

The Efficacy of Using Language Experience Approach in Teaching Reading Fluency to Indonesian EFL Students

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Abstract

This research was aimed at finding out the efficacy of language experience approach (LEA) in teaching reading fluency to Indonesian EFL students. This research was conducted at the fifth semester of English education study program of IAIN Palopo, an Indonesian University. The total number of samples was 20 students. This research used a pre-experimental method with pre-test and post-test design. The pre-test was given to find out the basic ability of the students in reading fluency and the post-test given to find out the students' improvement in reading fluency after giving the treatment through, Language Experience Approach (LEA). The findings showed that LEA approach is effective in teaching reading fluency of Indonesian EFL students. It is supported by the result of significance test through SPSS 20 program that the P was 0.00. . Therefore, it is recommended to use Language Experience Approach (LEA) in developing reading fluency of Indonesian EFL students.

Keywords: Indonesian EFL students, language experience approach (LEA), reading fluency

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Introduction

The result of the observation in the second semester students of English education study program of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo (IAIN) Palopo, there were many students could not read fluently. They have many problems in reading fluency such as the students read very slowly, mispronunciation, repetitions, no attention in stressing and punctuation and reading without expression. In addition, they were doubt to read a text loudly since they were not familiar with reading fluently. From the observation, the researcher assumed that the student face difficulties in reading fluency. Therefore the writer needs to explore an effective way to teach reading fluency to the students at IAIN Palopo as Indonesia EFL Learners. In this case, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) is chosen as an approach to be examined.

Nessel and Dixon (2008) describe that LEA contribution to the reading instruction is based on principles of learning. The main principle is to use the student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background on experiences to create reading texts, making reading an especially meaningful and enjoyable process. Furthermore, this technique is dictating interpretation. After dictated text then the student are asked to interpret the test of the story that their heard. LEA is strategy requires a student to read a passage or text a number of times while the teacher records the time with the number of words correctly. The student continues to read the same text until a desired goal or criterion is met. Furthermore, it is stated that reading is easier the text closely matches the learner's own oral language pattern and is aligned with the learner experience. In addition, Taylor (1992) defined LEA as a whole language approach that promotes reading and writing through the use of personal experiences and oral language. It is useful in tutorial or classroom settings with homogeneous or heterogeneous groups of learners. Beginning literacy learners relate their experiences to a teacher or aide, who transcribes them. These transcriptions are then used as the basis for other reading and writing activities.

Reading fluency is an important topic nowadays. There have been some researchers found that there is an important role of reading fluency towards the reading comprehension (Kim et.al, 2010; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp and Jenk Ins, 2001). Furthermore, reading fluency is more clearly influence the reading comprehension than silent reading. Kim, Wagner and Foster (2011) state that the relationship between silent reading and reading comprehension to be less clear than the relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension.

Reading fluency is the competence to read text accurately and quickly (Hapstack & Tracey, 2007). It is also defined that reading fluency as the ability of the reader to group words into meaningful phrases quickly and effortlessly (Corcoran, 2005; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Kuhn, 2004; Rasinski, 2004). In reading fluency, there are three important aspects namely accuracy, automaticity, and prosody (Garreth & O'connor, 2010; Moran, 2006; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Absolutely, those elements of reading fluency are crucial as they influence the students' reading proficiency. It is a set of skills that allows readers to rapidly decode text while maintaining high comprehension. Fluency also involves reading a text with proper expression. There are three major components of fluency: accuracy, which refers to the person's ability to read words correctly; rate, the speed a person reads and prosody, which is commonly referred to as reading with feeling and involves the stress, intonation, and pauses when reading (Westwood, 2001).

There have been many researchers research on reading fluency. Those research studies extend our views on reading fluency and led us to the identification of effective instructional

approaches to developing fluency in the classroom, such as (1) the effect of instruction and practice through readers theater on young readers' oral reading fluency by Keehn (2003) (2) Fluency and comprehension gains as a result of repeated reading: a meta-analysis by Therrien (2004) (3) Using paired reading to enhance the fluency skills of less skilled readers by Nes (2003).

Reading fluency is one of the ability in reading that important to develop, the students who do not develop fluent reading, it can impact their reading speed, accuracy, prosody and enjoyment of printed text. These students are reluctant to read aloud or read to others as their reading is slow and tedious to listen. When students are unable to read fluently, it can result in poor comprehension, an essential component of reading success. Lack of comprehension of written text will continue to be a stumbling block for a student's continued understanding of fiction and nonfiction text in the classroom.

Nessel and Dixon (2008) state that applying the LEA in EFL classes is believed to have numerous benefits for the second language learners. The principal advantages of the LEA include the following. All the language skills: speaking, writing, listening and reading are exercised in a LEA class. While working on the written account of the learners' experience, it is inevitable to employ both the productive as well as the receptive language skills. When discussing an agreed topic, students naturally exploit their oral and listening skills. After the discussion, learners give an oral account of the experience, which serves as reading material in the next stage. The actual writing takes place in the extending stage. In general, by the medium of the LEA, pupils are introduced to the process of writing step by step whereas reinforcing and developing the remaining language skills.

There are four reasons why Integrating the personal experience of students into classes may be very beneficial. First of all, it is an effective way of increasing learners' motivation since it makes the language learning content more meaningful and interesting for learners (Griffiths & Keohane, 2000). For stimulating the learners' motivation, it is very important that pupils perceive the activities as purposeful, see the point of what they are doing and why ("Practice of ELT" 257). Personally-based activities seem to meet these requirements. It appears that when learners are personally involved in the topics, they tend to concentrate harder and longer, make more effort to participate in the activities and to finish the set tasks. Thus the personal experience-based tasks seem to strengthen learners' motivation to learn the target language.

Secondly, it is a fact that incorporating the personal experiences of the learners has a positive impact on their attitude to language learning: "If learners feel that what they are asked to do is relevant to their feelings, thoughts, opinions and knowledge are valued, and crucial to the success of the activities, then they will be fully engaged in the tasks and more likely to be motivated to learn the target language (Griffiths & Keohane, 2000). While talking about topics based on their life-experience, pupils are usually more willing to learn new vocabulary, useful phrases, and expressions to be able to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions clearly.

Thirdly, it is also important to take into consideration that when the second language is connected to personal experience, it is much more easily understood, remembered and recalled than someone else's language and experience (Cramer, 2008). If a learner believes that some

vocabulary and phrases are useful and interesting, they usually strive harder to remember them. In the activities based on the personal experience, pupils learn vocabulary in contexts relevant to their lives and thus it is more likely that they will be able to recall it better when necessary.

Fourthly, including personal centered activities in language classes may help to create trust between the class and the teacher (Griffiths & Keohane, 2000). When learners, as well as the teacher participate in the tasks, they find out a lot about each other, which might help to create the supportive atmosphere in the class and improve the mutual relationships. Moreover, there are numerous opportunities for bringing humor in the language learning during the activities and it is believed that fun is an essential part of language learning (Griffiths & Keohane, 2000).

Another benefit of taking advantage of the LEA in a class is expanding students' vocabulary. This technique supports the development of vocabulary since students can learn vocabulary relevant to the experience-related topics in a meaningful context. It is recommended that prior to the discussion, the teacher prepares word banks that the learners might take advantage of. This vocabulary is repeatedly practiced at various stages of the LEA and thus more likely to be memorized (Nessel & Dixon, 2003).

It is possible to employ the LEA with heterogenous groups of students - for instance, when the teacher divides the class into groups, the more-advanced students can take the role of a transcriber or a prompter in the discussion. On the other hand, the less proficient learners can be given more stimuli to be able to participate in the discussion and dictation more frequently.

It can be modified for students of all proficiency levels since the primary emphasis is not laid on the length. While beginning learners may dictate a few sentences, the more advanced students can perform more complex tasks, for example prepare the text for publishing, or rewrite the story by adding more personal details or views on the topic.

This unique approach gives opportunities for "scaffolding and cooperative learning". In a LEA class, there are numerous possibilities to learn from the more knowledgeable peers and the teacher while working on the written account of the common experience, particularly during the discussion and the composing stages. In fact, the LEA is largely based on the concept of scaffolding namely helping students to progress through interaction with someone with better knowledge (Dixon & Nessel, 1983). Learners can advance their language skills, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation etc. while listening and debating their personal experiences in pairs, small groups, or in a whole-class discussion with the more proficient learners and the teacher (Dixon & Nessel, 1983).

Dixon & Nessel (1983:9) state that LEA offers a cooperative activity. Cooperative writing has plentiful benefits for all the involved, for instance the generation of ideas is frequently more lively with a group of learners in comparison to individual writing, or learners tend to come up with more creative ideas, views etc. As a result, the language learning is a lot more appealing to pupils as it is dynamic and interactive. Moreover, Hedge (1988) believes that a group composition allows students to learn from each other's strengths. In a LEA class, the less-skilled students can capitalize on the strengths of their peers, for instance by observing their tactics when creating a composition while the more advanced learners can share their knowledge with

each other. Another advantage of cooperative writing by the medium of the LEA is that it helps to build "a sense of classroom community" while working on the same objectives (LEA).

As the LEA places emphasis more on the content than on the form when creating the written text, learners no need to fear making mistakes. Learners are encouraged to participate in the LEA activities, to share their ideas and views with their peers while the mistakes are being tolerated by the teacher. The mistakes tend to be treated in the extending stage when the text is reviewed and edited. However, the peer correction is allowed in the process of text creation. Preferring students' ideas to grammatical correctness might increase the learners participation and fluency since learners are usually more willing to take risks in a non-threatening environment. On the whole, this approach "challenges traditional notions of error avoidance" (Wurr, 2002:2). Moreover, the learners' anxiety is also reduced by the fact that the compositions are not assessed.

This approach is believed to be a useful technique to encourage self-expression (Van Allen & Halversen, 2008). During the LEA activities, students have numerous opportunities to voice their views, thoughts and ideas and express their approval/disapproval. They need to take decisions about what topic to explore, what information to include in the composition, how to proceed etc.

As summary, incorporating the LEA in a language class may be very advantageous for many reasons. This special integrative approach can be used for students of various levels and abilities. Then, it facilitates the creation of supportive atmosphere for second language learning while taking advantage of the cooperative learning. In addition to this, it can increase the learners' self-expression and motivates them to learn and communicate in the target language. The advantages stated previously show the positive aspects of the LEA and of its utilization in a target language learning (MáriaKubiznová, 2009).

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is requires a significant time input from the teacher. It is particularly suitable as an approach in a small group approach. It is important that teachers use modeling and recasting sufficiently to help a student's progress their language skills. The content of the story is dictated by the students Experiences, and if this is limited than it may restrict the material available to work with (O'Toole, 2008).

Based on the explanation previously, it can be seen that many researcher have proven that LEA is a good approach for language learning in many parts places of the world, however it is rarely find the researchers that have already used LEA as teaching reading fluency way for Indonesian learners especially at the university level. In addition, the researcher believes that LEA can help the students to improve reading fluency at university level. Then, the specific objective of this research is to find out the effectiveness of LEA in increasing the reading fluency the Fifth Semester Students of English study program of IAIN Palopo. The result of the study can give the following benefits for teachers: can give information for the teacher at English education study program of IAIN Palopo about strategy in increasing reading fluency. Students: The student can apply LEA in their learning to increasing reading fluency. The next researchers can use this research as a reference to explore more on Indonesian EFL learners in the university level. The scope of the research is limited to the reading aloud to find out the students' reading fluency by using LEA. The strategy of LEA that has been applied in treatment is dictation, write

text and read the text fluency. The kinds of text that have been used in the reading fluency process focused on narrative text.

Method

This study applied pre-experimental research. It aimed at finding out the effectiveness of LEA approach in teaching reading fluency for Indonesian EFL students. It was conducted in English education study program of IAIN Palopo and it was conducted in eight meetings. The researcher was interested to conduct the research in IAIN Palopo because of the observation result. The observation results show that the students in English education study program of IAIN Palopo faced difficulties in reading fluency. Therefore, the researcher is interested helping the students to increase their reading fluency. The total number of population of this research was 150 students at the fifth semester students of English education study program of IAIN Palopo, in academic year 2015/2016. It consisted of 4 classes, in each class there were 30 students. In this research, the researcher used purposive sampling technique in taking the sample. The researcher took five students as a sample from each class who have low ability in reading fluency. Therefore the researcher took 20 students as sample of this research. The instruments that had been used in this research were: reading test and stopwatch. The reading test was given to measure the students' ability in reading fluency. Then, the stopwatch was used to count the time of students spent during their reading aloud. Both reading aloud test and stop watch were used in the pre test and in the post test.

In this research, the researcher conducted treatments in eight meetings. The procedures of this research were as follows (Adapted from MáriaKubiznová , 2009):

The treatment was conducted for six meetings, the researcher used different theme in every meeting. In giving treatment, the researcher gave instruction what the student should do in class activity. Each meeting was taken 90 minutes. Steps to conduct LEA as follows:

a. Choosing the common experience

The teacher cooperates with students to select an activity or an event that can be discussed and consequently written down, for instance a movie, a song, a book or an article, a trip, a visit to a museum, holidays etc. It ought to be based on a common learners' experience that all pupils participated in. In case, the activity had not taken place yet, the teacher and the students made a plan of realization.

b. Discussing the experience

After the common activity had been conducted, the teacher engaged learners in a whole-class debate. The main aim was to include as many learners as possible in the discussion. For instance, the class might reconstruct the sequence of the event, do some planning activities such as brainstorming, webbing, listing etc., some students may adopt a journalist's stance by asking WH-questions in order to gain more information. During the debate, the teacher notes down key words and phrases on the board.

c. Composing the written account

The class cooperates together on developing a written account which should be visible to all learners (on the board, on a flip chart pad or an overhead transparency). At this point, the teacher does not correct the learners' mistakes since the focus is mainly on the students' ideas. The teacher must also work to create supportive learning environment by actively listening and responding to ideas in an encouraging way and creating the environment where mistake can be made without the sense of failure.

d. Reading the written account

Once the written account was complete, the teacher and the learners read it aloud focusing on key structures, vocabulary and pronunciation. The teacher (or transcribe) models the language while learners have the opportunity to concentrate more on the correct pronunciation as they are familiar with the content.

e. Expanding the experience

Depending on the learners' proficiency levels, various follow-up activities can be performed. At this stage, the mistakes were corrected and the text edited. For the beginning or lower-level classes, the teacher might create a close type of exercise by deleting every nth word, or ask the students to copy the story themselves, make illustrations, use the text to review grammar etc. More profound learners may produce their own individual written pieces on a similar topic, prepare the story for publishing, and create comprehension exercises. (MáriaKubiznová, 2009).

To sum up, the previous procedure can be flexibly adjusted according to students' needs and interests. It consisted of a few simple steps: experiencing, talking about the experience, taking dictation, rereading and extending the experience further on. It can be employed in various classroom settings, from individual teaching to a whole-class teaching since it is very versatile. There exist many possibilities of adapting the LEA technique for learners of different levels and expanding the outcome by follow-up activities.

(a) Giving Pretest, (b) Giving Treatment: Choosing the common experience, Discussing the experience, Composing the written account, Reading the written account, Expanding the experience (Adapted from MáriaKubiznová, 2009) (c) Giving Posttest

Findings and Discussion

The result of the research shows that there is an improvement of students' ability in the reading fluency after the treatments by using LEA. The achievement of students in reading fluency can be seen in the following table. In the table, the researcher shows the mean score of students in reading fluency ability (accuracy, prosody, and rate) in pre-test, and in the post test.:

Table 4.1. Students' mean score of reading fluency achievement in Pretest and Posttest

Reading Fluency Dimension	Pre test mean score	Post test Mean score
Accuracy	2.9	3.5
Prosody	2.1	3.7
Rate	2.1	2.6

Table 4.1 shows that the students' achievements in the three aspects of reading fluency have been improved. The accuracy in the posttest achieved 3.5, the prosody achieved 3.7 and the rate only achieved 2.6. The lowest mean score achievement was rate while the highest mean score was in the prosody dimension.

Furthermore, the hypothesis of the research was tested by using SPSS 20. In this case, the researcher used t-test (testing of significance) for paired sample t-test, that is, a test to know the significance difference between the result of students' mean score in pretest and posttest.

Assuming that the level of significance (α) = 0.05, the only thing which is needed; the degree of freedom (df) = N – 1, where df = 19, than the t-test is presented in the following table.

Table 4.23. The Probability Value of T-Test of The Students' Achievement

Variable	P-Value	(α)
X2 – X1	0.00	0.05

From the analysis, the researcher concludes that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest in teaching reading fluency through LEA. In other words, using LEA in teaching reading could be used to increase the students' reading fluency skill.

The result of statistical analysis for level of significance 0, 05 with degree of freedom (df) = N-1, where (N) = 20, df = 19. The probability value was smaller than α (0.00<0.05). It indicated that the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. It means that Language Experience Approach (LEA) effective in increasing reading fluency ability.

In addition, the next bar chart shows the comparison between the students' achievement in three dimensions of reading fluency before and after the treatments.

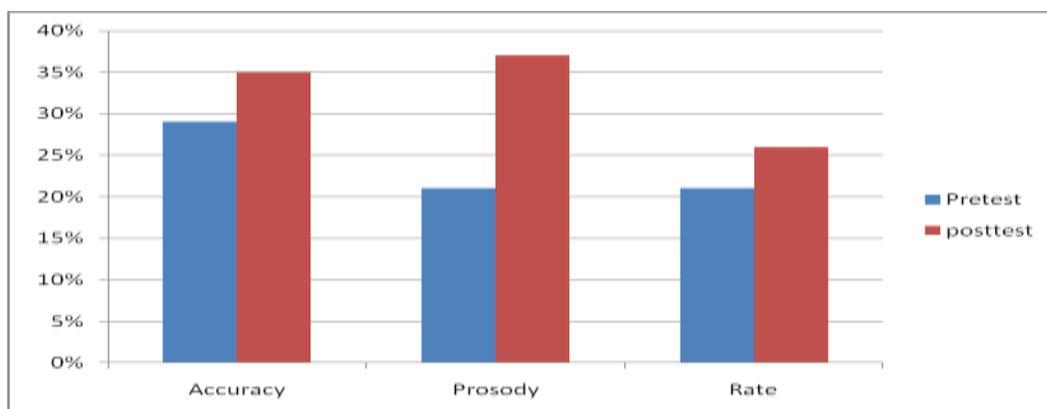


Figure 1: Students' scores in pre-test and post-test

From the previous chart, it can be seen that there was significance difference of students'

score in pre-test and post-test. The students' score in post-test was higher than their score in pre-test. The students' accuracy score in pretest achieved only 29%, in prosody the students achieved 21% in pretest and the students' rate score in pretest only achieved 21%. However, in posttest the students achieved 35% for accuracy, in prosody the students achieved 37% and the students achieved 26% in rate. It means that there was an improvement of students' score from pre-test to post-test after learning reading fluency through Language Experience Approach (LEA).

The researcher proves that teaching reading fluency by using LEA is effective. The main reason for this efficacy is stated previously by Nessel and Dixon (2008) that LEA contribution to the reading instruction is based on principles of learning. The central principle is to use the student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background on experiences to create reading texts, making reading an especially meaningful and enjoyable process. In addition, it is stated that reading is easier when the text closely matches the learner's own oral language pattern and is aligned with the learner experience. Since the students enjoy reading their own paragraph, they were very easy to read it for many times. This also in line with what is stated by Krashen and Terrell (1983) who recommended two criteria for determining whether reading materials are appropriate for ESL learners: The reading must be 1) at a comprehensible level of complexity and 2) interesting to the reader. Reading texts originating from learners' experiences meet these two criteria because 1) the degree of complexity is determined by the learner's own language, and 2) the texts relate to the learner's personal interests.

Furthermore, it was stated previously that in the steps on teaching reading used LEA, there was a repeated process. Therrien & Kubina (2006) explain that repeated reading strategy requires a student to read a passage or text a number of times while the teacher records the time with the number of words correctly. The student continues to read the same text repeatedly until a desired goal or criterion is met. Previous research has demonstrated that repeated reading cannot only improve reading fluency but it is also effective in improving other facets of reading success (Therrie & Kubina, 2006).

Furthermore, there have been many researchers examine the efficacy of LEA on reading fluency such as Rahayu (2013), Wurr (2002) and Curran (2007). Most of the researchers took children and young learner as subjects. However, it is rarely to find the use of LEA on reading fluency experiment in the university students. This research has proven that LEA can be used effectively in developing low learners' reading fluency in the university level.

Conclusion

Using LEA is effective in teaching reading fluency at the fifth semester of English education study program of IAIN Palopo. It was proven by the data that there was a significant difference between the students' mean score of pretest and posttest. In pretest, the students' mean score is 47.99 and the students' score in posttest is 72.89. Moreover, it also can be seen by t-test of the students' reading fluency achievement was smaller than $\alpha = (0.00 < 0.05)$.

About the Author

Masruddin is a lecturer at IAIN Palopo. He earned his Doctoral degree in Linguistics at Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia in 2011. He followed Sandwich Program at Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia in 2008. He is interested in English Teaching and Sociolinguistics field.

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