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USING NEWSELA AS THE MEDIA OF DIGITAL LITERACY TO ENRICH STUDENTS VOCABULARY

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Abstract

As a follow-up to the issuance of Permendikbud Number 23 of 2015 concerning the Growth Movement of Budi Pekerti, in 2017, the government began to vigorously increase the literacy culture in schools through the "GerakanLiterasiSekolah" (GLS). Teachers should be able to set an example in creating a spirit of literacy culture in school. Through the increasing reading culture for students, this also increases vocabulary for students in learning English. Newsela is an Instructional Content Platform that amplified reading engagement and learning in every subject. The Newsela application can help the teachers also the students to add references to enrich science as a provision for learning. This research aims to distinguish the usage of Newsela as the media of literacy to enrich student's vocabulary. This research pursues to answer two research questions; (1) is Newsela helps students to improve their reading ability? And (2) what are the impacts of Newsela application on the student's on developing vocabulary? The Steps that the researchers use are; first, the researchers share the questionnaire to the English students. Second, the researchers evaluate the responses from the respondents. Third, the researchers find out the answer about the impacts of Newsela to the students. This research used descriptive qualitative to conduct this research. This result of the research shows that Newsela helps students to improve their reading ability.

Keywords: Newsela, digital, literacy, vocabulary, reading

Introduction

The 2013 curriculum is a new curriculum in Indonesia that low interest in writing and reading. It makes the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a literacy program in schools. This program was developed based on the Minister of Education and Culture Number 21 of 2015 concerning the Growth of Character. The purpose of this program is to accustom and motivate the students to want to read and write to cultivate character. The School Literacy program is also expected to produce children with high literacy abilities. Therefore, in 2017, the literacy program was also intensified by starting to incorporate it into learning by doing revisions to the 2013 Curriculum. Literacy is communication through visually read inscriptions, not through the auditory and signaling channels. The visual inscription includes writing language mediated with the alphabet, script (AlfiSyahriani, 2010: 70). The spread of literacy culture is crucial for humans to

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advance their lives because the ingrained culture of literacy will make people accustomed to being critical and reviewing what is happening around them (Pujo Sakti, 2012: 259). According to UNESCO research, literacy culture in Indonesia is extremely low than the other countries. There are various factors influence low literacy culture. In general, this can be derived from factors inside or outside of the school environment. In the environment outside the school, for instance, the family environment also greatly affects someone's reading interest. The instance, the fondness for information technology is growing rapidly but is used for activities that do not support literacy. The low purchasing power of books is also a factor. The factors in the school environment are also diverse, for instance, the limited facilities to support literacy activities such as a good library, and a collection of books that are adequate and varied. Another factor is, learning situations that do not motivate students to study certain books outside of textbooks. Classroom learning is often teacher-centred or just a knowledge transfer activity where students are only filled with information or knowledge from the teacher and are rarely invited to discuss or be given problems about the material discussed to be solved together so students are not motivated to seek information from other sources and not trained to increase knowledge through reading. The figure of the teacher who is expected to be a role model in terms of reading and writing culture also still has not been able to inspire students to be interested in improving their literacy culture. The culture of reading and writing for teachers is important to improve their confidence. Teachers who have a high literacy culture have strong confidence in the results of their work.

Moreover, literacy culture can improve teacher competency along with the demands of high teacher professionalism. The breadth of the teacher's insight also allows students to be more comfortable when consulting. If the teacher can be a good listener, they also can be a good speaker. The diversity of vocabulary allows the teacher to express his opinion in a continuously and cleanly manner. besides, the changes to the 2013 Curriculum which included an increase in literary culture in learning also forced teachers to be able to have a high literary culture. This is an ingredient so that the teacher can balance the progress of science and technology and balance various types of students when classroom learning takes place. The absence of teachers as role models in the school literacy movement is due to the

low culture of teaching literacy. There are still not many teachers who see the importance of literary culture for the continuity of science. Even though the teacher's reading and writing culture can also help teachers to improve their knowledge and skills that can be used for classroom learning. The low level of teacher literacy culture is caused by reading and writing is not a need or a means to develop themselves for teachers. Without this, it is difficult for someone like a teacher to want to read and write. Especially for the history of reading and writing culture teachers are needed to add historical knowledge and references. Another reason that is often raised is busy (Apandi, www.kompasiana.com). Busyness is the reason most often asked by teachers as the reason why literacy culture is not a necessity for them. The increasing number of administrative activities related to the evaluation and assessment of students makes the level of teacher busyness also higher. According to them, there is no time to take time to read books or write. If they also need to spend time taking care of the house and family after returning home, so no portion of time for teachers to read books or write after activities at school.

In this modern era, the teachers and students are required to be able to adapt to the era. One of them is that students and teachers are expected to be able to master foreign languages in communicating globally and also able to use technology in daily life. Language is a sign, symbol, or tool used to exchange the information through spoken or written. Language has a close connection to a daily conversation. Conversation can be easily recognized if they use a language that they understand. According to Crystal (2010), he stated that language could be called a system that people used to communicate with each other and also sharing information. The classification of language includes speaking, writing, and making gestures, or body movement. The simple part of language is sound, and every language has its grammar as well. It means that different language has different rules. These rules in grammar are used to controlling the function of language to share the information or to build and gives the sentences meaning.

As a human being, human learn to speak at least one language. The first language as our mother tongue, the language as we hear as we grow up, and another language as our second language. These second languages can be acquired from our environment, or the new situation around us. When someone learning to

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speak in the second language (SL), and also foreign language (FL) is not as easy as possible. It also needs many efforts in understanding, applying the foreign language, commitment in learning, and developing the cognizance as each language has its systems and grammatically (Santos, Alarcon, & Pablo, 2016, p. 1). It is not wrong when learning something new about language, especially in learning a foreign language, it will take encourage and a strong confident to use the foreign language in a context where the target of language does not use the foreign language outside the classroom. According to Holmes (2013) and Chaika (2008), people are expected to improve their skills and knowledge not only linguistics abilities but also the appropriate communicative competence as well in communicating any foreign language. However, having the ability to understanding how to speak in a foreign language does not benchmark the realization to be able to speak a foreign language. Another point that should be achieved in the success to be able to use a foreign language in communication is to pronounce words correctly, use the correct grammatical, have a rich vocabulary and understand how to use them in speaking.

Vocabulary is one of several important aspects that has a main role in language. Vocabulary is important because someone will be able to communicate well if the interlocutor understands every word that we want to convey. Fluency and ability to use a variety of vocabulary can also make someone look proficient and master the language. Since learning a new language especially the foreign language is not simple many people feel reluctant to learn English and that makes their vocabulary not develop. whereas, in the current era, there are many applications can be used to learn and be able to enrich the vocabulary. One of them is that they can use an application called Newsela.

Newsela is an Instructional Content Platform that amplified reading engagement and learning in every subject. It is an application and web which provide reading digital platform to help people to read some articles. It provides some articles from a variety of genres In the Newsela helps the readers to find some articles which they want. They could find anything there. The features given by it help the readers to improve their reading skills because they could read anything that is their favorite. The Newsela application can help the teachers also the students to add references to enrich science as a provision for learning.

Method

Qualitative research is used in this research. This research aims to distinguish the usage of Newsela as the media of literacy to enrich student's vocabulary. The object of this research was the college students.

To begin this research, the researchers take three steps to answerquestions in this research.

1. Creating the questionnaire and then share it with the college students.
2. Evaluating the responses from the respondents.
3. Find out the answer about the impacts of Newsela to the students.

After collecting the respondents' answers, the data were analyzed to answer the research questions.

Findings and Discussions

This part discusses the result of this research is to conduct this research, the researchers shared the questionnaire to the college students in Indonesia. This questionnaire consists of 12 questions which the researchers thought that this questionnaire becomes the finding of this research.

Most of the respondents are majoring in the English Department. The reason why the researchers focus on English Department students because the researchers know that most of the students of the English Department are familiar with a platform that could improve their ability in English. Some of the respondents have also come from other majors. It means that several college students who are from other majors also know about the platform which could improve the ability to learning English. Starting from semester 2-6 respondents answer the questions. In total 51 questionnaires are collected from the college students.

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In order to collect the data needed, the researcher makes questions of questionnaire as can be seen below:

1. Do you know newsela.com?(Y/N)

_____

2. Do you like to visit this reading platform? (Y/N)

_____

3. Do you know the sections of all which available in the newsela.com? (Y/N)

_____

4. Which section do you like the most?

   Why:

_____

5. Do you think that newsela.com help your to improve you reading? (Y/N)

        Why :

        _____

6. Do you think that newsela.com help you to increase your vocabulary?(Y/N)

        Why:

        _____

    _

7. What is the advantages of using newsela?

_____

8. What is the disadvantages of using newsela?

_____

9. Would you still use newsela to help you to improve your reading skills? (Y/N)

_____

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Then, the researcher gives the questionnaire to the participants and the results are as follows.

Table 1. The Result of Questionnaire

Questionnaire number	YES	NO
1	43 participants (82,7 %)	9 participants (17,3 %)
2	42 participants (80,8 %)	10 participants (19,2%)
3	30 participants (57,7%)	22 participants (42,3 %)
5	43 participants (82,7 %)	9 participants (17,3 %)
6	45 participants (86,5 %)	7 participants (13,5 %)

The first and second questions related to how well the respondents know the Newsela. The first question asked about whether the respondents know the Newsela or not. About 84,3% of the total respondents said they know about Newsela and 15,7%of respondents said they do not know about Newsela. The second question is about the function of Newsela. Most of the respondents know about Newsela as a reading platform. However, several of them who do not know about Newsela said that they do not even know about the function of Newsela as a reading platform. Most of the students who answer *yes* are from the English Department. Also, several of them seem to have not known this reading platform.

In Newsela, it has so many sections. Sections here mean that the genre of every article which is available. Such as war and peace, kids, science, law, health, sports, arts, and opinion. Every section discusses anything in those sections. For instance, when the readers choose health as the section, they will find out all the articles about health. By sharing the questionnaire, the researchers know that most

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of the college students who understand the using of the Newsela already know every section in this reading platform. 58,8% of the total respondents know about the sections in Newsela and about 41,2% do not know about it.

Arts become the most favorite sectionschosen by the respondents. For the reasons column, the respondents have a different opinion about why they like these sections. The opinion section becomes second of the most favorite chosen by the respondents and the science section becomes the third.

By reading Newsela, the respondents answer the next question "do you think Newsela helps you to improve your reading?". Most of the respondents who know Newsela well answer *yes*. The reason why they said they answer it because they could read what they want to read. Besides, in this question, the researchers find out that to improve someone's to read is giving them the text which they want. The other reasons why they think that they think Newsela could improve their reading are, by reading an article from Newsela give them a piece of additional information and Newsela also has much content to improve their reading.

The next question is about vocabulary. 86,3% of the respondents said that by reading articles from Newsela could improve their vocabularies. The reasons why Newsela could improve their reading are that Newsela provides many articles which have new words. Most of the respondents said that they learn new vocabulary by reading it because they find new words there. Also, in total 13,7% of respondents said that Newsela does not help them to improve their vocabulary because they do not know the Newsela.

Every platform has many advantages and disadvantages. Through this questionnaire, the researchers find out that the users of Newsela already know about the advantages and disadvantages. First, the advantages of using Newsela are it could improve the readers reading because they could read any genre that they like. It provides many articles so the readers could choose their favorite articles. The respondents also said that in Newsela they could improve their English skills. Next, the disadvantages of this platform are, we need to join the course to take the quiz sections. As the online platform, using Newsela need to have a strong connection of Internet. By the answer of the respondents said that they will still use Newsela to improve their reading and help them to enrich the vocabularies.

Conclusion

This research aims to find out that Newsela helps the students to improve their reading and enrichtheir vocabularies bu using Newsela. In this research, the researchers understand that to help the students to improve their reading is by giving them a text which they like. Students do not like it when they are pushed to read something that is not their favorites. Besides, to enrich students vocabulary, reading a text could help them to increase their vocabulary. By understanding the respondents' responses, the researchers know that to enrich vocabulary takes two steps. First, they need to find vocabulary that they do not know then look for the meaning in the dictionary. Therefore, the result of this research shows that Newsela helps students to improve their reading ability and enrich their vocabularies.

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