THE USE OF LOCAL CULTURE TEXTS FOR ENTHUSIASTIC ENGLISH READING TEACHING

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Abstract
Teaching English reading has its own characteristics and difficulties. Since reading skill is a “passive” class compare to other skills’ class, it makes the big boredom for the students. Moreover, the students’ mindset toward reading class is a difficult, monotonous and uninteresting class. Basically this feeling comes to the students because they are not familiar with the topic discussed in the reading text. The students do not feel in to the text. The teacher’s way to motivate the students is another challenge. The use of local culture texts is one of the effective ways to stimulate students’ motivation in reading class. Using local culture text means that the texts learned by the students are the part of students’ life. By doing so, the students will feel motivated in reading class which brings a good impact in the higher level of reading class. (Abstract)

Keywords-component; local culture texts; teaching reading

I. INTRODUCTION
Teaching English reading has its own characteristics and difficulties. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher also finds it as a complicated problem because teaching reading’s difficulty is not only in the reading comprehension but also in students’ motivation to start learning. Mostly, students’ perception on reading class is as a difficult, monotonous and uninteresting class. This phenomenon happens because of some reasons. First, not all of the students are interested in reading, whereas the students’ motivation in reading is really important as one of determiner of reading success. As Guthrie (1996) stated:

Engaged reading is based on motivational and cognitive characteristics of the reader...who is intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from text.

The motivation determines the engagement of reading text. If there is no high internal motivation in students’ self, the engagement will not be optimum. Teacher obviously cannot force the students to like reading, but teacher still can make reading class is inviting for the students or in another word is external motivation.
Second, the EFL students are not familiar with the texts given in the class. They do not understand about the topic discussed moreover the detail information in the texts. Harmer (1998) stated in the principles of reading that students need to be engaged with what they are reading. If the reading text is especially interesting and engaging, acquisition is likely to be even more successful. Here, the topic of the texts will determine the success of teaching class.

The success of conducting teaching reading will affect other skills mastery. Reading texts also provide good models for English writing (Harmer: 1998). Further Harmer stated that reading texts also provide opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way we construct sentences, paragraphs and texts. Therefore, the appropriate technique used by the teacher is the biggest determiner in the success of teaching reading.

Since the importance of teaching reading texts, teacher uses some techniques to make it interesting. Unfortunately, not all of techniques can increase students' motivation in reading texts. The use of authentic texts sometimes is important, but mostly makes students are confused with the text because of the different environment between the texts' and students'. Thus, students do not feel engage with the texts. As with everything else in lesson, students who are not engaged with the reading text – not actively interested in what they are doing – are less likely to benefit from it (Harmer: 1998). Besides, the use of authentic texts sometimes brings the culture which is not in line with the students'. Therefore, it does not only make the students are confused and having less interest but also there might be inappropriate culture from target language for the students. Authentic native speaker discourse in London or New York might be quite inappropriate for speakers of English in other parts of the world; what is authentic in one context might need to be made appropriate to another (Kramsch and Sullivan: 1996). Thus, the topic chosen in the text will influence the success of learning.

The nature of EFL students who are not the native English speakers makes the way of teaching reading texts needs the different treatment, especially in the texts topic used. The use of local culture texts in teaching English reading, especially for EFL students, will make the students motivated because local culture texts involve the topics which the student are familiar with. If no association is made between the culture of the first language and the learning of the second one, the learning will not be as effective. Using local culture text means that the texts learned by the students are the part of students’ life. It brings a lot of benefits in teaching reading texts. Teachers will be easier to explore the topics because he/she knows more about them. So, the topics can be more various. Further, the students in reading class will be more enthusiastic because they are familiar with the topics which make it more understandable and the culture of the text is in line with the students’ culture. Borrowing the political motto of “think globally, act locally”, translated into language pedagogy as ‘global thinking, local teaching’ (Berman: 1994).

II. THE NATURE OF TEACHING READING

Reading needs a process. Anderson (2003) states that reading as a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their background knowledge which need reading strategies to build meaning. It means that the process of comprehend the reading texts does not directly happen. It takes time. The readers or in this case is students should have the background knowledge of what they are reading. It is important to help the students understand the texts easier. The reading comprehension can be successful if the teacher provides the texts involving the background knowledge that students have.

According to Harmer (1998), there are six principles of teaching reading, these are the three of which:

Principle 1 : Reading is not passive skill.
Principle 2: Students need to be engaged with what they are reading.

Principle 3: Students should be encouraged to respond to the content of a reading text, not just the language.

Based on that theory, teaching reading is also related with the good topic in the texts chosen to make the students engaged.

Brown (2001) stated that there are some principles in teaching reading, two of them are:

1. Identify the purpose of reading. Efficient reading consists of clearly identifying the purpose in reading something. By doing so, the students will know what they are looking for and can weed out potential distracting information.
2. Use techniques that are intrinsically motivating. Chose the material that is relevant with the goal and bring the students into the “real life” of reading.

By doing those principles, the teaching of reading can be efficient and effective for the students.

III. SECOND LANGUAGE READING

In the field of second language reading, the simplification of text is common (Crossley, McCarthy, and McNamara: 2006). Second language reading texts are simplified at the beginning and intermediate levels in order to make the text more comprehensible for second language learners and to help prepare those learners for more advanced, authentic texts (Young, 1999). Another expert stated that simplified text can be a valuable aid to learning because it accurately reflects what the reader already knows about language (Davies and Widdowson, 1974).

Based on those theories, the simplification of reading text for ESL (English for Second Language) or in this case is EFL is justifiable. The simplification of the text could be done by modifying the text into simpler text or by changing the topic used but still consider about the purpose in giving the text in teaching reading. As long as the changing of the text is without regardless the goal of the text, the sense of the text is still the same.

IV. THE LOCAL CULTURE TEXTS

The students’ engagement to the learning process is very important. Students should become the part of the learning, so they will feel that they are needed. Giving the local culture texts to the students in reading class can be the way to involve the students in the learning process. It happens because the nature of local culture texts is the texts which contain the local events, environment, norm, news, and culture. The use of local culture texts will give some advantages. They are closer to the students’ life. Culture consists of values, beliefs, and ways of perceiving (Irvine and York: 1995). A cultural group’s values and traditional lifestyle may, through child-rearing practices, influence the learning styles the individual will develop (Worthley: 1999). Therefore giving the texts based on local culture can make students easier in learning the material because they have previous knowledge about it.

In order to make English learning a holistic experience, it is important that culture and local context are integrated so the learner has a more comprehensive grasp of the language (http://neltachoutari.wordpress.com/2011/04/01/the-role-of-local-culture-and-context-in-english-language-teaching/). Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) states that ‘local culture’ in TEFL should be taught. This statement clearly support that local culture cannot be s-separated in teaching English. Although teacher teaches target language which has its own culture, but the local culture of students’ first language should not be left behind.

Teaching reading text using local culture texts is effective. Local culture is the culture where the students live. It means that the students are common with the culture. If the students learn the
text based on the local culture, of course the students will be engaged in it. Students need to be engaged with what they are reading (Harmer: 1998). When the students are engaged in it, they will be more motivated. The reading class which at the first time is seen as a boring and monotonous class will not happen anymore. On the contrary, the reading class will be more enthusiastic because the students can explore their knowledge more. Take for the example, if a person know about the topic discussed, he/she will talk a lot compare to when he/she is unfamiliar with the topic. It happens also to the students. When they know about the topic in the text, they will discuss a lot of things about it. They will get the knowledge more than what is in front of them. Though it is a reading class, students can discuss a lot of things which means they think actively. Besides the advantage mentioned above, there is another advantage if the students using local culture texts in reading class. Since the topics discussed are familiar for the students, the texts of course will be easier to be understood by the students. When the students have the background knowledge about the topic in the text the reading process will be easier. Since Anderson (2003) stated that reading as a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their background knowledge.

The last but not least, teaching reading using local culture text will keep the culture of the students’ first language. Why keeping the students’ local culture is important? Widdowson (1994) clearly states that:

The consequences for English language teaching; instead of a pedagogy of the authentic which [inappropriately] privileges native-speaker use’ and imposes its norms at the global level, he suggests a pedagogy of the appropriate, which revises the authentic and adapts it to local conditions.

There will be a different culture brought by the “authentic” text from the native English countries. In the world, there are a lot of different cultures in which not every culture is appropriate for every country. Authentic native speaker discourse in London or New York might be quite inappropriate for speakers of English in other parts of the world; what is authentic in one context might need to be made appropriate to another (Kramsch and Sullivan: 1996). Thus, in order not to give inappropriate culture for the students, using the local culture text is the good way in teaching reading.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL CULTURE TEXTS

Local culture texts can be implemented in any level of study. Teacher only needs to give the students a text which contains a local culture. It will not change the genre or the type of the text because local culture is only the topic which is inserted in the text. There are many things related to the local culture which can be integrated in the text. They could be traditional food, dance, custom in a region or country, legend, folk tale, story tale, and so forth.

In Elementary School, the local culture texts can be used in the texts of some chapters. For instance for the fifth grade students, there is a chapter talked about daily activity. The local culture can be integrated in the texts. The italic sentences are the example of inserting the local culture value in the text. Here the example of the text:

Hallo friends! My name is Rara. I am in the fifth grade now. I always wake up at five a. m then praying for Subuh. I go to school at 6.30 a. m. After going home, I join a traditional dance in a dance studio near my house. I learn Srimpi traditional dance with my friends.

In Junior High School level, the integration of local culture texts can be in the genre texts. For example in the second grade of Junior High School, there is a genre text about procedure text. The local culture which can inserted in the procedure
can be various, one of which is how to make the local food such as *How to Make Fried rice, How to Make Rendang*, etc.

In the level of Senior High School, the local culture texts can be more various. In the narrative text, for example, there will be many local stories which can be used in the texts. In the narrative texts, the topics which can be used are various. It can be the folk tale, legend, or other local story tales. This is one of the examples of narrative text using the local culture.

**The Lake of Toba**

Once upon a time, there was a man who was living in north Sumatra. He lived in a simple hut in a farming field. He did some gardening and fishing for his daily life.

One day, while the man was doing fishing, he caught a big golden fish in his trap. It was the biggest catch which he ever had in his life. Surprisingly, this fish turned into a beautiful princess. He fell in love with her and proposed her to be his wife. She said; "Yes, but you have to promise not to tell anyone about the secret that I was once a fish, otherwise there will be a huge disaster". The man made the deal and they got married, lived happily and had a daughter.

Few years later, this daughter would help bringing lunch to her father out in the fields. One day, his daughter was so hungry and she ate his father's lunch. Unfortunately, he found out and got furious, and shouted; “You damned daughter of a fish". The daughter ran home and asked her mother. The mother started crying, felt sad that her husband had broken his promise.

Then she told her daughter to run up the hills because a huge disaster was about to come. When her daughter left, she prayed. Soon there was a big earthquake followed by non-stop pouring rain. The whole area got flooded and became Toba Lake. She turned into a fish again and the man became the island of Samosir. (http://www.englishdirection.com/2011/03/contoh-example-of-narrative-text-story.html)

The local culture texts can be created by the teacher or it can be downloaded from other sources. The most important is the local culture texts should contain good messages for the students.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

Teaching reading has its own challenge because of the nature of teaching reading itself. Most of the students assume that reading class is a boring, monotonous and difficult class. The students cannot act actively like in other skills class. Besides, by using an “authentic” text, students are uninterested with it because of the difference culture of the text and the students'. In another side, there might be a different culture brought by the “authentic” text which is inappropriate with the students' culture.

By using the local culture text, it will be a good solution for the problems above. Local culture text offers an interesting text involving the students’ local culture which make the students are more interested with the text. Besides, the use of local culture text will be effective for the students learning because they have a previous knowledge about the topic which can trigger them to be more active in the reading class. In another word, using a local culture text is helpful for the students to start enjoying reading because the text is more understandable than the “authentic” one. It also gives the appropriate culture for the students because the culture in the text is in line with the students’ culture. Therefore, the use of local culture text in reading class is very useful.
REFERENCES


