

# Assessing Teacher's Perception in the Use of Pre-Reading Activities in EFL Classroom

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Submitted: 05/02/2020

Revised: 14/02/2020

Accepted: 02/05/2020

E-ISSN : 2579-4574

P-ISSN : 2549-7359

**Abstract.** This study was aimed at finding out kinds of pre-reading activities commonly used, and teachers' perceptions on the use of pre-reading activities. Survey method was used as research method. To collect data, questionnaire and observation checklist were used as research instruments. There were 33 English teachers from 11 Junior High Schools as participants. The result of the study revealed that pre-reading activities were used by English teachers to engage students in reading activities. Pre-reading activities such as asking questions, identifying text structure, previewing, showing picture, brainstorming, and making prediction were the preferable activities applied by teachers. The teachers believed that the use of pre-reading activities in teaching reading is an effective way to improve students' reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** *Teacher's perception, Pre-Reading Activities, EFL Classroom.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading has an important role to play in teaching and learning achievement, particularly in teaching and learning English. One reason why it is important is that most of the materials for teaching and learning are written. It is a challenge to English teachers as a foreign language because EFL students need more than just reading a text. They need to understand what exactly they read. According to Jin, Chen, & Wang (2019) understanding reading materials means transferring the author's main idea of the text to the reader's brain. Consequently, teachers should have effective ways in teaching reading skill, rather than just supplying students to read the text, answer the questions or explain its purpose.

Pre-reading activity is one of the activities that can be used to prepare students before they read a text. There are some previous studies conducting this topic (Osei et al., 2016; Moghaddam & Mahmoudi, 2016; Rubegni & Landoni, 2018). Generally, this method is intended to tap students' background knowledge related to the content of the reading text. There are several ways used in pre-reading activities such as pictures, discussions, teaching vocabulary, previewing, questioning, etc. The use of pre-reading activities is prominent because it can bridge students' prior knowledge and the new knowledge that they will get from comprehending the text. One of studies conducted by Alhaisoni (2017) shows that prior knowledge is an essential part of reading that allows readers to understand what they are reading and what they have learned from reading. This finding is similar with the study conducted by Lyngfelt (2017) and Patterson et al. (2018). This means students need to use their background knowledge, which is what they already know about a subject of the text to be read, in order to understand the text.

Bilokcuoglu (2011) shows that the students' schemata can be enabled by using pre-reading activities prior to the actual reading stage and they can have a better understanding of reading. In addition, Azizifar et al. (2014) also shows the same results which found that the use of pre-reading activities can enhance the level of students' reading comprehension by enabling them to express themselves freely on a subject relevant to the given text before reading in class. By applying pre-reading activities, the students' schemata can be activated and they can have better comprehension in reading written text. Another study conducted by Alemi & Ebadi (2010) shows that giving prior information through restoring to pre-reading activities might become a useful tool for teacher of ESP to facilitate the students' reading comprehension ability. It can be inferred that using pre-reading activities can help students understanding the text by relating their background knowledge to the given text. It also allows students to express their views about the text freely. In addition, the introduction of pre-reading activities makes the process of teaching and learning more exciting.

Some previous studies which had been mentioned focus to investigate the effectivity of pre-reading activities in improving academic performance of students quantitatively. This study tries to portray perception of teachers as organizer of this method in EFL learning. There are 2 general questions on this study (1). What kind of pre-reading activities were commonly used by the teachers when teaching

reading comprehension for their respective class? and; (2). What were the teachers' perceptions on the use of pre-reading activities in teaching reading comprehension?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Pre-reading Activity**

Pre-reading activity is the activity used to elicit students' prior knowledge to the actual reading material. The activity is intended to provide students with required background knowledge that will be needed to have a better comprehension when they interact with a text. Pre-reading activity in the EFL classroom is crucial because students can easily understand what they are reading by activating their prior knowledge during the reading process. This is in line with the idea proposed by Paul & Christopher (2017) that the students need to build schemata and make connection between their own background knowledge with the information in the text. Later, (Abraham, 2002) asserts that teachers need to give attention to pre-reading activities to activate the students' "schemata" by helping them recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of the text. This can be done by discussing titles, subtitles, photographs, identifying text structure, previewing etc.

Thuy et al. (2018) describes that the goals of pre-reading stage are to activate the students' knowledge of the subject, to provide any language preparation that might be needed for coping with the passage, and eventually to motivate the learners reading the text. Meanwhile, Thuraisingam et al. (2017) states that activating prior knowledge awareness can facilitate comprehension of the reading. Encouraging students to express their prior knowledge of the given text is not only helping them understands but it can also increase the motivation and confidence of students in expressing their personal views and ideas about the text.

### **Kinds of Pre-Reading Activities**

There are different kinds of pre-reading activities that can help students activate their prior knowledge, thereby aiding in their comprehension. Torres (2017) suggests that before students read a text, they can create their own comprehension tasks for the given topic. By creating comprehension tasks students will outline things or ideas they are going to learn and things they are not sure about. There are several ways of doing pre-reading activities. (Auerbach, E.R., & Paxton, 1997) suggest the following pre-reading strategies:

#### **a. Previewing**

The aim of previewing is to help readers anticipate or make some educated guesses about what's in the text (Chia, 2001). Previewing also proves to be a valuable pre-reading practice for accessing prior knowledge of students. The advantage of previewing is to allow students to formulate hypothesis on the text. She adds that previewing could be done using titles, headings, pictures related to the text that allow students to predict what the text is before reading (Boardman, Vaughn, & Klingner, 2018; Reed, Stevenson, & LeBeau, 2019)

b. Writing reader's experience related to the topic

Writing experience related to the subject of a text helps the students to trigger their previous knowledge (Pourhosei & Sabouri, 2016; McGraw & Mason, 2017). As a pre-reading exercise, the opportunity for students to experience what they will find as a theme in the text is offered. For example, if they are to read a text about an ancient object, their experiences when visited a museum would be a great help to activate their prior knowledge. This experience provides them not only with new knowledge but also new vocabularies.

c. Asking questions based on the title

By offering questions related to the topic, the teacher helps students to comprehend the text (Alhaisoni, 2017). These questions are given before students start reading. In their attempts to find answers, the students will be activating their prior knowledge. Once they are inside the text, the students meet some knowledge that was already activated. Students realize that they know already to some extent, about the text and gain their confidence to concentrate on what they read.

d. Making predictions based on previewing

Prediction ensures the readers' active involvement in reading. The readers never rely on the text alone but brought from their own storage and established links to maximize comprehension (Karimi & Baradan, 2017). Through this step, the students will be best encouraged to read the text. Moreover, teachers should assist students to develop positive response to the text they are about to read which aids in increasing their will to read it (Ekaningrum & Prabandari, 2016).

e. Identifying the text structure

One of the skills which should be grasped by students is to be able to indentifying the text structure (Hebert, et al., 2016). Teaching students to recognize the underlying structure of content-area texts can assist students focus attention on key concepts and relationships, anticipate what is to come, and monitor their comprehension as they read. As readers interact with the text to construct meaning, their comprehension is facilitated when they organize their thinking in a manner similar to that used by the author. Readers who struggle with text comprehension often do so because they fail to recognize the organizational structure of what they are reading, and they are not aware of cues that alert them to particular text structures.

f. Skimming for general idea

Skimming is reading for gist, it is a form of quick reading that is used when the reader wants to get the main idea of the text. The students do not have to read the entire text word by word. They just need to read the title, subtitles or subheadings to find out what the text is about. Further, read first and last sentence of each paragraph and look out for keywords in the text. After that, the students can continue to think about the meaning of the text.

g. Reading the introduction and conclusion

It is almost similar with skimming reading. The students have to read the introduction of a text to highlight the main information about the topic and continue read the conclusion to highlight the part where the main points are repeated. By doing so, students will easily predict what is the text about.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This is quantitative study by using survey method. Research instruments consisted questionnaire and observation checklist. Questionnaire aims to know the kind of pre-reading activities used by teachers and to know the advantage of pre-reading activities based on the teacher's perception. This questionnaire consisted of 17 items, and it was developed based on the theories of pre-reading activities. Another tool used is an observation checklist. It was used in observing teachers in implementing pre-reading activities in EFL classroom.

There were 33 English teachers from 11 different junior high schools involved in this study as participants. The main criteria in being participant is a well-experienced in implementing pre-reading activities in EFL classroom. There are 2 kinds of data which were collected and analyzed. Quantitative data which had been collected was analyzed using descriptive statistic method, and qualitative data obtained from observation and interview was analyzed using descriptive qualitative method.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Kind of Pre-Reading Activities

To know kinds of pre-reading activity used by teachers, a list of pre-reading activity proposed by Auerbach & Paxton (1997) was given to the teachers to choose. The results of the research about kinds of pre-reading activities used by teachers are presented in the table 1:

**Table 1.** *Kinds of Pre-Reading Activities Commonly Used by Teachers*

Pre-reading activity	Percentage (%)
Previewing	49
Writing reader's experience	13
Ask questions	100
Making prediction	43
Identifying text structure	64
Skimming	25
Reading the introduction and conclusion	28
Writing summary	19

Table 1 indicated that teachers' favourable pre-reading activity is asking questions. The result of interview shows that teachers tend to implement the activity, as the activity can be used almost in all topics in reading class. Moreover, asking question is easy to implement in the learning process than other activities (Mihara, 2001; Azizifar et al., 2015). The second most popular activity applied by teachers was identifying text structures. The next favourable activity was previewing the text before reading. The teachers also like to have the students making prediction about the content of the text they are going to read. The least

popular pre-reading activity among the teachers was writing reader's experience, skimming, reading introduction and conclusion, and writing summary.

Based on the results of the study it was obvious that the common used pre-reading activity by the junior high school English teachers is Asking Question. It is because Asking Questions based on the topic of the text can relate students' background knowledge with the reading text. The second most used pre-reading activity Identifying Text Structure. By identifying text structure students can understand different part of the text with its content. The next most commonly used pre-reading activity in the process of teaching reading is Previewing. According to (Chia, 2001) the purpose of previewing is to helps students predict or make some educated guesses about what is in the text. Previewing also proves to be a useful pre-reading activity to access students' prior knowledge. (Swaffar, Arens, & Byrones, 1991) stated the benefit of previewing is that allow students to formulate hypothesis about the text. Pre-viewing could be done by using titles, headings, pictures related to the text that allow students to predict what the text is before reading.

Furthermore, the next favourite pre-reading activity used was Making Prediction based on the title of the Text. Teachers used prediction to ensure students' active involvement in reading. Through prediction, the students will be best encouraged to read the text. (Dutta, 1994) suggested that teachers should help students to develop positive responses to the text they are about to read which aids in increasing their will to read. Besides, there are also the other pre-reading activities used by the teacher such as Showing Picture, Brainstorming, and Vocabulary Teaching.

The junior high school English teachers of Sirimau District believed that pre-reading activities are very important to improve students' reading comprehension. From the results of the study, it can be seen that most of the teachers strongly agreed that they always use pre-reading activities in teaching reading. The teachers believed that the activities help students obtain initial knowledge of the text before they start to reading. So, it can be confirmed that the junior high school teachers in Sirimau District always used pre-reading activities in the process of teaching reading.

By considering the importance of pre-reading activity it is also necessary for teachers use diverse pre-reading activities. Besides, it is also prominent to implement appropriate pre-reading activity that suitable with content of the text, learning objectives, and learning method. In addition, pre-reading activity is not a time consuming activity but it is beneficial activity to boost students' motivation before reading. Consequently, pre-reading activity should be well prepared.

### **Classroom Observation**

Classroom observation was conducted to observe kinds of pre-reading activities used by teachers. Five teachers were chosen to be observed. 1<sup>st</sup> teacher used demonstration which she described things based on the title of th text briefly and asked students to guess what they were going to learn from the text. Besides, students were given questions that lead them to find out the main idea of the text by pay attention to the stress words. Then, the teacher explained the structure of

the text itself by giving example and asked the students to identify the structure of the text. Students did this activity independently followed by classroom discussion.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher used picture that was related to the text and then asked questions based on the picture. The students observed the picture and tried to answer the questions. Based on the students' answers, the teacher made a conclusion related to the content of the text that is going to be read by students. The use of picture related to text helps students to access their prior knowledge of the topic of the text. By this way they were aided to read and understand the contents of the text itself.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> teacher used real object found in the classroom. She explained the object to lead the students to predict what they were going to read. After that, the teacher asked students opinion about what she just explained and asked them to choose an object to be explained by themselves. Before reading, the teacher asked students to find unfamiliar words in the text and search for the meaning of the words in the dictionary. After that, they were asked to pronounce the words. The purpose of pronouncing these words were to help students read the text fluently.

The 4<sup>th</sup> teacher used pre-reading activities that was quite varied. First, the teacher invited two students to come in front of the class and started to describe them. Based on the demonstration, she asked students about what they were going to learn at the moment. The teacher also showed picture of a famous singer and asked the students to describe the singer based on the example already given. Furthermore, teacher also asked students to find out the adjectives related to the singer itself in the text.

The 5<sup>th</sup> teacher provided real object then asked students questions related to the object. Then the teacher continued by asking them to describe the object briefly. The students wrote the draft as an example. So when they start with the text they can do the exercises or follow the example.

### Teachers' Perception

In finding out the teachers' perceptions on the pre-reading activities in teaching reading, some statements were provided to be responded by the teachers. The teachers' responses are described in table 2.

**Table 2.** *Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Pre-Reading Activities*

No	Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree
		%	%	%
1	I always use pre-reading activity when teaching reading comprehension.	46	49	5
2	Pre-reading activities are important to be applied to improve students' reading comprehension.	40	60	-
3	Pre-reading activities must be used in teaching reading.	55	45	-

4	I use pre-reading activities to prepare students before reading a text.	49	51	-
5	Diverse pre-reading activities are needed to be applied in teaching reading.	46	37	17
6	Applying pleasant pre-reading activities in teaching reading is very important.	55	45	-
7	Student background knowledge of a text is my consideration in implementing a kind of pre-reading activity.	61	25	14
8	The use of appropriate pre-reading activity that is suitable with the text is very important.	70	30	-
9	Pre-reading activities can motivate students to read	58	34	8
10	During pre-reading activities students should work Individually.	60	3	37
11	During pre-reading activities, students should work in group.	57	6	37
12	Pre-reading activities that applied must be in accordance with the learning objectives.	49	45	6
13	It is important to discuss pre-reading activities that will be used with the other English teachers.	81	6	3
14	Pre-reading activities waste too much time.	5	4	91
15	Pre-reading activity is an easy strategy to be applied in teaching reading.	70	18	12
16	Pre-reading activity is an effective strategy in helping students comprehending a text.	51	43	6

Table 2 indicates that majority of the English teachers agree and strongly agree that pre-reading activity is important to be applied in reading comprehension activity. In every statement, more than 90% teachers agree and strongly agree that they use pre-reading activity in their class. It is because pre-reading activity prepares students by relating what they are going to read with their background knowledge. In terms of pre-reading activities diversity more that 80% teachers agree that teachers need to use diverse pre-reading activities. They also agree that applying suitable pre-reading activity in accordance with content, learning objectives, and teaching method is also important. More than 60% teachers agree that in pre-reading activities students may work either individually or in group. In addition, more that 90% teachers agree that pre-reading activities boost students' motivation to read the text. They also stated that pre-reading activity is not wasting of time but it is useful and effective to help students comprehend the reading text.

Based on the findings, it was obvious that teachers have positive perceptions on the use of pre-reading activities in teaching reading in EFL classroom. This positive response lead to the idea that they were aware of the significance of the use pre-reading activities in the process of teaching reading. The teachers realize



that it is necessary to use various pre-reading activities to motivate students and boost students' curiosity to read. (Graves, M. F., Watts, 1994) suggested that teachers should provide the students with various pre-reading activities that help them have certain amount of background knowledge about the reading text because schemata would help the reader to get better comprehension. The pre-reading activities used by the teachers must deal with the topic of the text, learning objectives and learning method.

The teachers believed that the use of pre-reading activities is an effective way to improve students' reading comprehension. Besides, pre-reading activities can improve students' vocabulary knowledge because they were exposed to unfamiliar words in the text to help them comprehend the text. (Harmer, 2007) stated that students also need to know how to use the words in proper sentences. Students need to see words in context to see how they are used. Ultimately, vocabulary pre-teaching can help students understand difficult key words of incoming text before they start reading. The teachers also stated that another positive impact of pre-reading activity is students can be motivated and building their self confidence in reading.

## CONCLUSION

There were some kinds of pre-reading activity used by the English teachers, and teachers' favourable pre-reading activity is asking questions. Teachers tend to implement the activity, as the activity can be used almost in all topics in reading class. Moreover, asking questions based on the topic of the text can relate students' background knowledge with the reading text. Most of the English teachers agree that pre-reading activity is important to be applied in reading comprehension activity. It was shown based on their positive attitude in applying pre-reading activity. They believe that pre-reading activity can boost students motivation and readiness for reading.

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