on the observation I did, I could conclude that the students from the three classes were serious in preparing the articles which were all about English language, teaching, and education. Even though in terms of speaking most students were not very fluent in English, they showed an attempt to make their presentation understandable to their classmates.

Before the presentation, many of them came to me for discussing word pronunciation. They also asked each other to make sure if their pronunciation was correct or wrong. In addition to trying to find how to pronounce particular words correctly, they also discussed the content of the articles with me and their friends. When discussing it with me, I did not directly tell them but gave them some questions leading to answer their question. I did it to make them think, avoiding spoon-feeding. Composing sentences and arranging them for presentation was a serious problem for most of the students. To avoid this, they also discussed with their friends and sometimes with me. Before the presentation, I reminded students to give responses to the presenter. In the beginning, it was difficult to encourage participation, but with some clues I gave, responses in the form of questions, comments, and even criticism emerged.

During the presentation, I noticed that most students could give good presentation. In terms of pronunciation, they could pronounce words understandably. They could answer the questions even though I sometimes had to explain to both presenter and listener. Most presenters presented in a good flow, which means that their presentation was quite clear and understandable. Questions asked were categorized as good; a few questions were critical enough.

As mentioned, I also did interviews to find out to what extent this program contributed to students' English language learning. Based on the interview, I found that the majority of the students prepared their presentation well. The preparation started from trying very hard to understand the articles to finding how to pronounce particular words. This supports my observation. While in the observation during the implementation of the program I sometimes came across a group of students discussing the articles in the school premises, in the interview they told me that they did discussion with their friends.

Another finding from the interview was that students practiced a lot. What they practiced was how to deliver pronunciation and to pronounce words correctly. Most of them practiced with their friends, and a few of them practiced at home. They also informed that the most difficult part in this program was understanding the content of the article. So, there were two big challenges in this program. One was reading the article, and the other was presenting it. In order to understand the content of the articles, they told me that they applied such reading strategies as skimming, scanning, finding the topic, and determining supporting details. Some other students applied previewing and predicting. A few did translation.

The last method to get information with regard to this program was questionnaire. I found that the majority of students liked to learn reading. 83% of the participants said that they enjoyed reading the articles, so they read seriously. However, considering that the students did not read a lot in their daily life was because this program was a compulsory activity in a reading course, so their reading activity was extrinsically motivated. They just expected a good score for this course.

When asking students' preferences in learning English, I found various answers. 75% of the students liked to practice English by conversation, and 64% of them liked to study at home. Among the activities students liked to do at home were watching English programs, reading English newspaper and books, etc. For those fond of conversation, presenting the article was one of the appropriate methods facilitating their preference, while those who like reading, the one-week-one-article program was suitable.

There are some reflective thoughts regarding this one-week-one-article program. First of all, this activity encourages motivation even though it may be extrinsic motivation. Their motivation was driven by the reward they would get after completing the course. It has been widely believed that motivation is important in education, including in the EFL teaching and learning processes as indicated by some authors (e.g. Cai & Zhu, 2012; Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). This extrinsic motivation, however, is expected to make them aware of the importance of reading, which then turns into intrinsic motivation. Based on my findings, this activity was also quite challenging. This may be one of the factors that also spurred their motivation. On the other hand, we need to be careful not to give very difficult task which could make students feel discouraged.

Secondly, this one-week-one-article program encourages cooperative learning. The cooperative learning happens when the students discussed the content of the articles, the meaning of particular words, and the way to deliver good presentation. This kind of interaction teaches them how to communicate, interact with other people, and negotiate meaning. Some authors have also indicated the importance of cooperative learning in the EFL (e.g. Jalilifar, 2010; Seileek, 2012; Shaaban, 2007). Some advantages of cooperative learning shown by the studies are, among others, improving students' communication skills, reducing students' anxiety, and promoting students' autonomy.

The final positive effect of one-week-one-article program is encouraging students' critical thinking skills. This can be shown by the interaction among students during presentation in which students gave responses to or asked the presenter. Some questions asked sometimes required the presenter to think, opine, or give reasons and argument. These three activities can encourage critical thinking (Ilyas, 2016a, 2016b). Other authors also mention the importance of critical thinking, and some studies on critical thinking in EFL have been conducted, with the results showing very positive contributions (e.g. DeWaelche, 2015; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Kamgar & Jadidi, 2016)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This one-week-one-article program has given a promising contribution, with possible benefits including increasing EFL learners' motivation, promoting cooperative learning, and encouraging their critical thinking. This program is even practical; however, the teacher has to be ready with students coming for discussion outside the classroom. With the number of

students reaching fifty-three, this program consumes much time, even though I have to admit that this program is successful enough.

Students participated in this program were university students. With some modification, it may be successful to junior or senior secondary school students. Two skills can be encouraged when implementing this program: reading and speaking. Besides this, the skill of sentence construction may be promoted considering that students need to arrange sentences before delivering speech.

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