

The Students' Perception on Academic Reading Log for Essay Writing Literacy: Some Influential Points

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Reading log or the so-called reading journal is a journal to monitor how far the students read within their own pace and time. This study aimed at investigating the students' perceptions of some influential points of using reading log in order to enhance the students' ability in writing academic article. The participants of this study were twenty sophomores pursuing their study at Universitas Islam Malang taking Writing IV class. They were asked to fill reading logs given after reading academic articles. They had to read one academic article each day for one week at home. A questionnaire and a brief interview were used as the instruments to collect the data which were then analyzed descriptively qualitatively. The findings show that, according to the students, reading log is very beneficial for the students specifically when they are reading academic articles in some cases. However, there are some aspects that must be considered by both the students and the facilitator in administering reading log to escalate the students' ability in writing academic article.

Keywords: reading log, academic article, journal

INTRODUCTION

Reading, in line with listening, which is one out of four language skills, is considered as the building block for other two other skills—writing and speaking. The former two skills, the so-called receptive skills, determine how good the last two skills, famously known as the productive skills, mastered by the students. Reading is basically an activity including, say, some processes to decode information encoded in the written materials (Grabe, 2009). Those processes which are supposed to define the complexity of reading are like 1) a rapid and an efficient process—when reading, the activity goes rapidly and efficiently beginning from word recognition, syntactic parsing, meaning formation, critical evaluation, and, the last but not the least, confirmation the new information to the prior knowledge; 2) a comprehending process; 3) an interactive process between the reader and the writer; 4) a strategic process in which the readers read based on their purpose—different purpose calls for different strategy; 5) a flexible process—in this process, reader keeps in line the reading process undergone with its purpose; 6) purposeful process; 7) an evaluative process, the reader in some cases gives responses to the reading materials they have read; 8) a learning process; and 9) a linguistic process between morphological, phonological, syntactic and semantic of the language.

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Thereadingmaterials might vary from the very formal texts to less formal or informal ones. Based on a survey of eighty-two participants ranging from freshmen to seniors [Rahmawati \(2018\)](#), the university level students' reading literacy of Universitas Islam Malang especially in reading academic article is still considered low and needs to be improved considerably. The students tended to read the less formal or even the informal reading materials like reading social media, newspaper, magazine, etc. They mostly read academic articles for the sake of fulfilling the teacher's assignment; they do not read those materials unless the teacher asked them to do so.

In this particular study, therefore, the researcher concerned about reading academic articles since reading such materials is considered a must for university level students. The more the students are exposed to the reading materials—in this case academic articles—the more they can write in such a way [Krashen \(1997\)](#). Writing academic article for the tertiary level of education is deemed as the first runner-up a account for the fact that the students in their level are required to compose academic written materials in the form of final projects or even more 'dramatic' than that like thesis. In this extent, it was also found, based on a case study, that the students of Universitas Islam Malang majoring at English education also had low level of writing habit especially academic articles [Rahmawati \(2018\)](#).

Writing, as in the above-mentioned, is regarded as one of the productive skill other than speaking. It is literally defined as the activity of conveying information via the medium of print. The students, within their learning process, are required to compose some academic outputs like articles, essays, and other academic writings. That's why reading article is very beneficial activity for them to do in order that they are habituated to read such article in their daily. The students, then, are expected to know how a good academic article will be in terms of its structure—grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and mechanics—and its composition—authors' name, abstract, introduction, method, findings and discussion, conclusion and suggestion, reference. By knowing how a good article should be, it is believed that the students can write such article later on in an appropriate way.

In this study, the researcher furnishes the previous study done by [Pak and Waseley \(2012\)](#) within which they found that reading log can increase their general understanding the whole reading materials. Slightly differently, this study more concerns on the students' reading habit. Besides the reading materials used in this definite study are all about academic articles which, at the end, have some benefits towards the students' capability in writing better academic articles. The following subtopics elucidate a clear explication of some theories underpinning this study.

Extensive reading, as its name, is the activity of reading in an extensive way; extensive in terms of what, when, where and how the students read. The students, in this case, are allowed to choose themselves the materials they want to read, the time to read, the place at which they are eager to read, which are based

on their own pace. This activity, according to some experts, can promote positive attitudes towards reading activity with which the life-long readers exist [Grabe \(2009\)](#). The positive attitudes which can, then, be assumed as the result of the successful extensive reading activity are like 1) vocabulary growth; 2) language and literacy skill development; 3) conceptual-knowledge growth; and 4) reasoning skill development. The theory of extensive reading is the pioneer of the following reading activity, Sustained Silent Reading.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) or widely known as Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) is a reading activity within which the students can select the reading materials themselves [Grabe \(2009\)](#). This is conducted a few minutes before the usual class begins. Different from extensive reading (ER from this point forward) activity, SSR is conducted within a certain time in a certain place modelled by the teacher; the students, however, are, like in ER, allowed to choose themselves the available materials to read. In this activity, the students get less exposure than in ER due to the fact that the materials are provided by the teacher though those still vary in terms of, say, the topics.

In some studies, it was proven that SSR can successfully be applied for university level students learning foreign language [Mason and Krashen \(1997\)](#), [Lee \(2007\)](#) and [Liu, 2007](#) in [Krashen \(2001\)](#). In some others, it was mentioned that some aspects of English competencies which can be boosted through the implementation of SSR are writing, spelling, vocabulary [Krashen \(2004\)](#), writing fluency [Lee \(2007\)](#), and grammar [Krashen \(2004\)](#), [Rodrigo \(2006\)](#), and [Mason \(2007\)](#)

There is a guideline to conduct the successful SSR activity [Krashen \(2011\)](#); those are 1) read a little every single day; 2) allocate the time less than the students can handle i.e. if the students, say, can concentrate within them ten; 3) the reading materials might be comics, magazines, and graded readers—language students' books; 4) allow the students to select their own reading materials provided; 5) the difficulty level of the reading materials could be either below—easier (i-1) or above—more difficult (1+1)—the students' difficulty level [Krashen \(2005\)](#); 6) SSR does not work for both beginners and advanced readers [Krashen \(2004\)](#); 7) the books might not be finished at a time the students read; 8) no rewards are available; 9) provide a conducive atmosphere when reading [Trelease and Krashen \(1996\)](#), Eating and Reading in the School Library; and 10) authentic materials are the most suggested for the readers [Trelease \(2006\)](#). This study, however, was basically based to this guideline which had been adapted beforehand in order to fit the method—SSR—to the context in which SSR was applied or, briefly saying, to make the method contextual. The steps of applying SSR, in this study, are revealed in detail in 'Method'. When conducting SSR activity within the class, the teacher, in this study, distributed a reading log to control the students' reading activity as well as to know the students' progress. The following subtitle figures out what reading log is and how it should be, in brief.

Reading log or the so-called reading journal is a journal to monitor how far the students read within their own pace and

time Pak and Waseley (2012). According to them, Such log was formulated to boost the students' reading habit by assigning them to read a few minutes per day—adapted SSR method—and note down the reading materials they have read in the log. Empirically, reading log is also substantially helpful to enhance the students' comprehension towards textbook reading materials Winiharti et al. (2014a). The participants of this study were 104 students coming from four distinct departments—Department of Information System, Department of Information Technology, Department of Japanese Language and Culture, and Department of English Language and Culture—in Bina Nusantara University. The result revealed more than half of the participants performed positively towards reading textbook materials; their comprehension of the assigned materials increased significantly. Reading log, thus, is assumed to be beneficial for students to build their reading habit and to more greatly establish their apprehension as well. The former assumption, however, still needs more empirical studies to confirm. In this study, therefore, the researcher was aimed to, say, verify once more the use of reading log to build the students' reading habit towards academic articles, which then presumably improve their ability in writing such materials appropriately.

Reading log is used as a tool to control the students' reading activity, as in the above-mentioned, not as a pressure, a deadline, a surveillance or any other, say, haunted sort of thing which might, at the end, demolish the intrinsic motivation to read. Besides in this log no certain goals are required. Imposing certain goals might result negative effect on the students' reading habit especially their inherent motivation to read Deci et al. (1999). This motivation determines if one is considered as a life-long reader; the higher the innate motivation someone has, the more proficient reader he/she will be and the other way around. Reading log consists of some components like day and date, the title of the article, the author, the duration, new vocabulary, and comments (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 | Reading Log's Components

Day	Title	Author	Duration	New Vocabulary	Comments
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“Reading to Write” is not only an activity which ends in itself, but this activity also aims at observing the writing style—or the so-called genre—of specific books read in order that the reader can shape her/his own writing style a According to him, there are some reasons why reading can be a way to be a better writer a) increasing the writers' wisdom which is very influential belonging to a writer; b) familiarizing with the interesting and beautiful written material; c) improving set of unfamiliar words; d) knowing good writing; e) keeping learning and updating; e) blossoming thinking skill and grammar competence as well. Based on the above elaboration, hence, it can be drawn that the reading activity done for

the purpose of being a better writer is a critical reading meaning that it does not only comprehend the reading materials, but it is much more than that—examining actively and judging thoughtfully and thoroughly on the reading materials. How intensive, based on the students' perception, reading log can lead them do such activities—critically examining and judging academic articles—in order to make the students' better in their academic writing is going to discuss briefly in this study.

METHODS

The method used in this study is a case study. Data gained from the field was then analyzed descriptive qualitatively. A qualitative case study calls for intensive, holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon in order to investigate how the subject of the study takes role in the real world Hinkel (2005). The participants of this study were fourteen sophomores of Universitas Islam Malang taking Writing IV class E in the fourth semester academic year 2017/2018. [R1] Questionnaire and a brief interview were conducted to compile a valid data in which one might clarify the other on gaining a trustable data.

The study has conducted during the teaching and learning process for about eight meetings. Within the learning process, the researcher who was also the lecturer at the same time distributed reading log and provided some academic articles downloaded from various accredited journals like *Lingua Cultura*, *Litera*, *Teflin*, and so on which covered miscellaneous topics including listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar, and so forth; the journal, of course, must be at least accredited as the top three journals by Science and Technology Index (*Sinta 3*). Before the usual class began, the lecturer asked them to read as many articles as possible for

utes; the name of the articles read were then jotted down in the reading log given. Not only is the name written in the reading log but also the author and the comments of the articles. This reading log used by the lecturer to monitor their daily reading activities.

A they were asked to write themselves academic articles based on the topics in which they were interested. The teacher monitored their activities from meeting to meeting by evaluating their writing through both reading log submitted weekly and their writing activity. In the very first meeting, based on a brief interview done before conducting the study, the students did not know at all what academic articles are and how to write such.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data got from online questionnaire provided by Google which was distributed to fourteen students in the end of this study, it was found that 64.3% of the students agreed that reading log can help them to write better articles. Some other

students that was 14.3% extremely agree to the use of reading log when reading academic article. The remaining students those were 7.1% or only one student and 14.3% or two students disagree and extremely disagree respectively of the application of reading log when reading academic article. The result like in the above explanation can be pictured in the **Figure 1**.

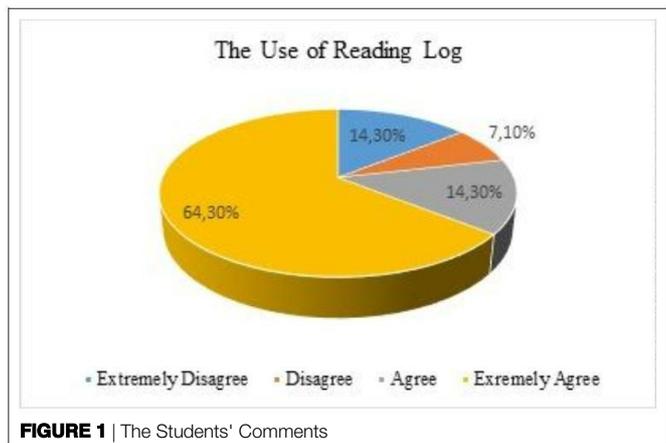


FIGURE 1 | The Students' Comments

The result shows that reading log can roughly stimulate the student to read article. Based on the data obtained from questionnaire and a brief interview of fourteen sophomores, there are some beneficial points found and its proportion when benefiting reading log as a tool stimulating the students' appetite to read article daily. Those points are that reading log 1) improves the students' habit in reading academic articles (43% of the students); 2) enhances the students' vocabulary mastery (50% of the students); 3) helps to find the appropriate data and resources to write a better academic article (14% of the students); 4) escalates the students' comprehension of the academic article (35.7% of the students); and 5) increases the students' knowledge of academic article (14.3%). **Table 2** is presenting the mentioned result.

TABLE 2 | Some Influential Aspects of Reading Log

Aspect	Percentage
Improving the students' reading habit	43 %
Enhancing the students' vocabulary mastery	50 %
The appropriate tool to stimulate the students to write academic article	14 %
Escalating the students' comprehension of the academic article	35.7 %
Increasing the students' knowledge of academic article	14.3 %

In the other pendulum, even tough, the researcher found some aspects that must be considered; in this extent, of course, the facilitator's creativity is needed to maximize the use of reading log for habituating the students' reading, in this case reading academic article. Those are the teacher must make sure that

1) the articles given to the students are considered as good articles issued by accredited journal; 2) the articles supplied by the teachers must vary in terms of the topics; 3) the articles must be higher than the students' level of difficulty in terms of vocabulary and structure; 4) the instruction given by the teacher must be as clear as possible; 5) the teacher must skim the article in order to know its difficulty level; and 6) the teacher must be a model for the students at class, reading the articles.

The result of the discussion aiming at investigating the phenomena to answer the research question can be concisely bridged as follows. Based on the above findings, voluntary reading log can assist students in both promoting reading habit **Pak and Waseley (2012)** and increasing the students' capability in writing, especially in the academic realm. These two discoveries enrich what **Winiharti et al. (2014b)** established in their study; they found about 88 % of the students who were assigned to write reading journal—the so-called reading log in this study—showed positive attitude in terms of the students' general understanding towards the assigned reading materials. Despite its benefit, some biases possibly obstructed the reading and writing activities like when the students focused more on the unfamiliar words, on the comprehension of each sentence when reading, and on the reading log itself which asks them to fill out some aspects i.e. unfamiliar words, comments, etc. The teacher, therefore, must take role to explain them briefly that those activities can, in the end, hinder the goal of reading activity that is writing better academic article. The teacher must inform to the students they should read as many articles as they can in a given time and must stop looking up dictionary when some unfamiliar words emerged. The students must know that they are asked to figure out the general meaning of the whole text, not the specific meaning of each word, and to critically examine and judge the articles before they are asked to write themselves academic articles.

CONCLUSION

The researcher drew some conclusion related to the use of reading log in habituating the students to read article daily and in improving the student's ability in writing academic articles. The influential points of reading log used when reading academic article are improving the students' habit in reading academic articles, enhancing the students' vocabulary mastery, helping to find the appropriate data and resources to write a better academic article, escalating the students' comprehension of the academic article, and increasing the students' knowledge of academic article. Some considerations in making use of reading log are the articles given to the students are considered as good articles issued by accredited journal; the articles supplied by the teachers must vary in terms of the topics; the articles must be higher than the students' level of difficulty in terms of vocabulary and structure; the instruction given by the teacher must be as clear as possible; the teacher must skim the article in order to know its difficulty level; and the teacher must be a

model for the students at class, reading the articles.

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