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EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPLEMENTING PRE-READING ACTIVITIES IN ONLINE READING CLASSES

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Abstract

This research aimed to find out the teachers' perceptions, including the kinds of pre-reading activities commonly used, the advantages of pre-reading activities, and the difficulties faced by the teachers in implementing pre-reading activities in online reading classes. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Furthermore, open-ended questions and semi-structured interview guides were used as research instruments. The participant of this study were 8 English teachers with teaching experience ranging from 10 to 15 years from different senior high schools in Lamongan. This study revealed that the teachers commonly used online pre-reading activities: previewing, predicting, questioning, writing the reader's experience, recognizing the text structure, reading the introduction and conclusion, semantic maps, and vocabulary familiarization. The teachers believed that it positively impacts both teachers and students in online reading classes, specifically to support the students in comprehending a text and encourage students' enthusiasm in online reading classes. Moreover, these activities helped the teacher in delivering the primary materials. Besides, the teachers should evaluate the time management in implementing pre-reading activities in online reading classes.

Keywords: Teachers' Perceptions, Pre-Reading Activity, Online Reading Class

INTRODUCTION

One of the crucial factors in EFL students' achievement is mastering reading skills. The reading activity facilitates the students to earn new knowledge and updatable information. As the article by Pardede (2019) explained, performing reading is vital for EFL students due to several rationales. First, reading helps the EFL students to synchronize predominant language to improve the quantity of receiving information. Second, reading plays a vital role in job hunting, career advancement, further research, and the ability to collaborate. Third, reading involves the development of other language skills and components. Fourth, reading improves writing skills by assisting students in determining how to portray thought using sentences, proper sentence structures, and paragraph formatting. Moreover, a large number of teaching and learning materials are in the form of written text (Anaktototy & Huwae, 2020). Thus, EFL students should expand their language skills by maximizing reading mastery. In achieving the aim of reading, the reader is required to understand the exact meaning of the content that it can gain through reading comprehensively. Pearson and Hamm (cited in Fletcher, 2009) stated that reading comprehension is an activity that integrates the pattern to present the material and the process of understanding the material they have read. Their statement is in line with (Lipka & Siegel, 2012) that reading comprehension refers to a complicated stage that engages the reader, the reader's prior knowledge, and the contextual framework. Therefore, reading's ultimate goal is comprehension.

However, comprehending a passage or a text is one of the challenges faced by EFL students, specifically in Indonesia. This reality is proven in the Programme for International Student



Assessment which reported that Indonesia got the 64th position of 79 countries in the assessing reading ability of senior high school students (OECD, 2019). It represents that the students' reading performance was still low compared with other countries. Furthermore, Al-Jarrah & Ismail (2018) specified several difficulties encountered by the EFL students: vocabulary knowledge, grammar knowledge, text complexity, complex sentence structures, text organization, cognitive processes, and background knowledge.

According to the issues above, having good preparation before reading a text can support the students' performance in reading. Activating students' prior knowledge, as implemented in prereading, is one of the essential aspects of promoting reading ability. Pre-reading activity is an activity to recall the students' existing understanding to construct a new comprehension of the materials (Anaktototy & Huwae, 2020; Osei, 2016). These activities help students navigate between their existing knowledge and the new knowledge. Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi (2015) pointed out that prior knowledge stimulates readers to understand the context they have read. Hence, pre-reading activities can assist students in activating prior knowledge, achieving the purpose of reading, and determining the proper expectation of the text.

In applying pre-reading activities, the teachers mandate an essential role in organizing classroom management. They should provide the necessary materials and appropriate strategies. Fitri & Ginting (2021) mentioned that the level of teachers' professionalism in managing the classroom and distributing instruction influences the performance of the teaching process. In this context, the teacher has an enormous responsibility to guide the students in recalling prior knowledge to comprehend a text. The differences in the teachers' understanding can lead to different perceptions. It impacts the teacher's behavior on the judgments they make. According to Maba (2017), generally, teachers' perception is the statement to describe the process of educating, monitoring, assessing, and evaluating expressed by teachers, which are influenced by their values and emotions. In this case, this statement refers to teachers' readiness to share their experience in implementing pre-reading activities and their relation to the understanding of reading achievement. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate the teachers' perspectives on pre-reading activities in online reading classes. Additionally, the teachers specified their perceptions, including the kinds of pre-reading activities they have applied, the advantages, and the difficulties of the implementation.

METHOD

In conducting this study, the researcher used the descriptive qualitative method. According to Ary et al. (2010), the qualitative approach provides situational context and participants' behavior in the form of narrative description. In addition, this study focused on investigating the implementation of pre-reading activities and analyzing the result of the teachers' perceptions of implementing pre-reading activities in online reading classes. The data were obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The research instruments consist of open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire aimed to identify the kind of online pre-reading activities commonly applied and classify the advantages and difficulties of implementing pre-reading activities in online reading classes based on the teachers' perspectives. There were 12 questions in this survey. It was created using theories about pre-reading activities by Auerbach & Paxton (1997) and Doucette et al. (2006). In answering open-ended questions, the participants can portray their ideas in their own words instead of responding to a fixed answer (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Moreover, semi-structured interviews were involved in gaining the depth of information after collecting teachers' questionnaire responses. Creswell & Poth (2016) explained that the semi-structured interview



was used as an extension technique, allowing the researcher to obtain detailed information by asking more related questions. The participants of this study were 8 English teachers (3 males and 5 females) with teaching experience ranging from 10 to 15 years from different senior high schools in Lamongan. The main criteria of participants were the English teacher who had implemented pre-reading activities in online reading classes and focused on teaching senior high school students. The researcher examined the data from questionnaires and interviews using the steps from Ary et al. (2010). They are familiarizing and organizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Kind of Pre-Reading Activities

The first questionnaire findings were about the kind of pre-reading activities commonly used in online reading classes. The teachers were given a list of recommended pre-reading activities offered by Auerbach & Paxton (1997) and Doucette et al. (2006). However, they could add other pre-reading activities according to their implementation. Table 1 presents the result of the study on the type of pre-reading activities applied by teachers:

Kinds of pre-reading	Participants (Teachers)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Previewing				-	-			\checkmark
Predicting			-	-	\checkmark	-		-
Questioning				-	-			-
Writing the reader's experience	-	-	-		-		-	-
Recognizing the text structure		-		-	-	-	-	-
Skimming	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reading the introduction and conclusion	-	-	-	-	\checkmark	-	-	\checkmark
K-W-L question strategy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Content analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Semantic maps	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Thought webs or brainstorming	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyramid outlines	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anticipation guides	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Probable passage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

 Table 1. Kinds of Pre-Reading Activities Applied in Online Reading Classes

Table 1 indicated that the teachers have implemented previewing, predicting, questioning, writing the reader's experience, recognizing the text structure, reading the introduction and conclusion, and semantic maps as the pre-reading activities in the online reading class. It could be seen from the table that the most frequently applied pre-reading activity by senior high school English teachers in the online reading classes was previewing. The interview results revealed that the students were stimulated to make assumptions before reading by using contextual signals such as titles, headings, short videos, and pictures. The second favorable activity implemented by the teacher was questioning. The teachers claimed that this activity



could be used in conducting reading classes on almost online platforms. It was because the teacher could deliver the questions in both written form and spoken form. The next popular activity was predicting. Half of the teachers applied to make predictions about the content they would read after previewing stage. The teacher could identify the students' thinking level by asking them to make predictions based on the introductory elements.

Besides, the teacher applied other pre-reading activities but not at the top of the list, such as writing the reader's experience, recognizing the text structure, reading the introduction and conclusion, and semantic maps. The teacher assumed that these activities were appropriately performed in the class with students' exemplary academic performance because they most likely did not have difficulty in applying. In addition, the teacher rarely used the semantic map because of limitations in space and time to prepare and implement.

Furthermore, no teachers applied more complex pre-reading activities such as skimming, K-W-L question strategy, content analysis, thought webs or brainstorming, pyramid outlines, anticipation guides, and probable passage in the online reading class. It was because the allotted time for pre-reading activity in online reading class was not enough. One of the teachers said:

Teacher 2:

"We need much time to prepare the teaching media for online class, also the limited time on the implementation".

Lastly, two teachers used another pre-reading activity which is vocabulary familiarization. The teachers explained that the unfamiliar vocabulary could decrease students' motivation to read the text since it was against activating background knowledge needed for the comprehension process.

All participants agreed that pre-reading activities are essential to support the students in understanding the passage and build their enthusiasm in online reading class. It could be proven from the teachers' answers below:

Teacher 1:

"I think pre-reading activity is important to help students be more prepared and motivated in reading digital text."

Teacher 4:

"Yes, it is quite important to recall the students' previous knowledge. Pre-reading helps students understand the content and gives me a sense of how much knowledge they have about the title."

Meanwhile, it is significant to select an appropriate online pre-reading activity that fits several criteria: the type of text, the topic or title, learning objectives, students' needs and abilities, teaching platforms, and the number of meetings. In addition, the time allocation to conduct online pre-reading ranged from 10 to 15 minutes depending on the platform and kind of activity chosen.

DI - 46	Participants (Teachers)								
Platforms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Zoom	-	-		-	-		-	-	
Google meet	-	-	-		-		-	-	
E-Learning Madrasah		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Google classroom			-	-		-	\checkmark		
WhatsApp				-		-	\checkmark		

Based on the questionnaire and interview results, the teachers implement both virtual conference platforms and non-virtual platforms. When teaching reading in senior high school, WhatsApp and Google Classroom are the teachers' favorable online teaching platforms. Besides, the teachers rarely used virtual conference platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and E-Learning *Madrasah*.

In addition, the researcher gained the step of implementing pre-reading activities in online classes used by the teacher through the questionnaire and interview. The 1st teacher used pictures, video, and storytelling as a medium in conducting pre-reading activities. The teacher shared three or four pictures related to the text's plot in a group class and asked the students to guess what the reading would be about. As part of that, the teacher sometimes shared a link to access the video thriller of the text or a voice note containing a short story. Then, the students were given questions that led them to determine the text's fundamental concept. The students could share their answers through speed chatting. After that, the teacher explained the structure of the text by providing an example. Meanwhile, the students completed this task individually, followed by an online group discussion.

The 2nd teacher implemented pictures and titles to stimulate the students' prior knowledge. The teacher sent the picture and asked the students to observe the image's implied. Then, the students took turns delivering their ideas through group chat. The teacher came up with the conclusion on the text's content based on the students' responses. In contrast, the teacher occasionally instructed the students to apply the pre-reading activities, previewing and predicting, before the class began to maximize the available time.

The 3rd teacher used short videos or pictures shared in the meeting room. The teacher explained the content of the video or image briefly. Then, the teacher asked the students to distribute their idea voluntarily. Some students conveyed directly, and others chose to write their thoughts in the chat box. Further, the teacher displayed the text and guided the students' to look for unknown vocabularies and look up their definitions in the students' electronic dictionary. It helps the students to be more engaged with the text.

The 4th teacher used two kinds of pre-reading in a different sessions. On the easy topic, the teacher assisted the students in writing their experience work with the title shortly. Three or four students were represented to share it directly. After that, the teacher gave a response to the presentation. Besides, the teacher created an online semantic map and shared it in the meeting room when the topic was quite hard. The teacher wrote and explained the topic, followed by sub-topics. Then the teacher asked the students to write unfamiliar vocabulary under each sub-topics. The students could browse the definition individually or in groups.



The 5th teacher used simple pre-reading activities, predicting and reading the introduction and conclusion. The teacher shared the text on the platform and asked the students to read the first and last paragraphs. After that, the students should guess the content that would be read. Then, the representative of the students expressed their opinion.

The 6th teacher used students' experiences and reviewed previous material to activate prior knowledge. The teacher asked the students reminding the last reading materials. The students would write the resume of materials on the meeting chat box, and one of them would present it. Then, the teacher gave feedback and followed by an explanation of the current material. After that, the teacher continued by inviting them to compare the last and existing materials. Furthermore, the teacher invited students to write down what they thought the text's title meant.

The 7th teacher sent a video of himself telling a short story and a vocabulary list that might be new for the students. Then, the teacher divided students into several groups. The teacher asked them to discuss the content of the reading text and define each vocabulary given. After completing the task, each group should share the results through chatting.

The 8th teacher used pictures, a vocabulary list, and the first and last paragraph. First, the teacher sent the vocabulary list and asked the students to memorize it. Second, the teacher displayed a picture that was relevant to the topic's text. It was followed by giving stimuli to recognize the contents of the text. In addition, the students were asked to read the introduction and conclusion parts to gain a deeper understanding.

Advantages of Pre-Reading Activities

All of the teachers believed that pre-reading activities positively impact both teachers and students in online reading classes. Their supportive responses led to the need to incorporate pre-reading activities into the reading process. The questionnaire and interview results showed that all teachers completely agreed that pre-reading activities help students understand the text. These activities assist the students in making the interaction between their experiences and new materials. One of the states was as follows:

Teacher 6:

"Of course, this activity helps our students to understand the text because we give some stimulus before reading, and they will get better prepared when receiving new material."

Moreover, five teachers realized that using various pre-reading activities in every reading topic increases students' interest and curiosity to read the text. It should be appropriate to several criteria that the writer had mentioned before in choosing the pre-reading activities. As a statement by the teacher below:

Teacher 3:

"The students are more enthusiast with anything related to the digital media, so we provide video, picture, or maybe animation to attract their attention."

The positive impact was also seen on vocabularies improvement. In this study, four teachers revealed that pre-reading activities were beneficial in encountering unfamiliar words before reading. It boosts the students' vocabulary acquisition to improve their ability to locate the diction in proper sentences. Further, the students preferred to use an electronic dictionary



because they could obtain the definition of a word and the way to pronounce it. For instance, one teacher said:

Teacher 8:

"Pre-reading activity enhances the students' vocabulary achievement, and also it can help recognize the theme or text topic."

The teacher also stated other benefits of the pre-reading activity, building the students' confidence and critical thinking. The students are challenged to answer the teacher's questions or ask the teacher about the text. It could be proven from the statement below:

Teacher 1:

"Maybe the students are more confident in delivering their opinions because the answer usually relates to their lives."

Teacher 4: "Sometimes the students ask or answer a question critically."

On the other side, all the teachers also realize the advantages of applying pre-reading activities in the teaching process. Pre-reading activity helps the teacher to deliver the primary materials. Moreover, pre-reading activities can sometimes save time when conducted independently by the students before the online class begins. One of the teachers said:

Teacher 1:

"It is making easy we are teaching and easier when entering the main reading."

Difficulties of Pre-Reading Activities in Online Class

The findings showed that the biggest challenge in applying online pre-reading was time management since the allotted time for online learning was pressed. The teacher tried to divide the reading stages into two phases, offline and online, which could be a potential solution to maximize the time available. To overcome this difficulty, the teacher cooperated with other English teachers in constructing various online pre-reading content. Below are examples of teachers' statements:

Teacher 7:

"The available time and material targets are sometimes unbalanced."

Teacher 1:

"I still struggle with the time management because when the students were slow response, it impacts the time allocation for pre-reading."

Furthermore, unstable internet connection, limited internet quota, and electricity problems continue to be the following primary difficulties teachers face. The teacher claimed that it was pretty challenging to reach the students in remote areas because of poor internet access and limited device availability. In addition, a sudden power outage during online pre-reading activities affected both the students' comprehension and interests. The students' limited quota also impacted the platform selection and teaching-learning continuity. Hence, the teacher offered students to determine the accessible platform freely and gave data quotas several times a year to facilitate online learning. The teacher's argumentation strengthens it:



Teacher 3:

"Most students have a limited quota and poor internet connection, so it leads to a different platform that we choose and different kind of pre-reading."

In traditional classrooms, teachers could manage the students immediately face-to-face. However, the teacher had difficulties managing an online classroom and monitoring students' discipline. The probable solutions to these challenges were designing learning contracts with the students and implementing class rules and regulations. It was crucial to deliver these provisions to the students before the online class started. Here are the teachers' responses:

Teacher 2:
"We don't know what the students do because they study at home."

Rapid developments in technology advancement required the teacher to master electronic equipment. However, several teachers had difficulties handling the devices, software, and applications because of a lack of technical training. The professional service provider and technology training were appointed to resolve the issue. For instance, one teacher said:

Teacher 5: "I have difficulties creating online media for reading class."

Besides, the teachers needed to improve online pre-reading strategies to handle students with different cultures and a lack of literacy and vocabulary. In this case, the teacher tried to overcome this by dividing students into several groups based on their academic level and being guided to start a group discussion. It could be proven from the short questionnaire result transcription as follow:

Teacher 1:

- They lack vocabularies acquisition.

Discussion

The study's first findings were pre-reading activities in online reading classes. This study found that previewing was the best pre-reading activity in online reading classes chosen by the teachers. This finding is in line with Karakas (2021), which highlighted the best pre-reading activity to enhance comprehension of a text and assist readers in integrating new material is previewing. This activity helped the students deal with unfamiliar components, explicitly reflecting on uncommon cultural information. As the benefit of previewing stated by Chen & Graves (1995), this activity is one feasible option to enhance the students' understanding and enjoyment of the text whenever students encounter the challenge of upcoming components. Additionally, the students are more motivated to read a text because the teacher serves the visual or audiovisual such as pictures, videos, and teacher's records as the media. It leads the students to formulate a hypothesis about the content. The following favorable activities were questioning and predicting. Meanwhile, Anaktototy & Huwae (2020) identified this activity occupied the first position of teachers' favorable pre-reading activity since it can be used on all topics in a reading session. By providing questions, the teacher supports the students in understanding the text by connecting the issue with their background knowledge or experiences. Moreover, predicting guided the students to be more critical and got the best encouragement to read the text.

⁻ Almost students ruin the reading experience.



In this study, a few teachers applied semantic maps as the type of activity. In contrast, Thuy & Yen (2018) highly recommended implementing a semantic map as a pre-reading activity because it significantly improves students' reading skills. On the other hand, the teachers needed to upgrade their insight into more complex pre-reading activities. In line with Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi (2015), the teachers were absent from using complex activities because they lacked an understanding of each strategy. Additionally, the teachers implemented vocabulary familiarization. By defining unfamiliar words, the students got engagement with the text they would read. This activity was easy to implement because each student had an electronic dictionary. On the other hand, Mihara (2011) found that vocabulary teaching was more effective as a post-reading activity.

In applying pre-reading activities in online reading classes, the teachers preferred to use WhatsApp and Google Classroom as the teaching platforms. The teacher and students could communicate simultaneously without meeting directly on these platforms. WhatsApp group was accessible quickly and provided educational and informational messages. While in Google Classroom, the teachers could provide reading materials and set assignments. It helped the students to find out the latest and updated materials. It showed contradictory results with Khusniyah (2020), which identified the teachers preferred to use the Zoom application to teach reading.

The second finding of the study was about the advantages of pre-reading activities. All teachers agreed that pre-reading activities help students comprehend a text. These activities supported students to engage with the text before reading. The finding was generally in line with previous research that focuses on pre-reading activity or prior knowledge impacting students' reading comprehension (Baldwin et al., 1985; Ozuru et al., 2009; Zarfsaz & Yeganehpour, 2021). Moreover, pre-reading activities boosted students' interest. It impacted the students' motivation to join online reading classes because digital visual media support that they can easily access through smartphones, computers, and other devices. Lailiyah et al. (2019) specified that the pictorial context could boost students' enjoyment and motivation in reading.

Furthermore, the teacher revealed the positive impact on vocabulary acquisition, especially for teachers who implement vocabulary familiarization. However, Mihara (2011) did not find the vocabulary improvement after giving vocabulary pre-teaching to Japanese students. Other advantages of pre-reading activities were improving self-confidence and level of thinking. It showed when the students tried to predict the content and shared their ideas asked by the teacher. In addition, Thuy & Yen (2018) specified that students in science classes perform better in making logical predictions and critical thinking. Lastly, conducting this activity was beneficial for the teacher in delivering materials because it could be a medium to categorize the students' abilities and identify their needs.

The third finding of the study was about the difficulties of pre-reading activities in online reading classes. The teachers have difficulties managing the time in online reading classes. Conducting pre-reading activities required more time to prepare the content in digital forms, such as recording the video, creating PPT, Doc, and other digital media. In Gurung (2021), 62.7% of the respondents agreed that online teaching required more time to prepare materials. It significantly impacted the efficiency of the learning process. Furthermore, the teachers also faced other difficulties related to internet access. Previous research, Gurung (2021), indicated that broadband and Wi-Fi were not installed in rural areas. It negatively influenced the pre-reading activity process.



In addition, the teacher could not control them physically and manage their activities. It impacted the pre-reading activities process, which not all students could join activity series. So, it was not easy to measure the students' understanding of the text. Besides, their ignorance about technology techniques influenced the adaptation process to the new teaching environment. It also brought the problem of implementing the pre-reading activities because they could not perform the pre-reading stages optimally and select more complex activities. The previous study participants also got this challenge during online reading class (Prasetiya, 2021). Lastly, the different cultures of students and teachers sometimes became a challenge to activate students' background knowledge. Also, the students' limited linguistic competence did not support them in delivering their thought.

CONCLUSION

The result and discussion showed that the teachers' favorable pre-reading activity in online reading class was previewing since the students quickly understood the text by using contextual signals. Besides, no teachers applied pre-reading activities that might be more complex and well-structured of the limited allotted time and limited teachers' knowledge. Moreover, WhatsApp and Google Classroom became the teachers' preferable online teaching platforms. Those platforms were accessible quickly and took a bit of quota. Furthermore, the teachers claimed several advantages of pre-reading activities, including students having better comprehension, boosting students' interest in reading the text, improving vocabulary, building the students' confidence and critical thinking, and helping the teacher deliver the primary materials. In this context, the teachers believed that implementing pre-reading activities was essential to building their enthusiasm for online reading classes. On the other hand, the teachers also faced difficulties before and during the implementation of pre-reading activities in online reading classes. They were inefficient time management, unstable internet connectivity, limited internet quota, electricity problems, online classroom management problems, technology problems, and students' limited linguistic competence.

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