

The Effects of Short Story through Wattpad on Reading Comprehension Achievement of Non- English Major Students of Bina Darma University

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Abstract: Integrating technology and literature in English language teaching has been quite useful nowadays, especially for undergraduate students. One of the technologies which promotes literature is Wattpad. The use of Wattpad in this research was to gain students' attention to read more, find the stories they were interested in, and apply their ability to think critically by giving comments or express their feelings. The study aimed at investigating the reading comprehension achievement of the students after being taught by using short story through Wattpad. The 60 non-English students of BinaDarma University were selected. The results suggested the short story through Wattpad significantly affected the students' reading comprehension achievement.

Keywords: Short story through Wattpad, Comprehension Achievement, Non-English Major Students

INTRODUCTION

The goal of education is to enhance the literacy skills of individuals, for examples, reading and writing. Literacy has been introduced and taught to students, especially children at school. It is as a practice of acquiring new knowledge. Literacy development is a beneficial activity which involves students in ways of making, interpreting and communicating ideas or meaning with written language (Neuman & Roskos, 2005, p. 4). These statements implicitly state that literacy is very important in order to understand other skills. Students are taught to be aware of their literacy skills both reading and writing through different kinds of materials.

As stated previously, one of the literacy skills that should be developed is reading. Billal, Tariq, Masood, Nasim, and Iqbal (2012, p. 283) state, "If a student is good at reading he will make good grades otherwise he will stay low in the order of merit." This statement might mean that reading is considered as a basic skill for students to understand in the process of learning. They also state that by having low comprehension in reading, it influences students' active thinking and participation in the class. Moreover, in teaching and learning process, teacher and students have to communicate effectively and exchange ideas.

Unfortunately, Indonesian students are lacking of ability in understanding reading materials and they also have problems in responding comprehension

questions. PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2009) shows that Indonesian students' scores are below average and on the 58th rank out of 65 countries with the score 402. And recently PISA 2012 also reports that Indonesian's rank and score are lower than before. Indonesia is in the 61st rank out of 65 countries with the score 396. Progress of International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011) also shows that Indonesia is on the 41st rank from 45 countries. It means that Indonesia students' reading ability should be improved.

In Indonesia, literacy development especially for reading is really needed in tertiary education because the students are going to find job, work and attend many kinds of seminars or meetings. This skill is very important since the information and technology are always developed. The students need to understand the basic skill first in order to achieve the success. Galik (1999, p.482) explains why reading is very important especially for students in university level; "Reading is a corner-stone for success, not just in school, but throughout life. The Commission noted that without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will inevitably be lost."

Students who have just attended classes in university commonly lack of motivation to learn English. They will not be inspired by using textbooks which are full of grammar (Slobodina, 1995, p. 40). They are more interested in learning English by using another media or materials instead of textbooks, because the language and grammar are sometimes complicated for them. The university students need new experience in learning English, especially in learning reading comprehension.

There are some ways that have been offered and used to teach reading in university level and one of them is by integrating literature in ELT classroom. Literature has been integrated in language teaching as one of the ways to improve language skills, especially reading comprehension. Hismanoglu (2005, p. 54) states, "The use of literature as a technique for teaching both basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) is very popular within the field of foreign language learning and teaching nowadays."

Short story is one of the literary works used to improve the ability of comprehending the text. Young (1996, p. 90) mentions two benefits of using short stories. First, short story provides entertaining and fun activities which make students enjoy and feel relax in learning English. Second, it encourages students to be more critical thinker and easy to remember the context of the story. By using short stories, the students can feel new experience in practice reading without making them bored. They are also suitable for all levels with various kinds of topics.

In this modern era, short story is not only found in story books, but also in internet. One of the famous websites or applications that promotes short story and other literature is Wattpad. It is the biggest e-literature community on web which allows people to read and enjoy stories by all online writers all over the world and share their own stories through writing (Popescu, 2013). Readers and writers can

access this media through its website or Wattpad application available on smartphones. Wattpad helps writers share their stories to public, attract readers to read and get feedback from them. Readers can also give their comments, follow, communicate through comments, and create new chapters or suggestions from original text.

Nowadays, university students are required to be able to think critically and apply their literacy skills well in order to compete globally with other students. They also should be able to speak English. Bina Darma University is one of the private universities in Palembang which is now moving toward international standard. It is supported by its technology and other facilities. All students from different majors in this university are obliged to attend English classes (English 1, 2 and 3) as one of the requirements for them to graduate. Their majors are accounting, economy, economy management, IT (Information Technology) and NIIT, civil engineering, communication science, Bahasa Indonesia, and many others. Moreover, there is one class consists of Asian students from Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. At the end of English 3 class, the students will get KET (Key English Test) held by ELC (English Language Center) of Bina Darma and Cambridge. The reasons why this study will take place here, because each student is facilitated by using laptop and free Wi-Fi connection.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher decided to focus on using short story through Wattpad in teaching reading to university students. The researcher assured that this method was appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to university students. It was hoped that reading learning process can be more exciting and their reading comprehension would be improved because students would actively read it and understand the context by giving feedback or comments toward the story they read and interpreted the messages. Finally, it was hoped that it could support other lecturers to use this idea in teaching their students too. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research question was formulated: was there any significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using short stories through Wattpad and those who were not?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research was conducted on the basis of experimental study. The experimental group was taught by using short story through Wattpad. Meanwhile, the control group was not taught. The aim of this study was to find out whether the teaching by using short story through Wattpad influenced the dependent variable, students' reading comprehension achievement.

Participants

There were 60 non- English major students of Bina Darma University. They were all the fourth semester students who attended English III classes. The students were distributed into 2 groups, experimental and control groups chosen. This study was administered for 24 sessions in one and a half hours by the researcher.

Instrumentation

The reading comprehension test used was from www.englishforeveryone.com. It consisted of 5 narrative short stories with 36 multiple choice items. The students were expected to answer them in 60 minutes. The test was a standard test and its reliability and validity have been proven. The researcher has done a preliminary study by using the test to 60 students out of the population with Cronbach's Alpha .939.

Procedures

In order to investigate the significant results of reading comprehension achievement by using short story through Wattpad, samples were divided into experimental and control groups. There were three phases in this study. In the first phase, the students were given the pretest of reading comprehension to recognize their ability before the treatment given. In administering the test, the researcher found that the students' readability level was dominant in level 7. Thus the narrative passages in pretest and posttest were in level 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The second phase was when the researcher taught reading in the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught by using short story through Wattpad. The students used the application of Wattpad in their smartphones to read stories and give their interpretation toward the story by giving comments or suggestions. The students were also taught how to identify main idea, detailed information, sequence of the story, the inference meaning, the cause and effect relation, word meaning, and evaluate or examine the message of an author and solve problems. Meanwhile, in control group, the researcher did not give any treatment. The strategy used to teach the experimental group was literature based approach. Thus, it would be suitable in this study, since short story through Wattpad was used. In the experimental group, the students wrote comments and express their feelings through Wattpad. In the third phase, the samples were given posttest in order to know their reading comprehension ability after the treatment. After collecting the data, the score of each student was tabulated.

RESULTS

The pretests and posttests were given to the student in the control and experimental groups. In the experimental group, the pretest was given before the

treatment and the posttest was given after it. In the control group, the treatment was not given.

Based on the results below, the mean scores of pretest and posttest in the control groups were 53.43 and 66.23. The mean scores of pretest and posttest in the experimental groups were 55.83 and 73.50.

Table 1
Score Distribution of Reading Comprehension Achievement in the Experimental and Control Groups

Score Range	Category	Control Group						Experimental Group					
		Pretest			Posttest			Pretest			Posttest		
		F	%	Mean	F	%	Mean	F	%	Mean	f	%	Mean
31-36	Very good	-	-	53.43	1	3.3%	66.23	-	-	55.83	4	13.3%	73.50
26-30	Good	1	3.3%		11	36.7%		2	6.7%		15	50.0%	
21-25	Average	10	33.3%		12	40.0%		12	40.0%		11	36.7%	
15-20	Poor	19	63.3%		6	20.0%		16	53.3%		-	-	
0-14	Very poor	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-	

Data normality: The test Shapiro-Wilk of both groups was investigated and the results are shown in this following table.

Table 2
Summary of Normality Tests in the Experimental and Control Groups

Scores	Saphiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pre-test Experimental	.943	30	.110
Post-test Experimental	.948	30	.147
Pre-test Control	.952	30	.195
Post-test Control	.956	30	.245

The significance level for assessing normality of the variables are greater than 0.05, thus the data of this study is considered normal.

Homogeneity of Variance: The significance values (sig.) for Levene’s test in table below are greater than 0.05, it means that the homogeneity of variance assumption is not violated (Pallant, 2005).

Table 3

Summary of Test of Homogeneity Tests of Control and Experimental Groups

Groups		Levene Statistic	Sig.
Control	Pretest – Posttest	1.731	.193
Experimental	Pretest – Posttest	1.331	.253
Control – Experimental	Pretest – Pretest	.774	.383
Control – Experimental	Posttest – Posttest	.468	.497

Research Hypothesis

In order to answer the research question, the researcher used independent sample t-test. The results showed that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using short story through Wattpad and those who were not. Table 4 presented the results.

Table 4

Summary of Independent Samples t-test between Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Groups (Mean Score)				Mean difference of between groups	Significant level between groups	t-value between groups
	Experimental Group		Control Group				
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest			
Pre-tests	55.83	72.73	53.43	66.23	2.400	.258	1.141
Posttests	55.83	72.73	53.43	66.23	6.500	.014	2.522

The table above shows that Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.258. Since it was higher than 0.05, it means that there was no significant difference in their pretest scores. It can be concluded that before the treatment was given, the students in both groups had the same or equal ability in reading.

The data above also shows that there is a statistically significant difference .014 which is less than .05. Thus, the reading comprehension achievement in experimental group which was taught by using short story through Wattpad is significantly different from those who were taught by using printed short story.

Table 5

Summary of Reading Comprehension Achievement in the Experimental and Control Groups (All Aspects)

Aspects	Groups	Mean	Std, Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Sig. (2-tailed)
				F	Sig.	
Main Idea	Exp.	3.30	1.119	5.099	.028	.785
	Control	3.23	.728			
Detailed Information	Exp.	2.87	.900	.036	.851	.007
	Control	2.23	.858			
Sequence	Exp.	3.77	.430	3.352	.072	.000
	Control	2.90	.759			
Inference	Exp.	3.10	1.094	.038	.847	.912
	Control	3.07	1.230			
Cause Effect	Exp.	2.73	.944	1.471	.230	.085
	Control	2.27	1.112			
Vocabulary	Exp.	7.83	.379	59.263	.000	.003
	Control	6.67	2.057			
Evaluation	Exp.	2.33	.994	4.186	.045	.157
	Control	2.80	1.448			

Based on the table above, it was found that there was a significant difference on the reading comprehension achievement in its aspects between the students in the experimental and control groups.

DISCUSSION

There is some interpretation presented in this part based on the results of this study. The problems of the study mentioned before are covered in this discussion.

The results of the research question proved that short story through Wattpad affected the students' reading comprehension achievement. The data clearly showed that there was a significant improvement on the students' reading comprehension achievement before and after the treatment. During the process of teaching reading, students were more interested in using the media and actively giving comments and express their feelings or ideas after reading the story. The researcher also ensured their comprehension towards the story by asking them to analyze reading aspects and answer some questions in the classroom and assignment. They were excited to find out the next stories and guess how the next chapter or the ending might be like. Alkali and Hamburger (2004) reported that young people prefer reading text or stories in digital display because they are challenged to think critically and invite their curiosity toward the story they read. They could apply their knowledge of some aspects in

reading comprehension to guide them in understanding the stories. Besides, they were offered to read short stories through Wattpad at home in order to make their comprehension better.

Short story through Wattpad provides new experience in reading and attracts their interests to know more about the story. Alptekin (2006) found that short story affects university students' reading comprehension. The students are provided with social problems occurred in society and new cultural knowledge. The students' comprehension is improved because of the narrative stories lead them to understand the culture based reality made by the author and they could link themselves with the characters, events, places, customs, and social relations in the story.

The finding also showed that the students who were taught by using short story through Wattpad performed better since they achieved better score than those in the control group. Even though there was improvement in the mean score (Pre=53.43, Post=66.23) in the control group, the improvement was not as significant as the experimental group. It happened so since the students in control group were usually taught by using stories in printed materials for reading activities taken from different sources with some questions. This activity offered less opportunity for them to explore their comprehension performance toward the story. They could not share their ideas and express their feelings with other readers through online media.

Meanwhile, students in the experimental group became accustomed to the reading activities through Wattpad since they had more chances to give their ideas and comment the story regularly. Alptekin (2006) reported that students enjoy reading better and become more enthusiast in finding evidence and relevant information from the story. Moreover he also argues that by asking them to express their ideas or feelings directly through online could make students feel no doubt to give their opinions and use their thinking skills in giving comments. It means that there was a positive contribution given by short story through Wattpad.

The significant difference between the experimental and control groups specifically lay on some aspects of reading comprehension. They were detailed information, sequence and vocabulary. But the improvement was not found in main idea, inference, cause and effect, and evaluation. Short story through Wattpad contains some basic elements that every short story has, such as plot, character, setting, atmosphere, and style. The detailed information could be included in plot and style. The students find it by knowing the detailed information in the arrangement of the story and also the symbols stated. Symbols in short story are like the detailed information in literal level which could lead readers to understand the meaning deeply and interpret what author implicitly states. If students understand the story plot, what happened first, next and last, it means that they already know the sequence. Vocabulary can be easily remembered or retained in students' mind when they read stories regularly, thus they could just guess the meaning based on the context (The Nature and Aim of Fiction, n. d.). The researcher concludes that the significant difference in some aspects in this study might be based on the nature of short story itself which makes the students able to answer questions easily after some practice

(treatment). Moreover, the media used gave them more chance to explore their comprehension toward the story.

However, the researcher also found some problems in conducting this study by using short story through Wattpad. The first was because of the duration of time. Each meeting lasted for 100 minutes, meanwhile the students had to read the story and understand the meaning well. Moreover, their vocabulary was quite limited to know all the words. That was why they needed more time and sometimes the researcher had to give them additional tasks. The second problem was in the internet connection. Wattpad can only be accessed online and students had to save the story first to their Wattpad library in order to read it offline. But, it was quite difficult when the students had to give their opinion towards the story after reading due to the bad signal of connection. Thus, they prefer using their own internet connection by using credit balance to Wi-Fi facilitated by the university. These problems might distract the students' concentration and influence students' performance in reading.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the students who were taught by using short story through Wattpad showed better achievement in reading comprehension than those who were not taught. It can encourage students to read since it provides interactive activities online. Students could also get many new vocabulary items from stories they read. It is also useful to encourage students to be more creative in giving comments or opinion based on their understanding toward a story. Their preference is also important because if they find the story uninteresting, they tend to stop reading it. Short story through Wattpad is a good strategy to make the students have better achievement in reading comprehension.

There are some suggestions that can be offered as the follow up on this study. First, it is important to provide an interesting and interactive media. The media should be appropriate to the students' language proficiency in the process of teaching reading and could encourage and motivate them to read more. Meanwhile, the technical problem, like internet connection during the process of teaching and learning by using this media should be considered too. Second, in choosing the sample and conducting a research in an institution, the future researcher has to consider the condition in the class distribution, for example the number of students in the class. It is important to follow the rule in order to have the same number of students in the sample classes in line with the regular classes and good research results.

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