

The Use of Reading Log to Build Lao's Secondary School Students' English Literacy

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: This study aims to examine the use of Reading Log to build Lao's junior student's English literacy and related to the Reading Log as a useful literacy practice that can build the student's English literacy that can promote parental involvement in student's English literacy, and the challenges in implementing Reading Log in SENGSAI school. The researcher used qualitative methodology to conduct this study by observation, interviews with teachers and some parents to find out how teachers conduct Reading Log to teach students and how Reading Log promote parental involvement.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is inseparable from human life. Every day human is surrounded by literacy events. At home, on streets, at their workplace, at their school they encounter and make use of literacy. It shows that literacy can be built even from the youngest age and from their family environment, which adult have significant role toward children literacy (Vélez, Olivencia, and Zuazua 2017). Though understandings and definitions of literacy might be different among countries and agencies, UNESCO defines that the most common understanding of literacy is a set of tangible skills particularly involving cognitive skills in reading, writing, and numeracy. In addition, literacy is not merely learning to read and write, but how one makes use of those skills to express his or her thoughts and ideas for learning, communicating with other people, improving his or her self quality, and participating on the community development (UNESCO 2006). This continuous literacy learning should be promoted in Laos, in all subjects taught at school, including English. In a context of learning English as a foreign language in Laos, one needs to know how to read and write in English. Such promotion can be done by having an instructional design and adoption of innovative pedagogy (Blau, Shamir-Inbal, and Avdiel 2020).

Teaching children to read and write in English should not deviate from a core goal in Teaching English for Young Learners as to arouse children's interest in English. It is important to teach English to young learner. The earliest they learn language, the better they will be in using the language (Uysal and Yavuz 2015). The reason why young learner could achieve better in learn English is because of their imitating ability and curiosity (Stakanova and Tolstikhina 2014). There are plenty of ways teacher can teach English to young learner. Teacher can use the kind of drama, as it allows the children to play in their imaginary world while learn the language (Demircioğlu 2010). It is also possible to utilize various technology during the learning process as children nowadays are digital natives (Gonzalez-Acevedo 2016). Children should feel positive about reading and writing in English. The kind of positive feeling is important as they tend to self-evaluate their own selves (Liu and Brantmeier 2019). Reischer (2016) said that the reading log has detrimental effects on students' interest and attitudes towards reading itself. Reading Log can also make the children want to stop reading (Nair 2014). It triggers a person's counterwill – a resistance force that exists in a person's mind. It can make people do the opposite of what they are being told to do. If the teachers or parents force children to read due the Reading Log, they will feel bored and they will have a desire to say no and end up with a hatred feeling towards reading. Reading log is coded according to the different literary styles that are used in the program, which makes us ponder about the enforcement and usefulness of the reading (Delarriba and Basabe 2015). Lyutaya (2011), examined the reasons for reading extensive literature in the EFL classroom and explained how to combine reading tasks together using reading recordings.

The results of her study show that the students will receive extensive reading success in the recording, by understanding their characters' motivations, explanations about the story unfold and reflecting on stories that are related to their own experiences (Lyutaya 2011). Reading notes shows advantages in teacher training programs and others, especially about literature, teaching and the response theory of readers (Ekstam 2018).

Lyutaya (2011) defines reading log as a written record of students' personal reaction to the text on several labels. Students use the reading log to express their attitudes toward a text, reflect their own discoveries, and link what they know and what they are currently learning. Lyutaya (2011) also said "it is a simple and the best method to note down a reader's thoughts about a book or any other material, his/her own connection with the text, language, plot, theme and characters he/she came to know". Making a log about what you read helps you gain insight of the texts. This is the place where you can record your own thoughts and reflections. If you are used to reading every day, even for half an hour, then making a Reading Log will help you organize and summarize your reading.

Concerning parental involvement, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) said that the description of parental involvement as parental participation in the educational courses and experiences from their children which contains school based and home-based parental involvement. School-based parental involvement includes activities such as attending parent-teacher meetings, while at home-based parental involvement is such as controlling children while doing their homework (Hornby and Lafaele 2011). By having a good literacy, the students find it easier to understand given lessons which are delivered in English. However, there has not been a study addressing this issue.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used the qualitative methodology to conduct the study, particularly the case study design, by observations and interviews with teachers and parents, which means that the data were analyzed qualitatively. The researcher wanted to investigate Reading Log program within its real-life context. Thus, the researcher tried to capture phenomena which happen in the steps of Reading Log as it is. This research aims at examining the use of reading log to build junior student's English literacy and to shed light on the Reading Log program as a useful literacy practice which can build children's English literacy that can promote parental involvement, give positive or negative impacts on the children's interest and attitudes towards reading as a recreational activity.

The research was conducted in SENGSAI School, Nongkhankhou village, Vientiane capital, Road number 13 North Laos. The participants were selected from two classes, with forty students, each first-grade class consisted of twenty students. The researcher selected the first graders as the subjects of the research since the researcher wanted to know the step of Reading Log program from the beginning when the students still did not have a strong basic literacy skill in English. The researcher expected to gain much more convincing data on the success in building English literacy. Furthermore, this research also involved the parents of the subject since this would also answer the research question on ways the Reading Log program promotes parental involvement. Other participants of this research were three homeroom teachers, one native English teacher, and some parents who were related to the implementation of the Reading Log program. The data were collected by using multiple ways. It was done through interviews with teachers, parents and observations on the implementation of Reading Log. It was also used for the analysis of triangular data in order to get reliability in this study.

Research instruments and data collection techniques were used to answer the following research questions.

- Why does SENGSAI School conduct the Reading Log program?
- How does the Reading Log program promote parental involvement in the students' English literacy in SENGSAI School?
- What are the challenges in implementing Reading Log Program in SENGSAI School?

The researcher used two research instruments, namely: Interview Protocol and field notes. Ten questions were used for interviews protocol, through which the researcher wanted to find out how teachers conduct the program to teach the students and how to improve TEYL in their school.

Interview protocol

The researcher developed an interview protocol. The semi-structured interview still gives a room for the researcher to modify questions depending on the situation. She interviewed the teachers for research question number one and parents for research question number two.

Observation

Observation enabled the researcher to record the class observations in detail as well as her personal comments expressing her own thoughts and feelings on what she observed. The observation was conducted once in a week in both classes in turn in order to help her answer the research questions. The researcher observed when teacher taught in class and she noted everything from their activities in class such as when students have activity about reading log so the researcher noted whether they give attention to reading or not and whether they are interested in this program or not. The observation was conducted once in a week in both classes in turn to help answer the research questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data obtained through interviews and observations. In the data display, the data were organized and demonstrated in the structure of vignettes and interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with the observation class activities. After that, the researcher and collaborators made the conclusion based on the data obtained from the process of data collection. Through the interviews, the research found out the parents' opinions about the use of reading Log program. Moreover, the researcher wanted to know how parents get involved in their students' English Literacy. The researcher used the data from observations and interviews to answer the research questions in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From interviewing the teachers, the researcher found that one of the reasons of the use of Reading Log program in SENGSA Senior High School is that it is considered more interesting than the traditional methods. Reading something that interesting for the students is important. This is why teacher should think about the topic or reading materials that interesting for the students as it could boost their motivation in reading (Merisuo-Storm and Soininen 2014). Finding interesting reading topic or material will not only benefit the students during their reading process. It will also help them to build such a positive attitude and feeling toward reading as well as promote a good reading comprehension (Zaccoletti, Altoè, and Mason 2020). Help the students to have positive feeling could also be more rewarding in the long run of reading activity (Soemer and Schiefele 2018).

Since students have low level of English proficiency, the school conducted this program to help them improve their English skills. Using various activity, which one of them is reading log could help the students to improve their reading. It is possible as reading log is interesting for the students. Those feeling then lead to such a motivation to read in which it resulted in positive outcome, which is the improvement in students reading comprehension and ability to read (Guay et al. 2019; Hwang 2019; Soemer and Schiefele 2018). One of the teachers said that the Reading Log Program did not only make students more interested in reading than before, but also it forced them to read a lot in order to make them improve their English literacy. The Reading Log Program makes students feel at ease and want to read in order to improve their skills. This School conducted this program because it was trying to find new ways to increase the students' interest in reading, to make the class fun and enjoyable during the Reading Log class, and to help students build their English literacy by promoting the reading habit using Reading Log. Literacy is generally important in language learning, especially in the context of young learners because they are still in the phase of shaping their habit and their language fluency. The teacher tries to make students have fun while they are in reading class and during all the class activities and make them want to eventually find reading fun, even when they are outside of class.

In addition, the researcher found that there are several reasons why the School conducted this program. The first reason is that Reading Log is a new way to teach reading and it is suitable for low-level students. Innovative way of teaching play significant role in promoting a good teaching and learning process (Zedan, Yusoff, and Mohamed 2015). Thus, preparing innovative way of teaching is one job of the teacher to address the challenge in the classroom (Nasongkhla and Sujiva 2015), such as the differences in students' cognitive level. The Reading Log program consists of using storybooks relevant to students' level and interest in order to motivate them to read. It is also a good way to encourage students to read more and record their achievements, especially those who still have low level of English. In the classroom there were only some facilities including a blackboard and 2 fans, there was no LCD, no speaker, or projector to support learning and teaching processes, teachers brought their own laptop and materials to support their teaching. The classroom was quite big with individual seats and one desk for the teacher. While the teacher was teaching, some students were quiet, and some were noisy and talking to their friends or moving around the class. The English teacher started the class by distributing storybooks to students, then, asked them to read and ask the teacher if they did not know the meaning of words or could not pronounce it. The teacher asked them to make groups for the activities and asked some questions to the groups related to the storybooks that they have read. The researcher noticed that the English teacher was using the Lao language in class more than English because the students could not understand. So, the teacher had to translate into the Lao language after speaking in English. Moreover, some students were not interested in reading the storybook.

From the result of the finding, the researcher found that some of the parents were aware of the Reading Log Program, but others did not know enough about this program because they did not have time for their children. Some of the parents believed that the Reading Log can help students remember what they had read, which made a good way to help them improve their reading skill and literacy and make them realize the importance of reading, as well as increase their motivation to read. Additionally, only some parents were found to be really involved in their children's learning process. In order to maximize students' learning process, it is important for the teacher to work with parents to support children or students learning process. The partnership of the teacher and the parents could improve students' learning (Guo and Kilderry 2018). The way parents get involved with their children was by encouraging them to read and trying to implement the reading culture in their homes. They also support them, to improve their reading skills, by asking them to read books whenever they have free time instead of playing, or by shared-reading with them when they are not busy. Furthermore, some parents think that it is quite hard to handle their children or make them study because the children are still worried about playing more than studying. Therefore, they support them by helping them with their homework, motivating them to read, or even by forcing them whenever they are distracted by other things because if they do not control them, then they may not have any desire to read at all. On the other hand, some parents claim that they do not have time for their children. Therefore, they rarely read the books or spent time with their children while doing their homework. In addition, given the relatively low interest and literacy of students, teachers expressed their doubt about the parents' involvement.

Through the observations and the interviews, the researcher found that some students do not have positive attitudes towards the Reading Log program. Although some of them enjoy reading, others still have no interest in reading. Reading Log program made students read in class and at home, which motivated some of them when they noticed the improvement. It is, however, important to motivate the students to learn. It can be done by give more cognitive support as well as motivating instructional (Law 2011). However, because of the hard work applied on students through the Reading Log, some of them lost all motivation or even desire to read. According to parents, the effectiveness of the program for students is still questionable because their children still do not want to pay

attention to their homework of reading books, and it is quite hard to handle them or make them read if they do not want to. This leads some parents to force their children to read or finish their homework. Another challenge in implementing Reading Log has to do with the lack of facilities and materials that could be used during this program. This led some teachers to bring their personal devices and materials to the class. Furthermore, while the teachers teach in the class, some students do not pay attention to them and don't even join the activities, for they prefer being noisy while playing with their friends, which often hamper the teaching process. Moreover, some students find the material too hard for them because they cannot understand since they have low mastery of English skills. Thus, it is quite impossible for them to read or understand.

The researcher found that the first reason of the use of Reading Log program in SENGSAI School is that the program consists of using storybooks that are interesting to students and it is believed that it motivates students to read and improve their English skills. Effective reading skills are especially vital in the EFL context because exposure to spoken English is scanty, and reading is very often the only source of comprehensible and meaningful linguistic input that helps unconscious acquisition of the language (Krashen 1985). The Reading Log is a good way to encourage students to read more and record their achievements. As Lyutaya (2011) claimed, the Reading Log Program teaches students how to choose interesting topics and materials to read according to their level which makes them want to read again. Students read books that are appropriate to their language level, and they choose the time and place to read.

The researcher also found that the Reading Log Program is appropriate to apply in the school because it made teachers able to use different ways to make their students interested in reading and make them feel pleased while reading. Teachers could create tasks by using engaging activities, games, simplify a task by breaking it down into smaller parts, and model tasks through different ways. This allowed them to provide suitable tasks for each learning style and control students by creating a comfortable atmosphere that can ensure their success in learning English under the Reading Log program. The Reading Log Program is highly suitable for low level students such children and young learners in secondary school or high school because it is flexible. Reading Log can encourage students to read and pay more attention to reading. It is a good way to be applied for young learners. This is because, it develops their mind and their language skills. In addition, it can help them learn to listen and make them have more passionate to read (E Reischer 2016).

The Reading Log builds students' literacy. It is believed that as much as learners read, they can remember vocabulary and spelling. Therefore, the Reading Log improves their literacy in not only reading but also in writing and speaking skills (UNESCO 2006). While using reading log, teachers may help students build their English literacy by promoting reading habit using reading log. The more we read, the more competent language learners we become, and the more we enjoy reading, the more we read, and the more competent language learners we become (Gee 1999). From the observations and interviews, the researcher found that through the Reading Log, students build their literacy and stand a greater chance of achieving higher fluency compared to adult learners, especially if they accustom themselves into the habit of reading much earlier. Extensive reading allows students to enjoy reading as they get a general understanding of ideas, learn reading strategies, gain new vocabulary, and boost their English literacy. Reading assignments also make it efficient to blend the other skills: students speak and listen when they discuss the stories in groups and write when they perform the reading activities. Students can become good writers and conversationalists by reading as it can make them understand more in less time. If they can read faster, they will find it easier to pick up knowledge and information fast. Teaching through storybooks can provide a world of imagination in which the children can enjoy learning language (Cameron 2001).

Through the interviews, the researcher found that some of parents does not have time for their children, even though some of them cared more and paid more attention to their children, the problem is they also could not help them a lot because parents also have low skill of English language and some parents, unfortunately, did not care about their children's homework at all. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), and Hornby and Lafaele (2011) mentioned that the parent level of education is very important for parental involvement. For this reason, the research found that the fact that most parents have low levels of English proficiency; they tend to get less involved in school activities (Desforges et al. 2003). However, most of them were aware of the importance of reading and the benefit of using Reading Log, thus, encouraged their children to read more even during their free time and monitored them by asking them to do their homework. Moreover, whenever they took the storybooks home, some parents checked their children's progress in reading the books and Reading Log even though the child did not want but they had to because they were forced or encouraged by their parents.

Parents should start to support their children's academic development from earliest elementary grades (Hill and Tyson 2009; Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey 2013). Parental storybook reading has been found to have positive effects on children's early literacy skills (Bus, IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini 2016; Sénéchal and LeFevre 2002). Specifically, reading aloud with children increases their vocabulary (Hargrave and Sénéchal 2000), facilitates receptive and expressive language (Baker et al. 2001), and encourages later reading achievement and an understanding of language (Kleeck, Stahl, and Bauer 2003). Early parent involvement regarding children's literacy practices has significant and long-term impact (Mullis et al. 2004).

This research study showed that the parents motivated their children by reading together with them often, tried to understand their mood, their attitude and talked with them calmly, and spent more times with them. This way, they tried to motivate them to read. Every parent has their own ways for asking their children to do their homework, while some force their children, other prefer not to force them to do if they still do not want to do it. The awareness of their responsibility raised the willingness of parents to provide a range of involvements such as helping their children review lessons, do homework, and go to English courses.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that the use of Reading Log, in SENGSAI School, was improved after the School conducted the program. The main facts within the framework of theoretical basis of the study consisting of the definition of Reading Log and English Literacy. The results of this research study showed that the implementation of the use of Reading Log Program succeeded in improving the teaching and learning in class. The use of Reading Log was an appropriate method to be implemented in the classroom as the students gained more passion to learning. It implies that the students had the willingness to read and that was due to the Reading Log Program through the opportunities it offers that enable the students to get more encouragement to read.

In addition, the observation and interview showed that the Reading Log Program was conducted in the School, because the School wanted the students to have more time for reading in classroom activities and motivated them to read books. However, some students were not were interested in Reading Log. Thus, the teachers still need to motivate and find more fun activities in teaching reading to make students have more desire to study. From the observation, the researcher found that some students are quite bored of class activities. As story books are not interesting for them, they do not pay attention, so they do not even make effort to understand what the teacher wants them to do in class.

Furthermore, the parents are not really involved in their children's learning process, as the finding shows, some students are not really interested in the Reading Log. Parents need to pay more attention to their children, because they have an important role in encouraging them to learn, supporting them and giving them motivation. However, some parents are not cooperating with the program and teachers and do not even know about the Reading Log Program.

This study has widely opened the researcher's mind about the practical English teaching through Reading log. It highlighted the problems and difficulties faced by the English teachers in the classroom, and the ways to deal with students. In addition, the researcher found that the problem is some students were not interested in Reading Log, so it make teacher difficulty to deal with them and also, the students have low level in English skill, it make them had lost motivation to it, and the method also make students bored. This research study has expended the researcher's insight about the steps that need to be carefully followed and done in the right order.

- The reading skill has been improved by implementing the Reading Log Program, in order to benefit further from the Reading Log Program for the students in reading class level 1 and level 2 in SENGSAI School, the researcher suggests that:
- The School improves the quality of teachers who join the program in order to make sure that the program helps all the students improve their reading skill. In addition, the school should support the teaching and learning process by providing the facilities in the classroom such: LCD, projector, speaker and other materials.
- The teachers should find new techniques or fun activities to teach, have more times to sharing reading with students, and try to engage all students in doing the class activities. The teachers should also exploit this program to increase the abilities of the students including their reading and writing skills.
- Future researchers continue to improve and develop new access and findings through educational research and development of the English learning in Lao, as well as, conducting similar researches for other students' populations and level to strengthen the findings of this research.

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