

Teachers' Beliefs in Teaching Reading towards National Examination Challenge in Indonesia

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Abstract

Reading is an important skill to be acquired in second language learning. The significance of teaching reading is aimed at educating students to face life. However, the existence of national examination as a measurement standard brings some effects towards teachers' beliefs in teaching reading. Moreover, it is taken as students' final evaluation to pass the school by 40% percentage from NE and 60% from school. The soul of teaching reading to get students' comprehension of texts can be damaged since people are thinking more pragmatic. Teachers tend to change their way in teaching reading when the national examination day is closer. This research will be conducted descriptively, using questionnaire and interview as the research instruments. In order to face the newest curriculum in Indonesia, NE is pondered as good to be held as the measurement of education in Indonesia, but the side effects in teaching reading should be taken as consideration. This paper also aims at finding out solution for betterment of education.

Key words: *National Examination (NE), teachers' beliefs, teaching reading*

1. Introduction

Reading is an activity with a purpose in which individual has his/her own goal in reading. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or aiming at criticizing a writing's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for joyful activity, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read (Byrnes, 1998). The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. To achieve reading comprehension, there are some factors contributing reading comprehension.

Perfetti, Marron, and Folz as cited in Mcnamara's book (2007:49) divided the factors that contribute to reading comprehension into two general areas: processes and knowledge. Processes involve decoding, working memory, inference making, and comprehension monitoring. In contrast, knowledge factors include word meanings and domain knowledge related to the content of what is being read. The teaching of reading as a foreign language (EFL reading) in Indonesia can be generally included in the teaching of reading comprehension. This

is because it aims to improve the skills of learners, who have been able to read in their first language and in EFL, in understanding the meaning of a written text. Thus, the term reading in this article refers to the nature of reading in this sense, not to the initial reading.

The core curriculum for reading education should equip graduating teachers to produce readers who are successful in the classroom and on standardized tests and use reading effectively to negotiate the world. According to the 2004 English curriculum, the objectives of English instruction at the two levels of secondary school (junior and senior high) are as follows (Translated from Depdiknas, 2004: 9 and Depdiknas, 2003: 7, originally written in slightly different Indonesian wordings): developing communicative competence in spoken and written English language which comprises listening, speaking, reading, and writing, raising awareness regarding the nature and importance of English as a foreign language and as a major means for learning, developing understanding of the interrelation of language and culture, as well as cross-cultural understanding.

Having a status as a local content in the curriculum, English in primary schools is targeted toward the development of ability to understand simple oral and written English discourse (Cahyono, B.Y, Widiati, U, 2006). Aside with that statement, reading for second language learners is arranged as reading to find information, reading for general understanding, reading to learn, and reading to critique and evaluate respectively (Saville-Troike, 2006; Orr, 1999). Besides, reading abilities is defined as a means of communication (Sulistyo, 2011).

2. Theory

2.1 Criteria of Successful Teaching Reading

As cited from Saville-Troike, criteria of successful teaching reading can be determined from how a relative beginner is able to scan text for a specific topic or word, and intermediate L2 learners can comprehend the main ideas and get some supporting information, but reading to learn and critical/evaluative reading are generally for discourse or textual schemas and common technical vocabulary.

In Indonesia, the criteria of successful teaching reading are not merely different from general. The goal actually the same, but problem that is faced by Indonesian EFL teachers is the responsibility to make students pass the national examination. Therefore, the goal of teaching reading not only for getting information, but how the way students can answer and notice the possible answers from multiple choices.

3. Research Method

This research aims at knowing varieties of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading in addition to achieve their reading purposes; in this case reading to learn. However, current condition creating variety of teaching reading with an assumption as an effective teaching. This demand us to see how strong the role of teachers belief in teaching their students when teachers should face with the National Examination. This research investigated kinds of teaching strategy implemented by the teacher which derived from their beliefs. The writers tried to see the correlation between beliefs and National Examination. Thus, the writers used questionnaire and interview as the instruments to know teachers' beliefs in teaching reading. The subject of this research were 16 English Junior High School teachers representing Indonesian Region. Those were from East Java (7), NTB (3), Kalimantan (3), Sulawesi (3). This research took those regions randomly in addition to get different teachers' beliefs from different level of proficiency in each region, regarding the geographic condition in Indonesia.

The questionnaire consists of 16 questions, prior to teachers' beliefs questions, strategy, and teachers' opinion about National Examination. While the interview questioning teachers' expectation in relation to the upcoming National Examination (in K13 period).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching Reading

Teacher belief is one important thing to be there in teaching learning process. It is associated to the reflection of teachers upon their own actions in order to make explicit their often implicit beliefs systems and to help teachers clarify what is personally meaningful and significant to them in their professional roles (Williams & Burdens, 1997). Teachers' beliefs are important in teaching learning activities since it brings effect towards everything teachers

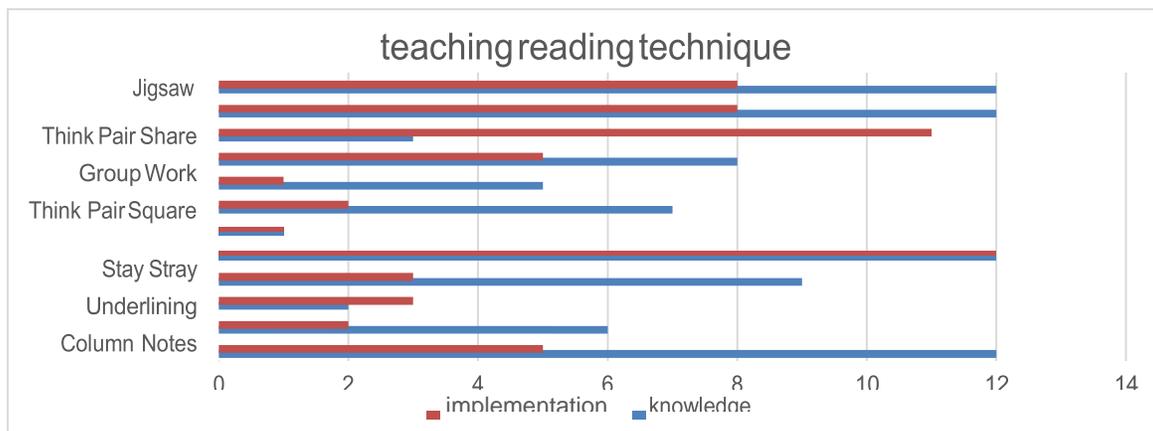
do in the classroom, explicitly or implicitly. However, previous research found that there is inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and their self-reported classroom practice (Khonamri & Salimi, 2010:96; Powers & Butler, 2006:123).

Generally, teachers' beliefs towards teaching reading can be seen from micro- and macro-skills for reading comprehension in teaching reading strategy derived from Brown's book (2007:358-359). Those are bottom up and top down processing, schema theory and background knowledge, teaching strategic reading, extensive reading, fluency and reading rate, focus on vocabulary, the role of affect and culture, adult and literacy training. It deals with language knowledge and also culture knowledge to be brought in classroom to achieve students succeeded reading comprehension.

In Indonesian context, teachers' beliefs towards teaching reading are more alike. The method and strategies used are not necessarily different to teaching reading generally. However, the shifted of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading are shown when students are in final grade of the school, especially for secondary school. The goal of reading is to achieve high score in National Examination.

The following issues cover findings on teachers' beliefs towards knowledge of using strategy in teaching reading and its implementation in classroom. From the result of the questionnaire, teachers tend to use strategy in teaching reading. Majority of respondents believe that using strategy will help students to achieve reading comprehension (72%), help teachers to prepare their teaching materials (23%), and others because it has been equipped in the lesson plan (5%).

Diagram 1.1 shows kinds of teaching reading techniques implemented by teachers.



The diagram shows that teachers have adequate knowledge about teaching reading strategy. But they have preference to use only some techniques to be implemented. The consideration is varied, from the condition of the classes, the students and the topics. Group Work and Group Discussion mostly implemented because of teachers' lack understanding on how to teach reading in K13.

The writer also held interview to strengthen the results. Derive from teacher's confusion on K13 which stated that it implemented scientific approach in English. Teacher found difficulties to implement the approach. Therefore, teacher prefers to have Group Work and Discussion in teaching reading which can be said that those two are considered as conventional. Curriculum might be changed but teacher beliefs still there since it is built from long time and many experiences.

4.2 National Examination Challenge

The coming of newest curriculum in Indonesia that is 2013 curriculum or abbreviated as K-13, brings new enlightenment towards Indonesian's education. The goal of learning language as a means for communication along with the spirit of 'Observing-Questioning-Analyzing-Experiment-Networking' is considered can make betterment for future of Indonesia. However, the existing national examination is still being one enemy for teaching reading.

From Diagram 1.1 we can see that teachers have beliefs to use strategy in teaching which the kinds of teaching reading strategy assume effective to help students in comprehending reading materials. The writers found that most of teachers familiar with and implementing group discussion as teaching strategy. However, when teacher facing National Examination, most of them tend to change their beliefs in teaching. The percentage of teachers who tend to change their teaching methods are 75% as can be seen in Diagram 1.2 below. It affects the result of previous teaching result, whether the shifting helps students to comprehend reading materials or helps them to use trick to answers the multiple choices.

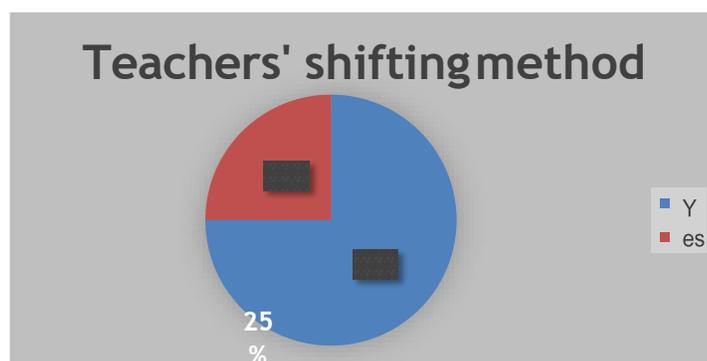


Diagram 1.2 about teachers' shifting method in teaching reading

From the elaboration, can be concluded that teachers tend to change their beliefs when the NE time is closer. This condition creates challenge to NE that government should consider this phenomenon in constructing NE in the future. Therefore, if NE still be established, the government should consider the level of difficulties and competence standard in each region, which will help teacher not to teach tricks in facing NE.

5. Concluding remarks

Most of teachers have beliefs to use strategy in teaching reading aiming at helping students achieve their reading comprehension. The soul of teaching reading to get students' comprehension of the texts can be damaged because of the existing national examination. Teachers tend to change their way in teaching reading when the national examination day is closer. It surely challenges the existing of National Examination (NE). However, NE is important to be held as the measurement of education in Indonesia, but the side effects in

teaching reading should be taken as consideration. The stakeholder should thinking about level of difficulties and standard competence of each region. This research also recommends the local government to support in maximizing teacher training program in K13 socialization, especially in teaching reading strategy. Future researchers could conduct the same research but deeper in terms of equal respondents and different research method.

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