

CHALLENGING EFL STUDENTS TO READ: DIGITAL READER RESPONSE TASKS TO FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY

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Abstract

Reading and technology are believed to have a strong link with learner autonomy. This research aims at investigating how digital reader response tasks in a reading class promote learner autonomy. The students were given reader response tasks which challenged them to respond to texts using digital infographic and presentation tools in *Moodle* forum. The data of this case study, collected from questionnaires, online records, and reflections involving 25 participants, were analyzed based on the domains of autonomy. The findings indicated that digital reader response tasks in a *Moodle*-based reading class enabled learners to plan, execute, and evaluate their own learning. The findings also showed that these online tasks did not only motivate learners to engage in meaningful language learning experience, but also encouraged them to nurture social dimensions of autonomy.

Keywords: digital reader responses; reading skills; learner autonomy; e-posters

1. Introduction

Studies have extensively argued that reading helps learners acquire a foreign language. It is an essential skill needed by EFL learners to excel in academic contexts as texts provide both linguistic and cultural information on the foreign language. However, reading is one of the least developed skills in Indonesian context. Tests indicated that Indonesian people tend to have low reading interest; Indonesia ranks 60 out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest (Miller & McKenna, 2016). The complexity increases when Indonesian learners in higher education are required to read English texts. The lack of autonomy prevents them from finding more learning materials as well as getting reading exposure outside the class, which can be the reasons why learners read ineffectively. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to develop materials and activities which encourage learners to exercise their autonomy and engage in meaningful reading experience.

Learner autonomy has been discussed by researchers in the field of education, who have emphasized the importance of autonomy in EFL learning. Little (2004) believes that to be autonomous, students need to learn beyond teacher-guided instructions. In line with that, Tassinari (2012) states that autonomy involves learners' active roles in learning English. Another essential aspect of autonomy is the ability to take control of the learning materials. A more recent study (Ardi, 2017) shows how technology promotes autonomy because students are free to manage their learning and cognitive processes. Similarly, Hazaea and Alzubi (2018) report that the use of *WhatsApp* develops a sense of learner autonomy in reading contexts as it forms an interactive and reflective platform for the learners to learn outside the class. Furthermore, as their findings suggest, this mobile app can be utilized to share summaries, extra readings and tasks. These studies highlight the essence of students' active roles and self-evaluation in autonomy.

Promoting learner autonomy in the Indonesian context may encounter cultural challenges. Due to the long prevalence of teacher-centredness, this teaching approach has "been commonplace in the Indonesian school culture" (Zulfikar, 2009, p. 14). This pedagogical characteristic is highly influenced by a famous Javanese philosophy "*manut lan pinurut*" or "to obey and to follow". Furthermore, a teacher in Indonesia is called "guru" implying the philosophy "*digugu lan ditiru*" or to be obeyed and to be seen as models (Herawati, 2010). These two ways of living encourage students to seek guidance from teachers when they are learning. However, since students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, teachers are challenged to find approaches that can develop learner autonomy.

As a sizable volume of research has highlighted the relationship between technology and autonomy, further research on the implementation of the reader-response approach in technology-enhanced language learning to promote autonomy in the Indonesian context should be conducted. Reader-response based tasks could help students develop a sense of learner autonomy since the tasks focus on how learners create meaning. Iskhak (2015) suggests that a reader response approach encourages students to construct meaning by making a connection between the text and their personal experience. He further finds out how it affects students' personal and linguistic growth. Reader responses in the form of e-journals also engage and motivate low achieving students. Hence, the use of this approach, which requires students to play a central role in creating meaning in a technology-enhanced classroom is believed to promote autonomy. The advent of technology helps teachers to deconstruct the teacher-centred long-standing tradition and shift to a strong student-centredness. Since the link among reader response, technology and learner autonomy in an Indonesian context has not been investigated

yet, this study fills the gap by reporting how digital reader-response-based tasks in *Moodle* foster learner autonomy in a reading class.

2. Literature review

2.1. Reader Response Theory

Reading is a central path to learn new information (Grabe, 2014). Information from written texts can be interpreted from different perspectives. Abrams (1971; cited in Karolus, 2013) mentioned that there are four elements of literary works, namely the works, the authors or the artists, the nature or the universe, and the readers or the audience. We can interpret the work by referring to the work itself. Secondly, we can interpret the meaning of the work by linking the discourse to the authors. Next, the nature or the social context surrounding the context of the text can be used as tools to analyze it. Finally, the texts can be analyzed from how readers create meaning through reader responses.

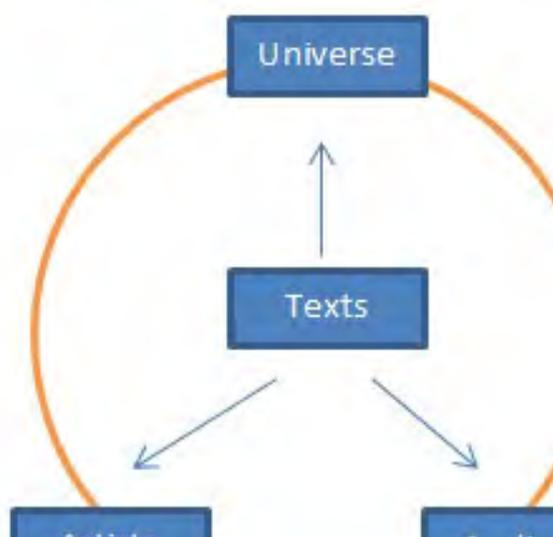


Figure 1. Interpretation of texts

Based on these perspectives, the reader response theory emphasizes the role of meaning created by readers. This approach is then considered applicable in language learning, particularly in engaging students to read (Gonzales & Courtland, 2009; Mizuno, 2015). By using a reader response theory, students do not only analyze the writers' purposes in creating the text, but also create meaning by using their background knowledge when interacting with the text (Rosenblatt, 1990). In this case, through reader-response based activities, readers are encouraged to play an active role in interpreting the meaning of the texts.

Studies have elaborated some benefits of the reader response theory in the classroom. Carlisle (2000) found out that the implementation of the reader response theory does not only help students learn the semantic domains of the texts, but it also encourages students to explore the text and give critical responses. In line with the previous findings, Gonzales and Courtland's study (2009) highlights the link among reader response, readers' interests and critical thinking. Mizuno (2015) strengthens this argument by proposing that responding to reading materials gives "a positive impact on the cognitive process of reading" (p. 18). Laboid (2016) suggests that the implementation of reader response journals in class helps students know themselves and gain "a sense of ownership of their learning experiences and to gain confidence and self-efficacy which are likely to affect positively their reading and writing attainments." (p. 111). He further suggests some reader-response activities that are in line with the teaching of reading strategies, such as outlining, paraphrasing, referential questioning and applying ideas to the real world. However, a recent study by Biglari (2017) shows that although there is no straightforward relationship between reader responses and students' comprehension, classroom practice based on reader responses decreases students' anxiety.

Considering the positive relationship between reader-response approach and language learning, this research focuses on elaborating the implementation of digital reader response theory in technology-enhanced EFL reading class.

2.2. EFL reading and learner autonomy

EFL learners in Indonesia face complexities in reading foreign language texts due to linguistic and cultural constraints (Masduqi, 2014; Pasaribu, 2017). EFL learners have limited experience in reading EFL texts, which hinders their comprehension of the texts. The hands-on activities in the classroom are not sufficient for learners to construct meaning and reflect on what they learn. Masduqi (2014) also adds that students' low interest in reading is affected by their lack of motivation. Students tend to be more passive as they wait for teachers to initiate them to read. Moreover, students may expect to learn new vocabulary and grammatical patterns of the texts from the teachers. Hence, it is a major concern for teachers to create a learning environment that promotes learners to take control of their own learning.

Promoting learner autonomy has been a major concern for educators and scholars (Ardi, 2017; Chia, 2005; Dafei, 2007; Little, 2007; Littlewood, 1999). Littlewood (1999) summarizes that learner autonomy is the learners' capacity to take responsibility of their own learning. This involves the ability to own the learning process including setting goals and evaluating the process. Little (2007) explicates that autonomous learners have independent characteristics and

are able to prepare the materials autonomously. Dam (2011) encourages teachers to make learners capable of taking responsibility by planning, carrying out the plan and evaluating the outcome, further suggesting practical autonomy-oriented tasks: logbooks, portfolios and posters.

Literature has also documented the strong link between technology and learner autonomy (Ardi, 2017; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2018; Darasawang & Reinders, 2010; Lee, 2011). Darasawang and Reinders (2010) explain how the online program, *My English*, makes learning opportunities available to all students and allows the teacher to expand learning to learners' real life. The materials and activities which are available anywhere and anytime encourage students to exercise autonomy. Furthermore, Lee (2011) shows how blogging can promote autonomy and intercultural competence. The research identifies some principles of learner autonomy: cognitive engagement, self-directedness and critical reflection. Furthermore, Ardi (2017) finds that a Schoology mobile learning platform helped students to exercise autonomy as they took responsibility for their "learning management, cognitive process, and selection of learning materials" (p. 55). He added that technology facilitated student-teacher interactions and allowed students to explore online materials. A more recent study by Hazaea and Alzubi (2018, p. 50) explains how the use of *WhatsApp* which offers "flexibility of time and place for reading" can give a sense of autonomy, motivate learners and encourage interactions. From these studies, it can be highlighted that technology which offers a more flexible learner-centred environment enables students to take responsibility for managing, directing learning, choosing the learning materials and exercising cognitive skills.

The reader response approach is believed to share similar principles with the concept of learner autonomy. Granger, Black and Miller (2007) indicate that reader response played a positive role in fostering students' reading comprehension and attitude. After responding in their journals and participating in classroom discussions, the students "increased either their independent, instructional, or frustration levels of reading comprehension" (p. 14) based on Qualitative Reading Inventory-3. This approach gives students, as readers, the freedom to choose the topics and manage their own learning process (Laboid, 2016). The reader response approach in the digital environment is assumed to encourage the development of learner autonomy since the readers or students are given space to make plans and take proactive roles in the learning process. In making e-posters, students are encouraged to monitor their understanding and strategies because self-monitoring is a key concept in autonomous learning processes (Tassinari, 2012). Lee (2012) implemented a reader-response e-journal, which helped students to achieve and evaluate their learning goals. The combination of technology-enhanced

instructions and face-to-face interaction proved to allow more freedom to students to explore various reading materials and experiment with their projects.

3. Methodology

3.1. The aim of the study

This study aims at answering these research questions:

1. How were reader-response-based tasks in *Moodle* implemented in a reading class?
2. How did they foster learner autonomy in the class?

To achieve the goal, the current study employed a case study design which focuses “on a single unit to produce an in-depth description that is rich and holistic” (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 454). A good case study uses “a number of different research tools available in order to increase the validity of the study” (Davies, 2011, p. 104). The focus of the study is on investigating the perceptions of a single unit which refers to a class as a social practice. The data were collected using several data collection procedures, including questionnaires, reflections and online archives, to see the holistic view of the case.

3.2. Participants and the context

This research aims at elaborating how the reader-response-based-tasks were implemented in Basic Reading II Class to foster learner autonomy. This research employed a case study design involving 25 students (7 male and 18 female), who were taking Basic Reading II class in the second semester of English Language Education Study Program in a private university from February to June 2017. In this class-based research, the teacher as the researcher formulated learning goals aiming at improving students’ reading skills and learning autonomy. I was responsible for developing the instructions and materials in *Moodle*. I posted instructions for each task so students could plan their personal aims, choose reading materials, and choose partners for group challenges. I also uploaded the rubrics of the tasks for the students so that they could set the targets when doing the tasks. Taking a role as a facilitator, I also commented on the students’ works to help them monitor their progress. As a researcher, I made careful observations of the class, developed the questionnaires and analyzed the online records with consent from the students.

3.3. Course design

The course was given in the second semester of the English Language Education study program. This class employed a blended learning method, which enabled the students to learn from both face-to-face interaction and technology-enhanced learning using *Moodle* as the learning management platform. Research elaborated that *Moodle* facilitates easy access for students in Language Teaching Media (Wulandari, 2016) and Paragraph Writing (Pasaribu, 2016) classes. Technology-enhanced activities as seen in Table 1 were applied in the reading class to enable students to learn and manage their own learning.

Table 1. Technology-enhanced and regular classroom tasks/activities

| Technology-enhanced tasks/activities | Regular classroom tasks/activities |
|---|---|
| Students access and follow online instructions and rubrics. | Students share their projects. |
| Students choose the reading texts from the Internet. | Students discuss the texts and their responses. |
| Students make the reader response projects (using various digital tools). | Students receive feedback from peers. |
| Students upload the projects and comment on their friends work. | Students brainstorm for the next projects. |
| Students prepare for the reading class by reading the materials. | Students consult the projects with their teacher. |

There were five online tasks that the students uploaded to *Moodle* and presented them in class. These challenges required them to use digital apps: *Moodle* Forum, *Canva*, *Piktochart*, and *Prezi*.

- Reading Challenge #1: Students write a reader response to expository texts in the form of paragraphs through *Moodle* Forum.
- Reading Challenge #2: Students create a reader response to expository texts in the form of paragraphs through *Canva* and *Moodle* Forum.
- Reading Challenge #3: Students write a reader response to biographical texts in the form of paragraphs through *Piktochart* and *Moodle* Forum.
- Reading Challenge #4: Students write a reader response to narrative texts in the form of alternate endings through *Moodle* Forum.
- Reading Challenge #5: Students create a reader response to narrative texts through *Prezi* and *Moodle* Forum.

The challenges required students to:

1. choose reading texts for their projects,

2. find new words and use them in new sentences,
3. summarize the main ideas or conflicts found in the texts,
4. relate the texts with their experience.

3.4. Data collection tools and procedures

The data were collected from questionnaires, students' reflections and online records. The first section of the questionnaire was developed based on the domains of internal and external reading motivation (Allen, 2013). The second one was developed using Dam's simplified model of autonomy: planning, carrying the plan and monitoring (Dam, 2011). The questionnaire, consisting of six items on motivation, four items on planning, four items on executing the plan, and four items on monitoring, was distributed using *Google Forms*, which was embedded in *Moodle*. Respondents (n=25) responded a 5-point Likert scale (from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree.") The open-ended questionnaire had two questions on 1) benefits of online reading challenges and 2) difficulties when doing online reading challenges. This study also analyzed the students' reflections which were uploaded to *Moodle* to show how they experience autonomy in a technology-enhanced reading class. Moreover, other online records, including the screenshots of the instructions, materials and rubrics, were presented in this study to enrich the elaboration of the online class.

This study was approved by the head of the study program of English Language Education at Sanata Dharma University. Furthermore, the permission was sought from the respondents of the study. After they approved to participate in the study, they accessed the questionnaire on *Google Forms* at the end of the course.

4. Findings and discussion

The implementation of an online platform allowed the lecturer to use different digital tools for different purposes. There are three parts of the online modules, namely reading materials, reading strategies, and reading challenges. The sections, the digital tools, and the purposes of using the digital tools in *Moodle* are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Digital tools in *Moodle*

| Sections in <i>Moodle</i> | Digital Tools | Purposes |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Reading Materials | PDF files, Document files, <i>Prezi</i> , <i>Canva</i> , and <i>Piktochart</i> | Students accessed these materials to read the texts and the mindmaps of the texts. |
| Reading Strategies | <i>Youtube</i> , <i>Moodle</i> Forum, and <i>Google Forms</i> | Students used these tools to |

Reading Challenges

Canva, Piktochart, Moodle Forum, and Prezi

know different reading strategies and to monitor their own reading strategies. Students used these tools to do the reading challenges individually or in groups.

As seen in Table 2, students could access PDF files, MSWord documents, infographics from *Canva*, *Piktochart*, and *Prezi* presentations in *Moodle*. The students were encouraged to be autonomous in accessing these materials outside the class using their personal computers or mobile phones. The materials available on the learning platform enabled students to self-regulate when they were engaged in the learning process (Hui, 2016). The use of different applications at any time and place facilitates students' learning process. These digital tools were employed to provide a positive atmosphere which could be easily accessed by the students. Figure 2 shows the reading materials and questions uploaded to *Moodle*. The students could access the materials in the attached documents or other reading websites before or after the class.

The screenshot displays a Moodle course page with the following content:

- Reading Material - A Short Story: Charles** (with a photo of a young boy)
- Applying Reading Strategy: Questioning**
 1. How well did you remember your elementary sc
 2. Did you have a friend who did not respect his/h
 3. Why did your friend misbehave?
 4. What happened to your friend after elementary?

Think about these questions for the class discuss
- Reading Materials**
 - American Literature -- Reading stories does not only involve lingu also widens our knowledge to the culture! If you are interested in li everlasting short stories, you dont want to miss this site.
 - East of The Web -- This web features stories on crime, fiction, non humor, romance, sci-fi, and children's.
 - Classic Reader publishes out of copyright books online. So you ca of a lot of full unabridged classics.
 - Five Chapters publishes a short story in five parts every week (Mo archives list about 242 stories by 222 writers. All the stories are by authors.
 - Fairy tales of the world -- a website which offers wide range of fair the world.
 - Source:
 - 10 Websites Where You Can Enjoy Reading Short Stories and Fla
 - Reading Links

Figure 2. Materials

The materials were also uploaded in the form of *Prezi* embedded in *Moodle* (Figure 3) and they served several functions. Firstly, they showed students how to mind-map the information found in the texts using interactive graphic organizers. Studies mention that graphic organizers help students to organize ideas and see how ideas are related to one another

(Riswanto & Putra, 2012). It is also beneficial for visual learners as *Prezi* visualizes information. Secondly, the use of *Prezi* served as examples for students to do the projects which require mind-mapping and summarizing.

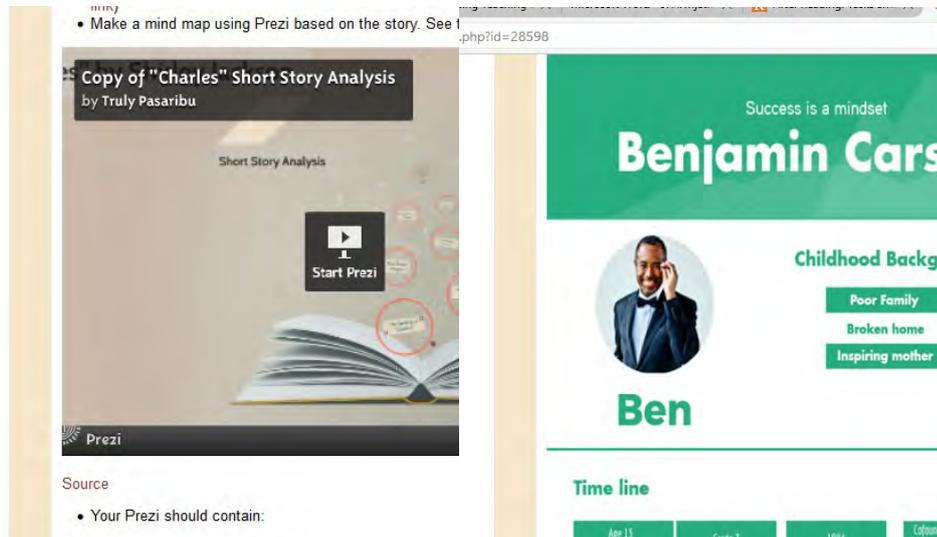


Figure 3. An example of *Prezi* and E-poster

Besides using *Prezi*, the designed module also attracted students to read or evaluate reading materials by uploading a poster based on the reading text as seen in Figure 3. The poster included pictures and pointers which made it easier for students to comprehend the texts. Moreover, it served as an example of poster presentations which were designed using *Piktochart*. The reading materials uploaded to *Moodle* using different digital apps enabled students to access the materials and control their learning styles. When they felt that they had control over their learning, they could learn faster and better (Warschauer, 1996). Statement 1 from the open ended questionnaire shows that this very participant could learn many things in an online environment and she could practice writing when doing the responses.

- (1) First, I get lots of things to be learned. Second, I can learn how to manage a good sentence on writing reflection by reading some articles. Third, I can get new vocabulary in every new article. Forth, reading challenges make me love reading more and more. Last, using the digital tools makes me more challenging because I can find new thing that I haven't learn before.

The second section was *Reading Strategies*. Knowing what strategies to use when reading texts is important to make the reading process more effective. Students need to be exposed to various reading strategies so that they could experiment and use the strategies which meet their styles and the purposes of reading the texts. Figure 4 shows that the e-learning modules consist of lessons on reading strategies in the form of *Microsoft Word* documents, *Youtube* and HTML hyperlink.

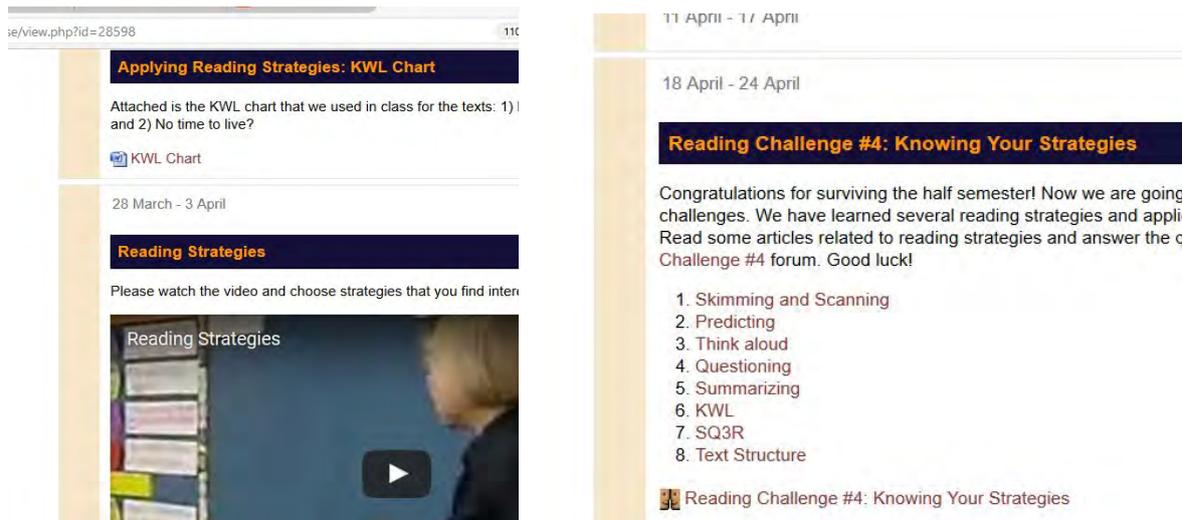


Figure 4. Reading Strategies

Questionnaires, reflections and open-ended questions showed how students experimented with various reading strategies, global, problem-solving and support strategies. The students employed global reading strategies when they utilized metacognitive strategies, such as predicting and evaluating the texts. They utilized problem-solving strategies when they dealt with problems while reading the texts, such as re-reading the texts or visualizing the information found in them. Students also employed support strategies by translating using *Google Translate* and finding vocabulary meaning in the dictionary.

Not only did the students access the materials, but also the students were given tasks under the section *Reading Challenges*. The challenges can be divided into two types, namely: individual challenges and group challenges as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reading Challenges

| Types | Name/Digital Tools | Aims |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Individual Challenges | Reading Challenge #1/ <i>Moodle</i> Forum | Students are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the expository texts Use new words in their own sentences Write responses and present them to the class Write responses and present them to the class |
| | Reading Challenge #2/ <i>Canva</i> and <i>Moodle</i> Forum | Students are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main ideas in the expository texts Use new words in their own sentences Analyze and evaluate writers' |

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| | | ideas |
| | Reading Challenge #3/ <i>Piktochart</i> and <i>Moodle</i> Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate the texts with their personal experience |
| Group Challenges | Reading Challenge #4/ <i>Moodle</i> Forum | <p>Students are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the main ideas in the expository texts • Use new words in their own sentences • Analyze and evaluate writers' ideas • Relate the texts with their personal experience |
| | Group Challenge #5/ <i>Prezi</i> and <i>Moodle</i> Forum | <p>Students are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the main ideas and conflicts in the stories • Use new words in their own sentences • Analyze and evaluate writers' ideas • Predict the ending of the stories • Relate the texts with their personal experience work in groups to share experiences, learn from others' experiences, appreciate others. |
| | | <p>Students are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the main ideas and conflicts in the stories • Use new words in their own sentences • Analyze and evaluate writers' ideas • Relate the texts with their personal experience work in groups to share experiences, learn from others' experiences, appreciate others. |

The challenges uploaded to *Moodle* contained several parts such as instructions, examples and assessment. Students needed these parts to be able to make plans for doing the projects. Therefore, these three parts are vital to guide students in making both individual and group projects. The instructions in the learning space were developed using *Canva*. The instructions included the information on the type of challenges (individual or group), the length (words or time), the structure of the projects, the questions, the due date of the projects and the link for the submission.

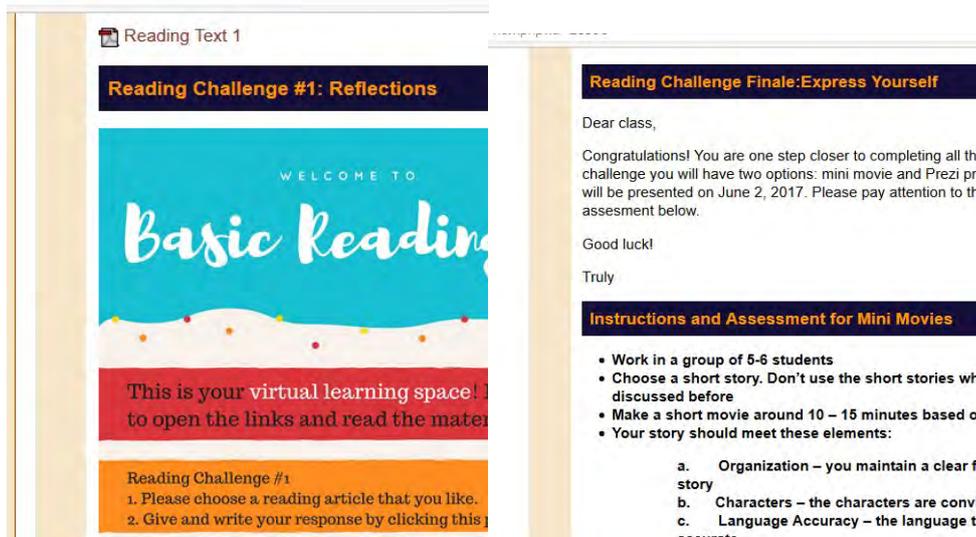


Figure 4. Online Instructions

The instructions were clearer when uploaded together with examples of the projects. The lecturer gave some personal examples related to the projects, such as reflections, posters and mind-maps using *Prezi*. This section also displayed the rubrics used to assess or evaluate students' projects. The rubrics help students prepare what they needed for the projects. Clear instructions, examples and rubrics enabled students to adjust their schedules to do the task and self-evaluate their projects individually or in groups.

After the implementation of reader-response challenges at the end of the semester, the questionnaire consisting of six items on reading motivations was administered. Items (1) and (2) in Table 4 demonstrate students' internal motivation as the students engaged in the reading activities for personal engagement regardless of the outcomes. Items (1) and (2) show that the online reading activities were considered beneficial as they offered more opportunities for students to read English texts.

Table 4. Perceptions of students' reading attitude

| Statement | Mean (out of 5, n=25) | Interpretation |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Reading online texts is a positive experience. | 4.4 | Positive |
| 2. In general, websites offer me more opportunities to read English texts. | 4.12 | Positive |
| 3. Online reading challenges encourage me to develop reading habits. | 4 | Positive |
| 4. I want to experience using online tools to do my tasks in the future. | 4.36 | Positive |
| 5. Online reading challenges make me more confident in reading L2 (articles in foreign language) | 3.92 | Positive |
| 6. I am confident about learning new vocabulary. | 3.92 | Positive |
| 7. I read online English articles/stories because I want to improve my linguistic and cultural knowledge. | 4.12 | Positive |

Furthermore, items (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7) in Table 4 demonstrate that students experienced positive external motivation when doing online reading. Allen (2013) elaborates that external motivation refers to the beliefs of the outcomes or expected outcomes. The students have the beliefs about the desirable outcomes of online reading. The outcomes they expected were developing reading habits (Item 3), completing reading tasks (Item 4), fostering confidence (item 5), building up vocabulary (item 6), and improving linguistic and cultural knowledge (item 7). In line with previous findings (Tassinari, 2012; Thorne, 2013), these results show that technology-enhanced reading environment affect learners' motivation positively.

4.1. Providing opportunities for students to plan and execute the plans

One indicator of becoming autonomous is students' ability to make plans. Wenden (1991) stated that planning the learning process is vital for students to be autonomous. Hence, teachers are challenged to encourage students to think about their plans. In the implementation of online reading modules, the students were given projects to make reader responses at the beginning of the course. Because there were both individual and group projects, they started to plan their reading strategy and discuss group reader response e-posters. It can be seen that the students were inclined to have the responsibilities of their learning. The data from the questionnaire in table 5 showed that students had the tendency to choose their own reading materials, evaluate them before reading, use different strategies to comprehend them and manage their time to finish the task.

Table 5. Planning ahead

| Number | Statement | Mean (out of 5, n=25) |
|--------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | I choose online reading topics which are related to my personal experience or personal concern. | 4.08 |
| 2 | I manage my time to finish my tasks and projects in time. | 4.04 |
| 3 | I use various strategies to comprehend new online reading materials. | 3.76 |
| 4 | I evaluate the articles before choosing them as the source for my Reading Challenges. | 4 |

The students chose articles which they could make connection to. The advent of technology makes it possible for students to choose articles which are connected to them or their surroundings. They confirmed this connection through their reflections.

- (2) I choose topics which are very fun and related with my life.
- (3) I'm not a kind of person who likes drink water. I rather drink milk than water. That's why I choose this article. I wanna know the benefit of drink enough water. So from that article I

- can change my bad habit and try to drink enough water.
- (4) I like skimming and scanning, sometimes predicting too, because skimming and scanning it doesn't need a lot of time, but when you skimming and scanning you must get the main idea or main topic it can help you to know the text structure and predicting the content.
- (5) I'm not a kind of person who patient enough if I get a long text. I always use reading strategies based on my mood. If I'm in a good mood, I often use the skimming and scanning strategies. Then, I'll make a summary to make sure that I get the valid information from the text.

As seen in the students' reflections above, they did not only plan the topics (Statement 2 and 3) they would choose, but also considered their situation (Statement 4) and mood (Statement 5). They access materials which are relevant to them to help them achieve the learning goals. These tasks provided some space for students to take control over their own learning management. After choosing their own topics, the students executed the plan. The data collected from the questionnaire in Table 6 showed that students were active in their learning process.

Table 6. Executing the plan

| Number | Statement | Mean (out of 5, n=25) |
|--------|--|-----------------------|
| 5 | I use reference materials (dictionary and google search) and different learning strategies to understand the text that I read. | 4.32 |
| 6 | I am actively involved in activities, such as discussion and class presentation. | 3.92 |
| 7 | I ask questions to friends or teachers when I don't understand the materials. | 4.28 |
| 8 | I help my friends who have difficulties in understanding the texts discussed in class or in online environment. | 4.08 |

Teachers help learner exercise autonomy by believing that the students are able to carry responsibility and complete the tasks well (Agustina, 2017). A student's reflection explained how he was engaged in reading the materials using the strategies that he chose:

- (6) I used skimming, scanning, and also predicting to read the texts. By reading the tittle I can predict what topic discussed in this article. I used these strategies because it is easier for me to find and understand the main idea of the article. It saved my time, I can read the article faster, and I still understand the meaning.

This reflection shows that the student executed his own plan by choosing the content he wanted to read and his reading strategies. Students used strategies and tools which help them to reach the learning goals. Since students came to the class prepared, they played active roles in class discussion. Besides sharing responses with their friends, students also consulted their project with the teacher in the classroom. The survey indicated that teacher's support through online tools or face to face interaction is also crucial. The teacher helped students plan and monitor

their progress directly and by using online platforms. Students could choose the means of discussion suitable for them because an online environment provided various ways of interaction.

4.2. Encouraging students to self-evaluate

One characteristic of autonomous learner is the ability to self-evaluate (Gardner, 2011; Herawati 2010). This designed study encouraged students to evaluate their experience by reflecting on their projects and share them in online forum. The students were challenged to know “the quality of their work based on evidence and explicit criteria for the purpose of doing better work” (Gardner, 2011, p. 79). Reader-responses enabled students not only to create meaning, but also to monitor their strengths and weaknesses when doing the challenges as seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Self-evaluation

| Number | Statement | Mean (out of 5, n=25) |
|--------|---|-----------------------|
| 9 | I know my strengths when reading English online texts. | 4.04 |
| 10 | I know my weaknesses when reading English online texts. | 4.16 |
| 11 | I reflect on the reading strategies I use when doing the challenges. | 3.8 |
| 12 | I am responsible in achieving the goals and finishing the reading challenges I have in this course. | 4.12 |

The most frequent difficulty that students face when doing online tasks was encountering new vocabulary. They realized that it hindered their comprehension (Statement 7) and their reading speed (Statement 8) as mentioned in these reflections.

- (7) When I met a lot of new vocabulary, it was difficult for me to understand the text.
- (8) There are 2 difficulties that I find when doing my reading challenges. First of all, when I find new vocabulary, the text becomes difficult. Second, I need a lot of time for understand the article or reading challenges than my friends.

Although they knew texts with new vocabulary would slow their reading speed, some students were challenged to find articles which allow them to learn new English words so they could enrich their vocabulary.

- (9) First, I get lots of things to be learned. Second, I can learn how to manage a good sentence on writing reflection by reading some articles. Third, I can get new vocabulary in every new article. Forth, reading challenges make me love reading more and more. Last, using the digital tools makes me more challenging because I can find new thing that I haven't learn before.
- (10) Honestly, reading a digital article/pdf can make my eyes watery or tired easily than reading a physical books/newspaper/magazine. That's why I chose this method to

shorten my time to read. Using this method, sometimes I need to re-read one paragraph before if I read too fast and can't connect the previous paragraph into the next. I've tried to use other methods, but for me, skimming and scanning is always better for me to understand longer text faster and more efficient.

They tried to solve the difficulty in understanding some vocabulary using *Google Translate* which sometimes mislead their understanding. They could easily access other dictionaries to help them understand the text. The ease of using digital tools offers them opportunity to find tools that can serve their needs. Studies have mentioned that online learning environment help students manage their own learning and monitor the strategies (Ardi, 2017; Lai & Gu, 2011; Ranalli, 2012). Student reflection 10 above shows how a student experiments with different reading strategies to find the strategies suitable for to evaluate the information she had before doing the online tasks. Not only did they reflect on the difficulties and the benefits they got, but they also monitored their reading strategies.

4.3. Enhancing collaboration

Learner autonomy does not end in self-evaluation. When students are autonomous, they are able to work together in groups (Herawati, 2011). Online tasks open opportunities for students to collaborate. When working in their own groups for online tasks, they distributed responsibilities to each member of the groups. With different responsibilities, the students in a group developed different perspectives. Some made summaries and shared how the texts or stories were organized, while others found new words and shared to the groups how to make sentences using the words. Furthermore, they also helped other groups by giving comments on other friends' projects.

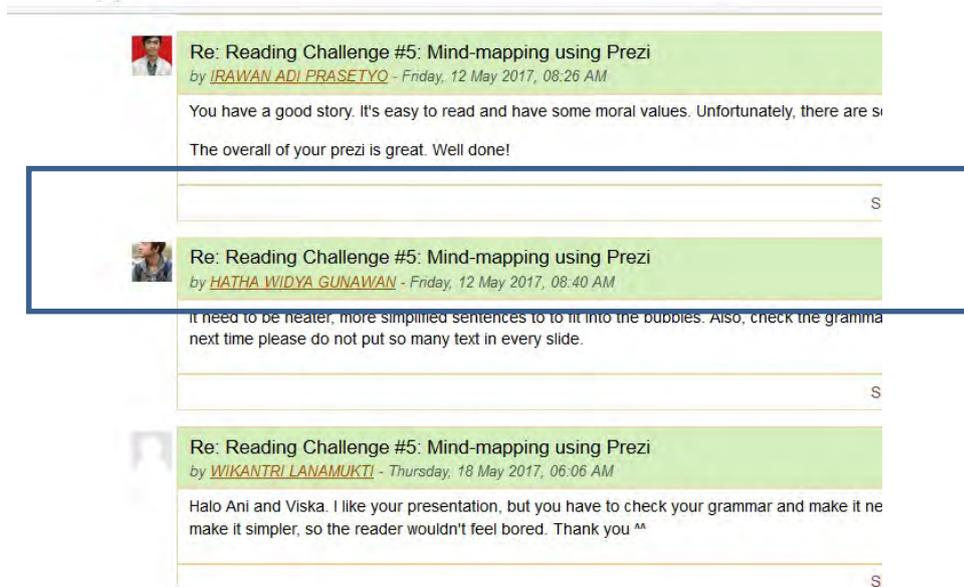


Figure 5. Students' collaboration

Figure 5 shows that students gave both positive appreciations to their friends and also suggestions to improve their projects. A visual student highlighted in the box did not only suggest other groups to pay more attention to details in the structures of the sentences, he also asked them to edit the layouts of the project. The collaborative atmosphere in doing the tasks encourages “a community of readers”. Online learning enabled learners in the class to learn from their friends and share ideas to improve their friends' works. In this case, online learning fosters collaboration which fits into Indonesian “*gotong royong*” (mutual assistance) practices.

5. Conclusion

Although the study on the relationship between digital reader response tasks and learner autonomy is limited in depth and scope, some findings are noteworthy. The implementation of digital reader response tasks offers more opportunities for students to exercise their autonomy. Students considered that these tasks were beneficial as they gave them more opportunities to play an active role in planning, reading and responding to English texts. By having access to reading materials and activities provided online, students can control their own learning by choosing the texts, adjusting their own reading time, place, media and strategies, as well as monitoring their progress. Not only do these online tasks help learners improve their reading skills, but these digital reading responses also enable them to exercise their autonomy in making plans, executing tasks and monitoring their learning progress. The findings highlight that these online tasks opened opportunities to collaborate with friends, so the tasks also encouraged learners to nurture social dimensions of autonomy. This study has shown that the

use of technology, such as infographic tools in e-forum, can be utilized to nurture learner autonomy in doing reader-response challenges for reading classes. It is then highly recommended for teachers to use digital reader response tasks in collaborative reading environment to encourage students' ownership of their learning process.

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