

## SYNDICATE LEARNING: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH FOR TEACHING EXTENSIVE READING

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### Abstract

Extensive Reading subject has important benefits for EFL learners. The main purpose of the subject is to raise the positive reading habit for the students. However, for most students, Extensive Reading is not an easy subject to complete. This paper describes the implementation of syndicate learning approach in Extensive Reading subject at English Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. The students' perceptions of the approach were collected through survey research with opinionative with Likert scales as the instrument. In addition, there were 16 participants engaged in the study. The results showed that majority of the students gave positive views of syndicate learning approach for both as the individual participant and the member of group. The study is expected to contribute a solution for problems may rise in Extensive Reading subject.

**Keywords:** *Extensive Reading, Syndicate Learning Approach, Students' Attitude*

### Abstrak

Mata kuliah *Extensive Reading* memiliki manfaat penting bagi pebelajar *English for Foreign Language (EFL)*. Tujuan utama dari mata kuliah ini adalah untuk meningkatkan kebiasaan membaca yang positif bagi para mahasiswa. Namun, bagi sebagian besar siswa, *Extensive Reading* bukanlah mata kuliah yang mudah untuk ditempuh. Artikel ini menjelaskan implementasi pendekatan *syndicate learning* dalam mata kuliah *Extensive Reading* pada Program Studi Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. Persepsi mahasiswa terhadap pendekatan *syndicate learning* dikumpulkan melalui penelitian survei dengan skala *Likert* sebagai instrumen. Selain itu, terdapat 16 peserta yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap pendekatan *syndicate learning* baik sebagai peserta individu maupun anggota kelompok. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan sebuah solusi untuk masalah yang mungkin timbul pada mata kuliah *Extensive Reading*.

**Kata Kunci:** *Extensive Reading, Pendekatan Syndicate Learning, Persepsi Mahasiswa*

## INTRODUCTION

For English learners, reading is a fundamental skill that must be mastered as well as listening, speaking, and writing. In the process of reading, students are expected to be able to extract and combine different kinds of information from the texts, and at the end they connect them with their background of knowledge (Koda, 2005 in Grabe, 2009). In other words, reading skill requires various cognitive processes work together, such as skimming, comprehension, and prior knowledge resources.

In relation to the students' academics activity, reading skill is essential. Here, it is not only for Reading subjects, but it also

applied for the other ones, i.e., reading to learn.

There are two kinds of teaching reading for EFL learners: intensive and extensive reading. The main purpose of intensive reading is to increase the students' knowledge of language features, for example: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, etc., and their awareness of reading strategies (Nation, 2009). In this kind of reading, the activities of reading depend more on the teacher's guided instruction.

Meanwhile, extensive reading has more complex activities. Here, extensive reading enables the students to focus not only on the items of language but also the story or the content of large quantities of

texts (Nation, 2009: 50). The important thing that should be considered by the teacher of extensive reading is the students' interest in what they are reading, so that they enjoy and have more optimal attention on the meaning of the text rather than studying the language elements of the text.

In addition, Renandya and Jacobs (2002) state that extensive reading engages rapid reading of large number of passages. Here, the readers focus on the meaning of what is being read rather than on the elements of language. The essential purpose of this program is to build a life-long reading habit for students.

In more specifically, Day and Bramford (1998) differ the intensive and extensive reading from eleven points of view: class goal, purpose, focus, material, amount, time, speed, method, assessment, teacher's roles, and student's roles. First, the class goal of intensive reading is the accuracy of the target language; however, extensive reading focuses on fluency and automaticity of the target language.

In addition, intensive and extensive reading has difference purposes. The purposes of intensive reading allow the students to translate and have full comprehension of the text. On contrary, extensive reading enables the learners to get information and enjoyment.

From the focus view, in intensive reading, the learners should pay attention on the words and structures of each sentence in the text; on the other hand, extensive reading attempts the students to focus on overall meaning of the text. Moreover, the materials in intensive reading are selected by the teacher. As a result, it drives the learners into a boring situation. It also perceived irrelevant with the students' interests and sometimes it is difficult. Meanwhile, extensive reading gives an authority for students choose their own materials. It gives the positive effects for them, such as the text is relevant with their expectations and easy because it goes well with their linguistics capabilities.

The next difference lies on the length of the text. Intensive reading has short targeted selections; on the other hand, extensive reading has many whole texts, ideally a million words over a year. Meanwhile, intensive reading is done in the classroom and homework time; conversely, extensive reading facilitates the students to read for both in and outside the classroom.

The reading speed in intensive reading is slow; in opposition, the reading speed in extensive reading is fast. In addition, reading in intensive reading is a compulsory activity. Here, students must finish reading the passage, and they use dictionary to verify and gloss unknown words. On the other hand, the reading activity in extensive reading is voluntary. Learners are able to exchange the book if it is not suitable or difficult. Moreover, they do not need dictionary because they can infer the meaning of any unknown words or skip them.

The assessment in intensive and extensive reading is also different. In intensive reading there is regular compulsory testing, and the form of assessment is closed questions. However, there is no regular testing in extensive reading. Here, the form of assessment is open questions.

In intensive reading, teacher has more authority; conversely, in extensive reading, teacher becomes a facilitator, motivator, and fellow reader and learner. At last, in intensive reading, the students' roles are passive, compliant, and subordinate. On contrary, in extensive reading, the students are more active, creative, equal to everyone in class including teacher.

At English Education Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, *Extensive Reading* is a subject taken by students after completing the three pre-requisite subjects: *Literal Reading*, *Interpretive Reading*, and *Critical Reading*. In this program, reading activities becomes the main doing.

Moreover, the students select the materials based on their interests and needs, including fiction and non-fiction texts. It is

expected that by choosing their own readings, students have positive motivation towards Extensive Reading subject. However, the length of the text should be complied with the teacher's guided criteria.

In line with this, Guthrie and Cox (2001) have proved that extensive reading could build positive attitude and motivation towards readers' interest. In addition, Wang and Guthrie (2004) claim that extensive reading equips the learners with good experience to produce positive motivation towards reading.

To make the extensive program is successful; teacher may consider ten principles developed by Bamford and Day (2002). They are (1) the materials of reading are easy for readers; (2) a variety of reading topics are available; (3) students choose what they want to read; (4) students read large number of reading materials; (5) students use rapid reading; (6) students read for pleasure, getting information, and general understanding; (7) students read individually and silently; (8) reading is its own reward; (9) teacher orients and guides the students; and (10) teacher becomes a role model for the students.

Based on the observation, the students' motivation towards Extensive Reading subject is still low. The data taken from the interview showed that most of them stated that Extensive Reading is a complicated subject because they should read a lot of books. Although the materials were provided by themselves, they felt hard to accomplish the assignments given by the teacher. The main reason causing the problem was the enthusiasm of reading on students was low.

The above phenomenon is contrary to the theories of extensive reading program. For this, the syndicate learning approach is chosen to solve the problem.

Syndicate learning is dividing a class into small groups (syndicates) of four to eight students (McKeachie, 2010). Here, teacher gives each syndicate assignment and the members of the syndicate may divide the readings and discuss together before giving the report in front the class.

In line with this, McKerlie (2012) states that syndicate learning is a promising approach that offers some valuable benefits for students. It is a type of peer learning that consists of five to ten students working together to achieve of a set goal or task. In practice, they have a freedom to arrange the allocated time and group meetings in order to accomplish the assignment.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In the present study, the researcher applies a survey research since it aims at obtaining the information of students' attitude on the implementation of syndicate learning approach in the process of teaching Extensive Reading. According to McKay (2006), there are three kinds of information that can be conveyed through survey: factual information, behavioral information, and attitudinal information.

The subjects of the study were the fourth semester students of English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, namely class B1. There were 16 students in the class. Here, the researcher took them all as the respondents.

Afterwards, the researcher formulated ten statements including students' attitude towards the implementation of syndicate learning approach in extensive reading as individual participant and member of group related to the students' perceptions on syndicate learning approach in the form of opinionnaire. In addition, there were five options for each statement that can be assessed by using Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. It was important to identify students' positive or negative attitude towards the approach.

The implementation of syndicate learning approach in teaching extensive reading has similar phases as cooperative learning process (Hamalik, 2008). There are four stages in syndicate learning approach. The first phase is forming syndicates Next, each group chose a particular book to read together. In this stage, it is expected that the

positive interdependence among the members are created.

The second phase is functioning process. Here, students in each syndicate were given chances to have their own roles. The main point of this phase is providing the students' responsibilities for both individually and group. The third is formatting the report. Here, students in each syndicate organize the summary of books they have read and communicate their idea in the group.

In relation to the present study, the researcher divided the class into four groups. Here, students were asked to read novels and reported them in the form of students' logs promoted by Lyutaya (2011). Students' log helps teacher see students whether they accomplish the reading program goals, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and also direct them to complete the assignments.

The next step, teacher check the reading logs based on the eight criteria on a scale of (1) Excellent; (2) Very Good; (3) Good; or (4) Needs Work. The criteria are as follows:

1. *Observation*. Students analyze about the plot, characters, setting, language, or other textual elements.
2. *Quotations*. Students quote the text accurately and relate to some important feature in the story.
3. *Comparisons*. Students make a note for the similarities and differences between characters, themes, language, or other textual elements.
4. *Reflections*. Students gives their opinions about how the story makes their feel and connects events from the story to their experiences or current incidents.
5. *Summaries*. Students write a coherent review of the readings.
6. *Analysis*. Students write the motivations of the characters, the resolution of the plot, or the consistency of the writer.
7. *Synthesis*. Students use advanced reasoning skills to show the correlation between the readings and other events.

8. *Vocabulary*. Vocabulary used in the students' log represents appropriate strategies and includes a variety of difficult words, grammatical structures, and colloquial expressions.

At last, in the performance phase, each group presents their understanding on what they have read in front of the class and discuss with the other groups.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the study, the researcher had constructed ten statements of students' attitude towards the syndicate learning approach implementation in Extensive Reading subject of the fourth semester students of English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. The statements cover the students' perception for both as the individual participant and the member of group.

To gather the data of students' response as the personal participant to syndicate learning approach in Extensive Reading subject, the researcher had set the opinionnaire items of 1, 2, 5, 7, and 9. In addition, the items of 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10 had been formulated to identify the students' perception as the group on syndicate learning approach implementation. The following table presents the result of the student's attitude after attending the Extensive Reading subject using syndicate learning approach.

**Table 1. The Analysis of Students' Attitude towards the Implementation of Syndicate Learning Approach in Extensive Reading Subject**

| Statements and Responses   | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| (1)<br>Extensive Reading is an interesting subject since the syndicate learning approach is implemented. | 14            | 88             |

|  |    |     |  |    |    |
|--|----|-----|--|----|----|
| Strongly Agree   | 2  | 12  | Neutral  | 0  | 0  |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   | Disagree   | 0  | 0  |
| Neutral  | 0  | 0   | Strongly Disagree  |    |    |
| Disagree   |    |     | (6)  |    |    |
| Strongly Disagree  |    |     | Students always appreciate one to another when they share their ideas during the learning activity in syndicate learning approach classroom. | 14 | 88 |
| (2)  |    |     |  | 2  | 12 |
| I enjoy learning reading during the whole process of syndicate learning approach.  | 16 | 100 | Strongly Agree   | 0  | 0  |
| Strongly Agree   | 0  | 0   | Agree  | 0  | 0  |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   | Neutral  |    |    |
| Neutral  | 0  | 0   | Disagree   |    |    |
| Disagree   |    |     | Strongly Disagree  |    |    |
| Strongly Disagree  |    |     | (7)  |    |    |
| (3)  |    |     | Extensive Reading subject becomes easier when I follow the steps of syndicate learning approach.   | 15 | 94 |
| During the implementation of syndicate learning approach, students actively participate within a group.  | 15 | 94  | Strongly Agree   | 1  | 6  |
| Strongly Agree   | 0  | 0   | Agree  | 0  | 0  |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   | Neutral  | 0  | 0  |
| Neutral  | 0  | 0   | Disagree   |    |    |
| Disagree   |    |     | Strongly Disagree  |    |    |
| Strongly Disagree  |    |     | (8)  |    |    |
| (4)  |    |     | Students work cooperatively during the learning activity in syndicate learning approach classroom.   | 13 | 81 |
| Students learn how to respond actively when the others need help in completing the tasks during the learning activity through syndicate learning approach. | 15 | 94  | Strongly Agree   | 3  | 19 |
| Strongly Agree   | 1  | 6   | Agree  | 0  | 0  |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   | Neutral  | 0  | 0  |
| Neutral  | 0  | 0   | Disagree   |    |    |
| Disagree   |    |     | Strongly Disagree  |    |    |
| Strongly Disagree  |    |     | (9)  |    |    |
| (5)  |    |     | After attending the syndicate learning classroom, I get better understanding on reading text.  | 14 | 88 |
| Syndicate learning approach makes me confident in reading class.   | 13 | 81  | Strongly Agree   | 2  | 12 |
| Strongly Agree   | 3  | 19  | Agree  | 0  | 0  |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   | Neutral  | 0  | 0  |
|  |    |     | Disagree   | 0  | 0  |

|  |    |     |
|--|----|-----|
| Strongly Disagree<br>(10)  |    |     |
| Students can take benefits, such as improving motivation, self esteem, and achievement after attending the syndicate learning classroom. | 16 | 100 |
|  | 0  | 0   |
|  | 0  | 0   |
| Strongly Agree   | 0  | 0   |
| Agree  | 0  | 0   |
| Neutral  |    |     |
| Disagree   |    |     |
| Strongly Disagree  |    |     |

The explanations of the results of the analysis of students's attitude towards the implementation to syndicate learning approach in Extensive Reading class in Table 1 are as follows. First, as the individual participant, students agreed that Extensive Reading is an interesting subject since the syndicate learning approach is implemented. There were 88% of the participants answered strongly agree and the rest selected agree. Moreover, for the statement "I enjoy learning reading during the whole process of syndicate learning approach," all the students stated strongly agree.

In addition, there were 81% of the students selected strongly agree on the statement "Syndicate learning approach makes me confident in reading class." Meanwhile, there were 19% of students stated agree. Besides, students also agreed that Extensive Reading subject becomes easier when they follow the steps of syndicate learning approach. There were 94% of learners answered strongly agree and the rest stated agree. Also, for the statement "After attending the syndicate learning classroom, I get better understanding on reading text," there were 88% of students stated strongly agree and 12% of students chose agree as their responses.

From the investigation of group participation, there were about 94% of the participants stated strongly agree and 6% of

them answered agree in the statement that during the implementation of syndicate learning approach, students actively participate within a group. This also happened to the statement "students learn how to respond actively when the others need help in completing the tasks during the learning activity through syndicate learning approach."

Meanwhile, there were 88% of students answered strongly agree for the statement "students always appreciate one to another when they share their ideas during the learning activity in syndicate learning approach classroom," and the rest chose agree. Then, it was 81% of the learners said strongly agree for the statement "students work cooperatively during the learning activity in syndicate learning approach classroom," and there were 19% students answered agree. Finally, all the students agree with the statement of "students can take benefits, such as improving motivation, self esteem, and achievement after attending the syndicate learning classroom."

## CONCLUSION

The study has provided the evidence that students have positive attitude toward the implementation of syndicate learning approach in Extensive Reading subject. This can be seen from the findings that most of the participants of the research show their strong agreement towards the usefulness and effectiveness of the use of syndicate learning approach for teaching Extensive Reading.

Considering the conclusion above, it is implied that syndicate learning approach is an attractive strategy to solve the problems in Extensive Reading program. In the process of learning, this approach promotes the positive interdependence, interaction among students, individual responsibility, social skills, and personal as well as group evaluation. However, teachers should make sure that all students actively participate in the process of learning. Accordingly, it is important for the participants being well trained before the application of the approach.

In fact, there are still plenty of problems and the essences of syndicate learning approach that need to be uncovered. Therefore, it is expected to see how syndicate learning approach could be applied in the different level of students, not only for the students of tertiary education but also at the secondary education.

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