

THE USE OF *SIMPLEMIND APP* IN TEACHING READING

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Abstract: It has been known that reading achievement influences academic and professional success. Unfortunately, Indonesian students are still categorized as struggle readers. Reading strategy and reading engagement has to be a part of reading instruction. In addition, the presence of technology in teaching reading cannot be taken for granted. Students nowadays are digital native who are surrounded with technology. SimpleMind App is the collaboration between mind-mapping as and technology. This paper reviews the importance of reading strategy and reading engagement, the role of technology in teaching reading, and the procedures of teaching reading with SimpleMind App.

Keywords: *reading achievement, teaching reading, SimpleMind App*

Reading is the skill needed by students to have highest achievement in school. Lukhele (2003) found out that there was relationship between reading ability and academic performance in Swaziland. As explained by Marshall (2015) explains that students' academic progress depends on understanding, analyzing, and applying the information that they gain through reading. Reading also influences students' life after completing their study at school. Graduated students will not able to compete in professional career without having ability to understand what they read (Butler, Urrutia, Buenger, & Hunt, 2010; Chou, 2011)

In the context of learning English as foreign language, reading is an undoubtedly fundamental skill.

Reading facilitates vocabulary enhancement. Ponniah (2011) investigated words acquisition by reading. The result of the study showed that students who acquired words incidentally through reading outperformed the learning words group in using words in sentences appropriately. Moreover, other language skills can be improved through text exposure. A study conducted by Lianasari (2015), for example, showed that reading narrative texts contributed to students' writing achievement. In short, through reading, students are exposed to target language as linguistic input for their global proficiency (Erten & Karakas, 2007).

Although the importance of reading cannot be debated, the fact

showed that Indonesian students' reading achievement is reported low. The data gathered by Ministry of National Education (2011) based on PISA study showed that there was no improvement of the Indonesian students' reading achievement. Indonesia has always been in the low-level rank. Another study by PIRLS in 2011 (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012) revealed the similar result. Reading achievement of Indonesian fourth grade pupils was 428. It was significantly under the centerpoint of PIRLS scale, which was 500.

Yilmaz (2012) explored reading attributions that will perceive success or failure in comprehending text in the perspective of both teachers and students. The most chosen options was good strategies. The fact that strategies are needed by students is understandable. It is because reading is a complex process involving many aspects, such as vocabulary, background knowledge, mechanics, (Chou, 2011; Pathan&Al-Dersi, 2013; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Meanwhile, majority students revealed that lacking interest in reading was attribution for not doing well in comprehending text. Reading is seen as boring activity. (Yilmaz, 2012). Since students are not interested in reading, the engagement between students as readers and text does not occur. The absence of reading engagement is also the factor of comprehension failure. Guthrie (2001) claims that engagement contributes to students' reading achievement. It is confirmed by Wigfield, Guthrie, Perencevich, Taboada, Klaua, Mcrae, and Barbosa (2008) who found out that reading engagement and reading comprehension were related.

In accordance to previous description, Coertze (2011) explains reading strategy is paramount in cultivating engagement in reading the text and performing related tasks that benefits to students' reading achievement. Reading strategies, therefore, have to be applied in order to help students being active. In short, a strategy that boosts reading engagement has to be the part of reading intervention in classroom.

Technology-based strategy is the use of certain technology as tool to support language development (Dalton & Grisham, 2011; Commonwealth of Australia, 2014; Davis & Sweeney, 2015). In other words, technology is presented in classroom as the part of strategy. The example of technology-based strategy is Big6 employing computer and internet connection. Involving Big6 strategy in an literacy approach called 3L's, Diem (2011) found out that the strategy improve fifth graders' reading skill.

Students, who are digital native, are surrounded with various technological devices. The most popular device is Smartphone that is used for one to sixteen hours or more everyday (Suratno, Murniati, & Aydawati, 2014; Bona, 2014). Students spend extensive time with technological devices so that make the use of Smartphone appears beneficial. Smartphone can help in boosting reluctant readers' enthusiasm, and their engagement can be increased (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014; Coertze, 2011). Therefore, the concern is what application used as the implementation of technology-based strategy in teaching reading.

Simple Mind is an free-downloaded application capturing the feature of mind mapping. The idea of using SimpleMind is that mind

mapping is known as a graphic organizer reading strategy which aims to acquire understanding comprehensively (Zaini, Mokhtar, & Nawawi, 2010; Meier, 2007). As a mind mapping application, the use of SimpleMind has never been explored before. This paper will describe reading strategy and engagement, the role of technology, and SimpleMind and teaching reading.

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING STRATEGY AND READING ENGAGEMENT

Pirnsarn (2009) defines reading strategies as specific actions employed by readers before in order to understand most efficiently the message of text. Reading is an active process to get meaning from text. Students will not get intended message from the text being read unless they employ certain strategy while reading (Abidin & Riswanto, 2012). Yilmaz (2012) also emphasizes the function of reading strategy in grasping meaning.

Engagement, in addition, is another point that impacts reading comprehension achievement (Miranda, Williams-Rossi, Johnson, McKenzie, 2011; Jones & Brown, 2011). As OECD (2010, p. 29) states, “students who are highly engaged and are effective learners are most likely to be proficient readers and proficient readers are also those students that are most engaged and interested in reading. Engaged readers gain knowledge and experience as they read by continually activating and extending their understanding.

Reading strategies, reading engagement, and reading comprehension, what is the relationship among them? Coertze (2011) explains that the development of explicit reading strategies is

required in order to successfully engage readers and text, and finally develop students’ reading skill. It is in line with Jones and Brown (2011) who declare that the enhancement of reading engagement occurs when students are provided with instruction in cognitive strategies associated with reading.

A study revealing the relationship between reading strategy and engagement was done by Wiegfield et.all (2008) with a reading instruction. Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) is a reading comprehension instructional program integrating either science or social studies and reading through various books exposure and reading strategies. The strategies covered in this instruction are activating background knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, organizing graphically, and identifying story structure. Besides enhancing reading comprehension, CORI aims to foster students’ motivation and engagement. Students who were exposed to CORI achieved higher reading engagement than other comparison groups since they employed more strategies in reading process. It can be said that strategies promote reading engagement. In short, the effects of instruction, which consists of reading strategies, on students’ reading comprehension is mediated by the students’ level of reading engagement.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING READING

Education Development Centre (2000) asserts that digital technology appears potential to enhance reading instruction. It is in line with Valmont and Wepner (2000) who also state that technological advances have moved students from instruction followers to

knowledge explorers. Technology is valued as supplemental tool in comprehending texts for students across grade levels (Stearns, 2012; Valmont & Wepner, 2000). To sum up, teachers have to involve technology in their instruction.

Audiotapes, CDs, videotapes, DVDs, hardware, and software are the examples of technological tools (Brown, 2007). It might be confusing to choose the appropriate technology to be integrated in classroom. Therefore, Education Development Centre (2000) suggests to have the key questions as the considerations to use technology in helping students to read. The questions cover recommendation from reading or technology specialist, availability of technology in school, components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) to be strengthened, supporting instruction to below grade level students, and information provided for parents to keep students learn.

As mentioned before, technology used depends on what components to be enhanced. Teachers who aim to improve students' phonemic awareness will employ different technological tools with those who want to develop comprehension. To enhance comprehension, for example, teachers possibly use Voyager Passport Reading Journeys software or Accelerated Reader, an online based reading program (Stearns, 2012).

The wide spread technology assisting comprehension is graphic or map organizer. In this case, software is used as primary to for learning in order to get students engaged with text in focusing on various concepts or ideas from text and relationship

among those ideas (Education Development Centre, 2000; Stearns, 2012). Moreover, the development of Smartphone makes it possible to find map organizer freely.

THE SHIFTED MEDIA OF MIND MAPPING

Mind-mapping is one of strategy used to improve students' reading comprehension (Cadieux, 2011). Furthermore, Malekzadeh and Bayat (2015) explain that mind mapping can help students to organize complex information into simple and meaningful representation to get global comprehension. It is in line with Reed (2005)'s statement that mind mapping help to show visual framework of ideas in the text and connect the association among them. The association can be detail information, cause and effect, and sequence.

In addition to capturing ideas, mind mapping is also tool for recalling information got from the text. Mind mapping, therefore, is said as recall strategy in which information is retrieved when needed (Reed, 2005; Santiago, 2011).

Being categorized as graphic organizer strategy, mind mapping is meaningful activities that can foster students' engagement (Santiago, 2011). It can be said that the use of mind mapping can help students to be active readers. Engaging reading means interacting with text to internally construct the meaning. In other words, students get into the reading process. They read the text and try to analyze main idea, supporting ideas, and relationship among those ideas. As the result, mind mapping impacts students' reading comprehension (Malekzadeh & Bayat, 2015).

The rapid development of software in educational context has aroused mind mapping in the digital version. Teachers can easily download mind mapping software that is available for free. Then, the software can be used either online or offline depending on the internet connection availability. In short, mind mapping is not any longer written in a landscape white paper.

The effect of digital version of mind mapping on reading has been examined in some studies. Introducing the term e-map, Ellozy and Mostafa (2010) exposed electronic version of mind mapping to Egyptian students. They found out that students admitted that understood the complex texts that they read since were able to identify main idea, distinguish important or less important information, and make connections among information. Furthermore, five reading comprehension sub-skills, namely main idea, detail, inference, cause and effect, and sequence, enhanced significantly (Ningtyas, 2013).

SIMPLEMIND APP AND TEACHING READING

SimpleMind is a mind-mapping application developed by Simpleapps.eu. the application available in android is available in two versions, SimpleMind free and SimpleMind full. SimpleMind free has basic mind-mapping features, and it is chosen because students do not need to afford the application. Students can download and install it in their Smartphone.

The concern of teacher before assigning students to use SimpleMind application is training. Students have to be introduced to the toolbar icons as the features of SimpleMind. There are four toolbar icons that have to be

known by students, they are (+), (*), (...), and (T).

Central theme on the middle of screen is used to place the main idea of the text. Supporting ideas will be branched off from parental node by tapping child-node well (+). Child-node can be dragged to a location in the empty background area. Adding new supporting ideas to selected topic's parent use sibling-node well (*). Similar to child-node well, sibling-node's position can be modified by dragging it.

Toolbar icon (...) has three functions, cut, copy, and paste. Cut is used to remove the selected topic and its children to the clipboard. To multiply topic and its children assigns copy function, and paste is used to insert topics that are previously cut or copied to the clipboard. Toolbar icon (T) is assigned to edit topic as a floating note.

The next step after introducing is training. Students need training on how to use SimpleMind. In this step, teacher can assign students to create a mind mapping by simply typing everything that they know about certain topic that is chosen by themselves.

Once students get accustomed in using SimpleMind, teacher can start the intervention. The procedures of teaching reading with SimpleMind are explained below:

- 1) Teacher distributes a reading text to students.
- 2) Teacher asks students to read the passage individually.
- 3) Students work in pairs to highlight important points from the text.
- 4) Students are asked to reread the text.
- 5) Students decide main idea and write it on the central theme.

- 6) Students decide supporting ideas and related details from the text.
- 7) Students create a branch off parent node by tapping (+) to show supporting ideas or details from the main idea.
- 8) Teacher and students discuss the relation among main idea, supporting ideas and related details and also meaning among them.

The sample of students' creation in applying SimpleMind Application of a text entitled Bali is shown below.

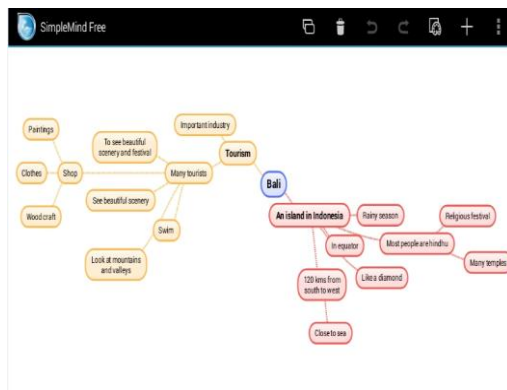


Figure 1. SimpleMind application with a text

CONCLUSION

Data got from some studies show that the ability to grasp meaning is still tormenting. This state has to be handled by giving intervention by introducing certain reading strategy to students. Reading strategy can help students to engage and focus to the text that they are reading. The rapid innovation in technology is promising to link particular technology device with strategy in order to raise students' engagement that will lead to text comprehension. One of technology-based strategy that is potentially employed in classroom is digital mind mapping. The term digital shows that

mind mapping is not written on paper anymore. Some studies revealed that the use of non-conventional mind mapping can help students to increase their comprehension. Comparing to computer software, the use of mind mapping application from smart phone is more preferable. It is due to expensive time that students spend with their Smartphone. The non-affordable mind mapping application is SimpleMind. Students can create a mind mapping in SimpleMind by knowing four main toolbars. The important thing of using technology product in classroom is acquaintance. Students need familiarized with the features and how to use it.

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