

EXPLORING EFL VOCATIONAL STUDENTS IN BOOK TALK STRATEGY IN READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

In reading classes, students were emphasized learning through tests, e.g., multiple choice and essays. They needed more opportunities to own and assign reading-discussion activities to help with these weaknesses. This study aims to determine the phases to assist students in understanding the text using the book talk strategy and to know students' responses toward the book talk strategy. This study used a qualitative and case study design to conduct this research. The researcher conducted observations, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The data analysis used in the research adopts the thematic analysis from Braun & Clarke. The study showed three phases in conducting the book talk strategy in the reading classroom: selecting literature, students' discussion, and students' presentation. Most students were happy and enjoyed during the lesson. They are active in the discussion and easily comprehend the text. All of them were students' responses about the book talk strategy in the reading classroom. The study highlights the students' engagement appeared in this strategy. The student's engagement included three aspects, e.g., affective, behavioral, and cognitive. The implication is an increased understanding of student involvement in learning and the use of exciting book talk strategies in reading classes.

Keywords: Book Talk; Discussion; Reading; Students' Engagement

INTRODUCTION

More intensive exploration is needed to improve high school students English skills (Garrett-Rucks & Jansa, 2020; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2016). It impacts students' learning experience in today's digital era, where English skills are essential in facing global challenges (Garrett-Rucks & Jansa, 2020). Dynamic and fast changes in this era require students and educators to have optimal and professional English skills to improve their welfare (Nordén et al., 2012). In reading classes, it is crucial to emphasize different evaluation methods. This method can include multiple choice and essays (Harmer, 2012). In line with research by Nassaji (2011), who found much emphasis on implementing multiple choice and essays in reading classes. This finding is also supported by Kaipa (2021), who claimed that multiple choice, essay, and short filled-in questions are common assessment forms in reading classes. Nonetheless, answering essay questions in reading class is challenging, and students need to find the right reasons to answer these questions (Stevens et al., 2020).

To solve it, students need to be given more opportunities to do reading-discussion activities. Reading discussion is an essential strategy in learning to read, which involves students discussing the books they read with classmates and teachers. This discussion is closely related to students' reading comprehension. Students' interest and understanding can be increased by understanding the relationship between technology use and reading (Wang et al., 2019). The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia also encourages student-centered learning and involves discussion in the learning process (Manalu et al., 2022).

Through book talks, students are encouraged to take initiative in reading and develop their language skills. Based on Vygotsky's theory (1986), the book talk strategy can help students build interactive and practical learning experiences in learning to read. In this activity, students introduce the books they read to other group members and invite them to read the same books. Discussions between group members were also carried out in this activity. Usually, students who are beginners will record the results of discussions or read with guidance from more experienced students. Through this interaction, students' motivation to read can increase (Adams, 2020).

Many previous studies have discussed book talk strategies (Beneke & Cheatham, 2019; Fassler, 2014; Kurishita, 2020; Nishizawa et al., 2018; Schmidt, 2020). However, most of these studies focus on using the book talk strategy in teaching reading to young students (Fassler, 2014; Hansson et al., 2020; Kurishita, 2020). Meanwhile, students at the secondary school level also need communicative English skills. Differences in socio-culture, language, habits, curriculum, and attitudes create uniqueness in this research's context (Bahri & Sitorus, 2022). In Indonesia, the use of English is more passive compared to several countries in Asia, such as Singapore (Bahri & Sitorus, 2022), the Philippines (Turmudi & Hajan, 2020), and Malaysia (Kam, 2002). These countries use English as a second language. Meanwhile, Indonesia uses English as a foreign language (Masduqi, 2011). Differences in linguistic aspects between Indonesian and English make it difficult for students to understand English texts (Nishizawa et al., 2018). It applies to countries such as Korea (Kam, 2002) or Japan (Nishizawa et al., 2018) which use English as a foreign language. Therefore, applying the book talk strategy in teaching reading in vocational schools is crucial so that students can practice reading more.

This study uses a book talk strategy approach using e-books as learning media. The book talk strategy allows discussions between students in peer groups. Discussions with classmates help students see other viewpoints about the reading they are exploring. Through brainstorming, students can broaden their understanding of reading (Widodo, 2016). In addition, using e-books in learning aims to increase students' interest in reading and make it easier to find books of interest. High reading motivation helps students develop text comprehension skills (Nishizawa et al., 2016). Therefore, this research is essential to explore the experiences of students and the learning process that applies the book talk strategy in vocational schools. Most of the previous research has focused more on learning to read for young learners.

This study explores student involvement in learning to read through the book talk strategy in vocational schools. In this context, this study aims to understand to what extent the book talk strategy can increase students' involvement in learning to read, including the level of active participation in discussions, the ability to broaden understanding through exchanging information with peers, and students' motivation to read. Student participation and motivation in learning help students more easily understand learning. In the context of learning to read, students have better reading comprehension. Thus, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the potential of the book talk strategy in increasing student engagement in reading learning to help students have better reading comprehension.

METHOD

The research approach chosen by this researcher is based on the consideration that research must involve deeper aspects than mere practicality (Holden & Lynch, 2006). In determining the research methodology, the researcher considers the research background and thus chooses a qualitative approach. Decisions regarding the research methodology and the problems studied significantly influence the validity of the research results. Therefore, the match between the two components influences the study results. This research is based on research questions regarding the problem of lack of discussion in reading class and students' responses, so the researcher

chose a case study design. In this study, researchers used the case study theory developed by Yin (2018). The participants in this study were 11th grade students at a vocational school in Indonesia. Researchers involved 3 participants from the accounting major who were undergoing an even semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. These participants had an estimated age of around 16 or 17 years and their pseudonyms disguised their identities. Participants were recruited voluntarily, and researchers obtained student consent via a consent form. The researcher also explained the research procedure to the students and guaranteed the confidentiality of the information they provided and their freedom to participate.

In collecting data, researchers used two data sources. The primary data obtained through observation and reflective journals. Furthermore, the second data was obtained through interviews to assist data triangulation. Researchers made observations, recorded reflective journals, and conducted in-depth interviews using semi-structured techniques to collect data. The questions in the research instrument are based on the theory about students developed by Anderson et al. (2021) and Williams et al. (2023).

The data analysis used in the research is the researcher adopting the thematic analysis approach from Braun & Clarke (2006). The researcher will also adopt a framework for analyzing data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study uses observational data from reading classes and applies a book conversation methodology. The research data was obtained from two learning sessions which lasted 45 minutes.

At the first meeting, the teacher explained the requirements of narrative texts to students and the learning objectives of narrative texts, including an understanding of the structure and linguistic elements in the text. In addition, the pre-reading phase is carried out to encourage student's interest in reading books. This meeting is an important part of the overall learning.

Three stages involve students in learning to read using the book talk strategy. Data for this stage were obtained through observation, interviews, and student reflection journals.

According to Antonacci & O'callaghan (2011, p. 105), there are three stages in reading comprehension through the book talk strategy, namely the selection of literary works by students, discussions between students, and sharing the results of discussions in presentations.

a) Students Selected a Piece of Children's Literature

At this stage, students can choose the literature that interests them. The teacher instructs students to open the iPusnas application and search for the literature they are interested in. The literature search used the keyword "English classics" in iPusnas. Each group of students chooses a book that is different from the other groups. The researcher record data that has been translated.

SA : When searching the literature, it was excited. Because the books' cover was very interesting and cute, it triggers me to read them. But, I had difficulty choosing one of them, because the covers book was cute for me

(Interview data 1)

TS : I preferred the discussion activity because it was enjoyable for me. We could share our opinion about the text, But when searching for literature, I was happy too, because there were some interesting books.

(Interview data 2)

Based on the data obtained, searching for literature is an interesting activity for students. In this process, students can choose literary topics according to their interests, which reflect the affective aspects of literature search. The book cover also has a vital role in attracting students' attention and serves as a trigger for students' affective aspects. In addition, student behavior can be seen in reading book titles while looking for literature. At the same time, the cognitive aspect is reflected in student statements regarding the difficulty of choosing a book, which is part of learning, understanding, and thinking about something. Therefore, in the literature search, three aspects of student involvement were seen: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Affective aspects also affect the formation of cognitive aspects and student behavior, namely how they respond, think, and act according to their feelings.

b) Students were Encourage to Have Discussion

On the other hand, in the stage where students are encouraged to discuss, the observation results show that students enjoy conducting discussions. Student reflection journal data and interview results also support this. The results of this study are described in Table 1 and translated into English by the researcher.

Table 1. Students' Reflective Journal Data

Code	Initial	Statement
Excited in discussion	IN	I felt happy and excited during the lesson today. We could share our stories book from each other.
Like	SF	I am happy during the discussion. I loved the lesson strategy, so I was active during the discussion.
Happy	GT	I thought this lesson is happy and absorbed, because we could discuss with friends.

Based on data from student reflection journals, researchers identified three out of 22 students who expressed enthusiasm for participating in the discussion process. The affective aspects of these three students show that they are happy and enthusiastic about learning, especially in discussing with friends. In terms of behavior, students actively exchanged ideas during the discussion. On the cognitive side, the process of brainstorming in discussion helps students understand and gain an understanding of the contents of the stories from their respective groups. However, researchers also found that students needed help to stay focused in discussions. It is based on the results of observations in class, where students have difficulty understanding stories, especially when learning is done during the day. In addition, there is a tendency for students to prefer books with pictures because these pictures make them feel more interested and less bored. This student statement has also been translated into English by the researcher.

AM : It was better if there are some pictures in the teacher's explanation and text, because it prevented boredom in reading.

(Reflective Journal Data 1)

IN : Hmm... I thought it was interesting because I want to master English. But, I did not like it so much when reading a book without some pictures on it. However, I love discus, because it made me enjoy it. And we could share our opinion about the text. So, it helped me to hinder the feeling boring.

(Interview data 3)

Based on the data analysis, each individual has different affective aspects, namely their feelings, and motivation related to reading. Students showed variation in their reading motivation. For example, IN is interested in reading English books because they want to improve their English skills. However, she felt bored and sleepy if the book did not have pictures. On the other hand, TS is interested in reading English books because she likes reading. Meanwhile, SA requires additional motivation to read. These students' feelings influence their behavior during the reading process. For example, IN is interested in reading English books and likes to have discussions. She shows positive behavior by expressing her happiness when sharing her opinion with her friends. On the other hand, AS, who has low motivation to read, tends to show lazy behavior when reading and experience drowsiness. However, discussion activities help AS to stay awake and focus on learning materials and reading. Thus, students' feelings and motivation greatly influence their behavior in the reading process. This difference needs to be considered in designing appropriate learning strategies to increase student engagement and learning outcomes.

c) Students Shared Their Discussion in Presentation

In this stage, students can present the results of their discussions about literature to the whole class. Each group presented the results of their discussion orally in front of the class while the other groups listened carefully. The duration of student presentations is limited by the limited learning time. Each group is given five minutes to present the results of their discussion regarding the selected book. It should be noted that student presentations do not use projectors or PowerPoint due to limited time and available facilities.

Students showed interest in this stage based on data obtained from observations, reflective journals, and interviews. However, they still tend to speak Indonesian rather than English. It shows that preparation for presentations in English could have been done more optimally, so students presented in Indonesian. Even so, they enthusiastically shared the results of their discussions with other groups. Student statements regarding this stage are explained by the researcher as follows:

KM : The presentation helped me to know others' stories from other groups. It was fun.

(Reflective Journal Data 2)

TA : It was fun and I'm happy, except for presentation part. Because it was a nervous and the team didn't do it well

(Reflective Journal Data 3)

Based on data analysis, students appear to show feelings of pleasure, enjoyment, and anxiety in the affective aspect. They showed joy when sharing stories through presentations. However, there was one student who felt nervous when giving a presentation. The student feels his team needs to improve their English skills. Regarding student behavior, this presentation activity facilitated their sharing of stories about the books chosen by each group. In a cognitive context, this research shows that the presentation helps students to gain knowledge and understanding of stories from books presented by other groups. Thus, the three aspects of student involvement in the presentation process are manifested simultaneously.

d) Students' Response in Learning Reading Using Book Talk Strategy

Based on the observation, most students in the class interested in learning reading using book talk strategy. It showed that students' happy in discussion (affective), they were more active in

the lesson (behavior), and they easily understood the lesson and text (cognitive). It supported with the reflective journal and interview. The researcher showed it on the table below.

Table 2. Students Response in Learning Reading Using Book Talk Strategy

Code	Initial	Data	Statement
Excited in discussion	IN	Reflective Journal 1	I felt happy and excited during the lesson. We could share the story's book from others group.
Like	SF	Reflective Journal 2	I like this learning strategy, so I active during the lesson and discussion.
Happy	GT	Reflective Journal 3	The lesson was fun and interesting, because we could discuss with friends.
Enjoy	TS	Interview Data 3	I preferred like the discussion, because it was enjoy, nice, comfortable, and can share our opinion about the text. If we found difficult, we could find the solution together through read and comprehend it together.
Helpful	IN	Interview Data 4	I preferred choose the discussion, because when I found the unfamiliar word or I could not understand, I could ask it to my friends and we can share our opinion. It was fun and exciting for me.
Comprehend		Interview data 5	I preferred to discuss because I was worried about my comprehension skill when I read alone. I worried it was weak. In addition, reading alone made me feel bored.

Based on data analysis, it was found that students' statements reflected the presence of affective aspects, including feelings of pleasure, joy, comfort, interest, and joy in learning to read through the book talk strategy. Through reading by conducting discussions, students can avoid boredom and worry about a poor understanding of these texts. As previously mentioned, affective aspects influence aspects of student behavior. The positive feelings that students have to produce actions that are in line with the positive behavior of students. It can be seen from the active participation of students in discussions, asking questions, and sharing thoughts. Positive behavior of students in the learning process also contributes to the cognitive aspects of students in gaining understanding. It is proven that students understand the text more easily through reading and discussing it with their friends. Therefore, students' responses to learning to read in English using the book talk strategy influenced student involvement in the three aspects studied: affective, behavioral, and cognitive.

Discussion

Based on the data findings, there is a pattern in learning to read through the book talk strategy. The book talk strategy involves student interaction and motivation. In this class, some students showed high motivation. They are active and enthusiastic when interacting in book talks, trying to understand texts independently, and asking their peers when encountering difficulties. Previous research, such as that conducted by Kurishita (2020) and Nishizawa et al. (2018), support this finding and state that book talk can increase students' motivation to read voluntarily.

In addition, this study found that students felt happy in conducting discussions. Students' interest in reading lessons influences their behavior. This finding supports the view of Lockl et al. (2021) that student affective aspects, such as motivation, play an essential role in student

behavior toward learning. Positive motivation influences student engagement in class, including persistence in learning. Student effectiveness also predicts their appropriate behavior. When students have opportunities to discuss texts with classmates, they are more likely to become emotionally involved in learning to read (Flowerday & Schraw, 2003; Williams et al., 2023).

Engagement in learning, which involves effort, persistence, and attention to academic assignments, is also related to learning success. Children who are engaged in learning to read actively read more, work harder, and can understand the meaning of texts (Anderson et al., 2021). A high affective level is also associated with student achievement. Therefore, students who feel happy and active in learning help other students understand the text. It encourages students' ZPD (Zona Proximal Development), as explained by Vygotsky (1978, p. 86), who states that ZPD is a student's level of cognitive development that can be increased through guidance or collaboration with adults or more competent peers (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). These findings support Kurishita's research (2020), which shows that book talks can support ZPD students. Interaction between classmates helps students in language development within each student's ZPD. Students interested in the discussion said it helped their understanding and increased their confidence in reading. They can share their opinions about books and help other students who need help. Thus, discussions with peers awaken students' ZPD and assist in their cognitive development through assistance from classmates.

This study also found three processes involved in the book talk strategy in teaching reading: the selection of literature by students, the application of the book talk strategy (reading discussion), and the presentation of students about their understanding of books. This finding aligns with Antonacci & O'callaghan (2011), who argued that the book talk strategy involved three processes: selecting children's books, preparing to conduct book talks, and carrying out book talk presentations. However, Nishizawa et al. (2018) stated that in the context of learning to read, the book talk strategy involves three processes: students sitting in groups, students introducing the books they have read, and students discussing with other groups in court presentations.

As previously mentioned, students show high motivation and happiness in learning to read through the book talk strategy. They said the discussions and presentations helped them feel motivated and shared their understanding of the books. This finding aligns with Fassler's research (2014), which states that discussion in the book talk strategy allows students to talk and share opinions about the book. In learning to read, discussion is vital in broadening students' understanding through social interaction with classmates. Discussions also help students feel more confident when reading books because they can share opinions and discussions with their peers. Thus, discussions help students build their self-confidence and understanding of reading texts. This finding also supports Haerazi & Irawan's research (2020), which shows that discussion helps students build self-confidence and reading comprehension.

This study also found exciting findings that have yet to be revealed in previous studies. Some students expressed a desire to add pictures to their books of choice. Although the books they chose did not contain illustrations, students stated that the pictures helped them stay focused and avoid boredom. This finding supports the view of Tursunmurotovich et al. (2020), which state that books' illustrations or pictures help children enter the world of literature. Research by Ratminingsih et al. (2020) also stated that pictures in stories help students build their imaginations. The findings of Qi et al. (2019) also support this, showing that visualization in stories or books helps students understand and remember stories because of their attractiveness. Thus, pictures or illustrations in books help students build their imagination, understanding, and memorization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, the researcher can conclude that the book talk strategy in teaching reading involves three main processes: selecting literature, discussing, and presenting students' understanding of books. In addition, this strategy also involves three aspects of student involvement, namely affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. Students with high motivation, enthusiasm, and interest tend to have active behavioral involvement in learning. Affective factors of students play an essential role in influencing their engagement behavior. Positive student behavior, such as participating in discussions, significantly impacts students' cognitive understanding. In addition, students also need pictures or illustrations in books, which help them build their imagination, illustrate stories, and prevent boredom or sleepiness while reading. Three aspects of student involvement in learning to read through this book talk strategy contribute to achieving learning objectives by increasing students' understanding of the text. Thus, the book talk strategy triggers three aspects of student involvement in learning, encouraging them to participate actively and increasing student understanding.

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