STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING READTHEORY.ORG IN READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine and explore students' perceptions of the use of ReadTheory in reading comprehension. Quantitative descriptive was used to conduct this research. The researcher used a closed questionnaire using five Likert scales to collect data. In this study 50 students as the sample. Based on the overall results, the researcher can conclude that the students' perception of the use of ReadTheory in reading comprehension of the majority of the subjects showed positive responses, especially on the points related to the use of the platform towards changes in their abilities for the better even though the changes were not too significant. This can be seen from their responses that they will continue to use ReadTheory in the future because they feel that they have received many benefits. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that students' perception of using the ReadTheory platform in reading comprehension tends to be positive because it provides benefits and changes their ability to understand reading texts.

Keywords: ReadTheory.org, Reading Comprehension, Web-based learning

INTRODUCTION

Reading ability in English is needed not only when the reader is faced with discourse. This ability is a fundamental ability that is used in every aspect of life. Reading is a complex activity (Mikulecky, B.S. 2021). It is the process of gaining knowledge and interpreting written words. It requires comprehending the written information and figuring out the expressed problems. According to Dasigi, P (2019), while reading, readers have to be aware of the main and supporting sentences and the connection of each part of the written words as well. The focus of readers while

receiving and interpreting the language in the written form consists of four stages; decoding, comprehending, text analysis, and response (Abeberese, A. 2014). The ability to read will be very useful for reading instructions, road signs, procedures for using an item, or announcements posted in English. To prepare students to become qualified human resources, having the ability to read in English will provide additional value that is useful in the future. According to Hermann et al. (2015), the ability of reading comprehension can be categorized as reading the text through understanding which refers to the background experience of readers, general knowledge, vocabulary, syntactic awareness, and word identification function. According to Elleman, A (2018), the reader carries on the thought process while reading and can understand the text thoroughly using the background of the experience he has gone through, universal knowledge, vocabulary mastery, and identifying words to increase understanding.

Online learning has seen tremendous progress as a capable way to enable the education system to cope with the significant effect of the continuing coronavirus pandemic around the world. Social distance regulations enforced to avoid the spread of illness have forced schools and universities to directly order distant work and education (Dhawan, 2020). Addressing the above challenges is unfortunately considered very important for education systems in developing countries, where infrastructure is unfortunately not mature yet in terms of service accessibility and system stability (Kalolo, 2019). Difficult is assessed in many ways, including research methods, talent, affordability, placement time, regressive compatibility, and exposed interoperability.

According to Singh and Miah (2020), the development of information technology in the growth of modern learning settings is essential for smart education systems. Various aspects and features of the intelligent education system can benefit from the benefits of new technologies including mobile applications, website-based access (Nicolaou, C 2019). In another side, the research was conducted by Alfyna & Aswir (2021) the experimental class results would be the conclusion of research as this class used Story Face during the lesson. The value of the df t-value is searched based on n=29 with a range of 0,025. Its df t-value is 2,045. Because the t-test value is higher than the df t-value (5000>2045) h1 is accepted and 0 is rejected, so the learning method is successful in improving student's reading skill. It means that teaching English by using story face to improve reading comprehension by narrative text was significant.

Therefore, at this time, there are many websites and platforms online and offline that aim to improve students' reading comprehension skills, from elementary students to university students (Syakur, A 2020). Websites and platforms that have sprung up either are national or international products, one of them are ReadTheory. ReadTheory was started by Tanner Hock at the North Carolina University at Chapel Hill. Hock recognized the usefulness of improving students' critical thinking skills not only in classroom settings but also in real-world circumstances (ReadTheory, 2014).

ReadTheory is a website-based learning platform that can be accessed as a reading site in developing students' reading comprehension by providing them with categorized understanding. It is intended in providing students with a variety of exciting and authentic sections that are followed up with reading comprehension exercises. The questions are conveyed in direct and detailed feedback which permits students in analyzing and comprehending their errors. It is important for its reactive leveling algorithm, which permits students to be accessible with the most suitable material according to previous performances (Romeo, 2016). That is, students are presented with an assignment that evaluates students reading ability and they will consequently be assigned to a suitable level. Through each reading quiz practice, the website automatically offerings additional reading from the next level to challenge them.

In searching the relevant studies that have been conducted before, the writer searched phrases by combining the terms *students" perception, reading, reading with technology, and ReadTheory*. Many researchers have already done similar research with different objects and conditions. This part is explaining the studies that were completed by other researchers as additional references for this research. Based on the investigation of Dar, B.A et al (2019), this kind of research mainly focuses on young and school children. It was identified only a little research that involved adult participants. Therefore, the distinction between this research and the previous research is on the participants, while the other researchers focus on young children. This research was carried out with the involvement of university students as the sample or participants.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative design. These variables are measured so that data consisting of numbers can be analyzed based on statistical procedures (Creswell, 2012:5). This study was conducted on 4th-semester students of the English Education

Study Program of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Bandar Lampung. The reason why the researchers conducted research here is that she has already familiar with the teaching and learning situations, including the problems faced by students in learning reading such as lack of reading habits, low vocabulary, and English proficiency. Therefore, the researchers tried to give them new media and investigate how they perceive using it.

The data is gathered by providing questionnaires to the students. In this research, the researchers used a close-ended questionnaire. There were approximately fifteen questions using the Likert Scale where there are five response categories ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Partially Agree (3), Agree (4), to Strongly Agree (5) (Jeb, et al, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, there are 50 respondents. They are all students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Universitas Bandar Lampung. They are from the fourth semester. Based on their experience in learning to use ReadTheory in reading comprehension, the following are the results of the questionnaire that has been given. The questionnaire consists of fifteen statements with five options. There are some indicators taken in designing the questionnaires. Below is the table of indicators along with the statements of questionnaire results.

Interest

In the questionnaire, most students were interested in reading the stories available on ReadTheory. There were 35 students of 50 students who chose agree and strongly agree, which means 70% of them are interested in reading stories on the ReadTheory website. On the other hand, there are 5 students, or 10% of them who are not interested in reading stories on ReadTheory. While the other 10 students or 20% of them chose partially agree which means they are slightly interested. Meanwhile, on the next point, some students used ReadTheory because that platform provides a lot of exercises that can be done by students after they read the stories. There were 31 students out of 50 students who agreed and strongly agreed, which means that 62% of them are interested in reading readings through the ReadTheory website because there are many practice questions that they can do to practice students' reading comprehension skills. On the other hand, there were 3 students or 6% of them did not agree with the

statement. Meanwhile, 16 other students chose to slightly agree or hesitate if they were interested in reading stories in ReadTheory because many exercises could be done.

Experience

According to the questionnaire, most students' experiences of using ReadTheory were positive. They felt that ReadTheory was a fun reading platform and they enjoyed a lot reading stories on ReadTheory. It was supported by the data that 50% of the total students or there were 25 students agreed that reading stories on ReadTheory was a fun experience and they enjoyed it. While the other 19 students 38% of them thought ReadTheory was a little fun and they enjoyed it even though they didn't enjoy using it. On the other hand, there are only 6 students who think ReadTheory is not fun and they do not like using the platform.

Meanwhile, the difficulty level of vocabulary used in reading in ReadTheory does not include a level that is too difficult or rarely encountered for students. This is evident from the results of the questionnaire stating that 27 students disagreed with the ReadTheory statement using difficult and unfamiliar vocabularies. It means, that 54% of the total think that the vocabulary used is at an easy level or they have often encountered so that the reading is easier to understand. Meanwhile, according to 6 other students, or 12% of students, they think that the vocabulary found in ReadTheory is a little difficult for them. On the other hand, there were 17 students 34% of them thought the vocabularies they encountered on the platform were difficult and they rarely encountered and used.

Mood

Based on the questionnaire, many students read stories in ReadTheory only when they were in a good mood. The students might feel that a good mood helped them a lot in understanding the stories they read. Of all students, there were 33 students, or 66% agreed that reading stories in ReadTheory were only when they were in a good mood. While 9 students or 18% feel normal or neutral, the remaining 23 students, or 36% students feel that reading stories in ReadTheory is not so influenced by mood conditions whether in a good or bad mood.

Object Size

Based on the questionnaire result, most students prefer a handphone as the medium in accessing ReadTheory. There were only a few students who used the laptop while accessing ReadTheory. This is evidenced by the presence of 40 students or 80%

of the total students who chose to agree and strongly agree with the statement that they use smartphones when reading stories on the ReadTheory platform. This is because using a smartphone will be simpler and easier to access, besides that not all students have laptops or tablets, in contrast to smartphones which are owned by all students.

Positive

According to the questionnaire, most students agree to continue reading and learning on the ReadTheory platform. 29 students agree to continue using this platform because they got a lot of benefits from it. It means 58% of the total students gave a positive response to the use of ReadTheory in learning reading comprehension. However, there were only 7 students, or 14% of the total that will not continue reading in ReadTheory.

Negative

In this part of the questionnaire, the statement is about negative perception. It meant that instead of bringing benefits, it will negatively affect individuals. It shows that there were 31 students or 62% answered disagree and strongly disagree with the statement that they did not think their reading comprehension ability had improved because of ReadTheory. It meant that they felt ReadTheory help them improve their reading comprehension. Otherwise, there were 11 students or 22% answered agree and strongly agree with the statement, which meant that ReadTheory did not bring any benefits to them. While there were 8 students or 16% answered partially agree which meant that they thought ReadTheory has helped them to improve their reading comprehension ability but only a little.

Genres

Based on the questionnaire result, the students have not explored all the genres available on ReadTheory yet. There are only a few students who have explored all the genres available on ReadTheory. There were 32 students or 64% answered that they disagree and strongly disagree, which meant they did not read yet all the genres on this platform. While there were only 9 students or 18% that had read all the genres on the ReadTheory platform. Meanwhile, the rest of them choose partially agree which meant they had read almost all the genres.

Accessibility

Based on the questionnaire result, ReadTheory does not require a strong internet connection since most students did not agree with the statement *'ReadTheory needs a*

strong internet connection'. It is proven by the result that there were 37 students 74% chose to disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. It means they did not think that using ReadTheory needs a strong connection or it can be concluded that the use of the platform is very easy to access for anyone.

Educational Performance

The educational performance aims to find out the correlation between ReadTheory and students' English skills. According to the questionnaire result, it can be seen that there were 5 students, or 10% who chose strongly agree and there were 20 students or 40% chose to agree. It indicated that half of the students thought that their vocabulary of English had improved because of reading on the ReadTheory platform. There were 17 students or 34% chose partially agree, it might be because they thought that their vocabulary of English had indeed improved but they could not claim that the reason for the improvement was caused only by ReadTheory. While there were 5 students or 10% chose to disagree and there were only 3 students or 6% chose strongly disagree. It meant that their English vocabulary had improved at all since they use ReadTheory as a reading platform.

Personal Development

Based on the questionnaire result, there were 16 students 32% chose to agree and 11 students or 22% answered strongly agree about the statement that after they learned by using ReadTheory in reading comprehension especially, it gave a positive effect on their performance in doing the assignments. In other words, they felt that ReadTheory motivated them to learn more. Meanwhile, there were 13 students, or 26% of the total that chose partially agree, which meant they felt that ReadTheory gave a positive effect on them but they might be still confused about whether or not their motivation in doing the assignments is part of the positive effect obtained only from learning through ReadTheory platform. Then, the rest of the students chose to disagree and strongly disagree, which meant that they did not get a positive effect on their performance in doing the assignment from the platform.

Entertainment

Based on the questionnaire result, there were 16 students, or 32% who answered agree and there were 8 students or 16% chose strongly agree. It means that most students thought reading on ReadTheory was fun and as interesting as other recreational activities. While there were 14 students or 28% chose partially agree, which meant that

they might think reading on ReadTheory was fun but not be said as a recreational activity. Then, the rest of the students chose to disagree and strongly disagree, it might be because they did not think that reading on ReadTheory became a recreational activity and they had more preferences in other than only reading on ReadTheory.

Personal Reassurance

According to the questionnaire result, there were 16 students, or 32% chose to agree, and 14 students or 28% answered strongly agree. It means that after they read and do some exercises in ReadTheory several times, they felt that easier to understand the content of other reading texts because perhaps they have often practiced comprehending reading text. Meanwhile, there were 10 students or 20% who chose partially agree which meant that they might feel changes in their ability to understand reading texts, but they will not claim that the changes are caused by the ReadTheory platform. Whereas there were 7 students or 14% who chose disagree and only 3 students or 6% who answered strongly disagree, it means they did not feel any changes in their ability to understanding reading text after they read and practiced in ReadTheory.

Discussion

Based on the result of the questionnaire analysis that has been carried out, there are twelve indicators arranged into fifteen statements in this research instrument, Interest, Experience, Mood, Object Size, Positive, Negative, Genre, Accessibility, Educational Performance, Personal Development, Entertainment, and Personal Reassurance. The interest indicator has two statements, in which the majority of the subjects stated that they were interested in reading in ReadTheory and the interest was on average due to several exercise questions related to each reading so that they could simultaneously practice reading comprehension.

The next indicator is experiencing, which consists of two statements. The results of the questionnaire stated that the majority of subjects gave a positive response by agreeing if it was true that ReadTheory was a fun learning platform, it was because they felt that the vocabulary contained in the reading was not difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary for them. Then, the third indicator, the mood only consists of one statement and almost all of the subjects stated that they read ReadTheory when they were in a good mood. The next indicator consists of two statements in which the majority of the subjects stated that they accessed the ReadTheory platform more often through smartphones than laptops or tablets.

Then, in the next indicator, the students stated that they felt their ability in reading comprehension had changed since they often used ReadTheory as a reading learning platform. In addition, in the educational performance indicator, the majority of them stated that their vocabulary bank had also increased, it was natural that if they were diligent in reading, they would get a lot of new vocabulary. Then the final point also shows that the majority of subjects stated that since they learned through the use of ReadTheory as a medium for learning reading skills, they found it easier to understand the content of a reading text.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data processing of the questionnaire results and the data analysis that has been explained, it can be seen that of all the indicators compiled into fifteen statements related to student perceptions regarding the use of ReadTheory in reading comprehension, the majority of the subjects showed positive responses, especially on points related to the use of the platform towards changes in their abilities for the better even though the changes are not too significant. This is evident from their responses stating that they will continue to use ReadTheory in the future because they feel that they have received many benefits. Therefore, the researchers can conclude that students' perceptions of using the ReadTheory platform in reading comprehension tend to be positive because it provides benefits and changes their ability to understand reading texts.

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