

# A Student- Centered Approach in Teaching Reading in Indonesia (A Case Study)

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**Abstract**—This case study aimed to explore the implementation of a student-centered approach (SCA) in teaching reading course at University of Sumatera (pseudonym) Indonesia. Twenty students and one lecturer were involved in this study. The data collected through field note, video recorded and interview was as a measure of triangulation to ensure the validity and constant comparative analysis was to ensure reliability of the data. The findings of the study illustrated that teaching reading were done at pre, while and post teaching stage by implementing the principles of SCA e.g., developing and using initiating questions, encourage peer interaction, encourage active interaction between teacher and students, encourage and accept student's autonomy and initiative, seek elaboration to students' initial response. The formative and summative assessments were carried out individually or groups through written and spoken work or observation on students' activities. The lecturer allowed a waiting time after posing questions. Media were less interesting because only printed media used, not a multi-dimensional media. Classroom environment was good at pre stage but less conducive at post while and post stage. The implementation of SCA has contributed to the increase of students reading activities but not to their reading comprehension ability.

**Keywords** — Student- Centered Approach, Teaching Reading.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching reading is significant because at university level, learning involves reading academic texts and journal articles, which requires a student to have a good competency in the language in order to comprehend the text. This is so because in reading academic materials, students need to not only read and comprehend but also be critical of what they have read. This requires a higher ability as there is a difference in acquisition and developmental patterns between conversational language or language for interaction and academic language [1]. Reference [2] termed as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS are language skills needed in social situations or day-to-day

interaction with other people. This skill is not very cognitively demanding while CALP refers to formal academic learning listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area or content material. Reference [3] too had earlier noted that majority of learners could not use academic English for oral or written communication.

Attractive techniques, continuous assessment, and creative media will therefore enhance students' reading comprehension. In the context of the present study - Indonesia, the educational instruction system of EFL has undergone various model or methods. SCA has long been incorporated in the Indonesia curriculum for Indonesia University. Hence, it is expected that lecturers incorporate SCA in their teaching and the students are aware of and are experiencing the approach in their learning process. Apart from that, lecturers are encouraged to develop effective methods for teaching reading.

Despite the implementation of a student-centered approach in teaching reading in English, there are still many problems on students' reading comprehension. An analysis of the reading comprehension tests performance among students who have completed the Reading I, Reading II, and Reading III and Academic Reading and Writing showed that between 64% - 92 % of the students failed [4]. So, it is a wonder why students at the University of Sumatera were still not performing well in reading although they have learned English for 12 years.

A SCA has been implemented in many teaching strategies or methods such as individualized instruction, group discussion, inquiry, reciprocal teaching, humanistic education, hypermedia teaching [5]. In teaching reading process, ten principles need to be considered by lecturer : a) Encourage and accept students' autonomy and initiative. b) Use raw data and primary sources along with manipulative, interactive, and physical material. c) Use cognitive terminology in framing task such as classify, analyze, predict, and create. d) Allow students respond to drive lesson, shift teaching strategies, and alter content. e) Inquire about students understanding of concept before sharing their own understanding of concepts. d) Encourage student to engage in dialogue both with teacher and with students. f) Encourage students' inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and encourage students to ask questions of each other. g) Seek elaboration of students' initial responses. h) Engage students in experience that might engender contradictions to their initial hypotheses and encourage discussions. I) Allow a wait time

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after posing questions [5]. Thus, learning is an interaction between lecturers, learners, and learning resources in an academic context or situation [6]. There are five components of SCA that support learning processes to reach the learning goal, e.g. teacher as facilitator, interaction focus on learning, students' show creativity, learning resources multi dimension, learning environment constructive and contextual [6].

The lecturer's authority for classroom activities are : a) Act as facilitators and motivators in the learning process. b) Assessing the competence of the subjects to control student achievement c) Designing strategies and learning environment by providing a wide range of student learning. d) Help students to access, organize and process information in solving real problems. e) Identify and define the pattern of student learning outcomes, and assessment. On the other hand, students' roles in learning activities are : a) Studying the competence of subjects course. b) Studying learning strategies or procedure. c) Doing the learning scenario in which they participate. d) Doing active learning either individually or groups. d) Optimizing abilities to involve actively in classroom [7].

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the lecturer's teaching reading activities through a SCA at University of Sumatera.
2. To explore the lecturer assessment process in teaching reading a SCA at University of Sumatera?
3. To determine the lecturer's teaching aids / media in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera?
4. To explore the classroom environment created by lecturer in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera?

#### **Research Questions**

1. How was the lecturer teaching reading activities through a SCA at University of Sumatera?
2. How was the lecturer assessment process in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera?
3. What were the lecturer teaching aids / media in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera?
4. How was the classroom environment in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation that leads to further understanding of the phenomenon under study [8]. Hence, there is a case to be explored to understand further by gathering insights of the phenomenon and the complex interrelationship among all aspects [9]. It enables observations and insights to be gathered in the natural context [10]. This qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" [11]. Qualitative research is "any kind of research that produces findings not by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" [9]. Reliability and validity of the data were be assured as it indicates the quality of a research.

This study was limited to situation, the context of the learning English as a foreign language, specific place and the participant

there. There were 20 students and 1 lecturer of Reading III course enrolled in this study. A Case Study is an appropriate method to use when a "bounded system can be identified as the focus of the research and when the purpose of the investigation is to provide a rich, intensive description of a single entity and the phenomenon surrounding it" [12]. Classroom observation were employed as the main instrument to gather data on how the teaching of reading in English was done by the lecturer in reading activities through SCA and media, evaluation, and classroom environment done. It allowed the lecturer's instructions, gestures, activities, and techniques employed. Field note and interview were also used as the secondary instrument for collecting data. The data collection procedure involved pre, while and post teaching stage through observations record and field-note for 12 meetings and interview before, while and after meetings.

## **III. FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF THE OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SCA IN TEACHING READING**

### **The Observation on Lecturer's Teaching Reading Activities. Assessment, Media and Classroom Environment**

SCA focuses on the importance of students' cognitive engagement or their thinking. Hence, many learning models can be effective if the activities conducted were able to create an environment in which students think deeply. There are six (6) constructive teaching practices of students centered learning e.g., individualized instruction, group discussion, inquiry, reciprocal teaching, humanistic education, and computer and hyper- media [6]. Meanwhile reference [13] termed students learning activities as bottom-up and top-down approach to reading. The observations was to capture the lecturer's implementation of a SCA in terms of her teaching procedure at pre, while and post teaching stage in terms of activities in teaching learning to read, the assessment carried out, the media employed, and classroom environment. The lecturer was observed conducting these constructive activities in various strategies or methods such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Cooperative Learning, and Collaborative Learning. These were seen in the way lecturer organized and managed the reading classroom.

Based on themes analysis that were categorized and analyzed to illustrate whether or not the characteristics of SCA appeared in the teaching and learning reading activities, it was found 9 categories. They are background knowledge, active learning, lecturer's role, peer learning, instructional strategy, lecturer's role/ classroom management, autonomous learning, active learning and thinking, and assessment.

The categories background knowledge illustrated that lecturer applied various teaching and learning strategies. At pre teaching stage, the lecturer asked questions to get the students to focus or pay attention. To help the students in learning to read, the lecturer aroused the students' curiosity with a pre

questioning session by asking previous material and reflection questions and doing activity to motivate the students. For instance; the lecturer asked “why do you think learning to read this material is important?” was an example of a stimulus from sensory experience [14]. These were provided by the lecturer at the pre-stage of the reading activity. The lecturer also organized and guided group learning while explaining and elaborating material. Giving instruction, managing time and occasionally allowing miss behavior were also done at pre teaching stage.

At the while teaching stage, active learning category was also observed when the lecturer arousing the students’ curiosity [15] by asking “what would happen if ...” etc. Lecturer’s role category were observed in her questioning as she led the students to think prior to the reading process. The lecturer also encouraged the students to observe their friends, express opinion, carry out group work, discuss, listen to their friends’ opinion and engage in classroom activities to illustrate peer learning category. Providing examples and suggestions on how to use code switching to understand and discuss what they were reading were observed on active learning category.

The post teaching were aimed to extend the understanding obtained from texts at the pre-reading and while-reading stages into writing tasks such as summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting and reflecting. The themes advising, reminding, giving and motivating, informing, questioning and answering, reviewing, reflection and re-check were categorized into lecturer’s role, active learning and thinking, and assessment. These categories performed by engaging the students to class activity, pointing at students to get their responses, and seeking elaboration from students responses to help them fully understand on their own construction of meaning. The lecturer also showed the attitude of caring by listening and accepting the students’ responses (even when the answer was incorrect) at this post teaching stage. Active learning and thinking also reflected when she was reviewing, reflecting, and re-checking students’ work and understanding in evaluation step.

Observation on assessment illustrated that the lecturer applied formative and summative assessments. To measure the effectiveness of her teaching procedure and students’ achievement, the lecturer provided written test, oral test and group presentation. The lecturer re-checked the students’ understanding by questioning. Allowing a wait time after posing the question was done by the lecturer in oral test. Individual or group assessment were done to help students discover the relationships of idea and create metaphor [15]. The assessments carried out were formative or summative assessment categories. The requirements of assessment for formative and summative also seemed differ in several dimensions and the reference based on the judgment and focus of the information used [16].

Formative assessment category was employed by the lecturer at the pre teaching stage through pre questioning by asking prior knowledge orally and individually to guide or help the students identify or familiarized with the topic at hand.

Allowing a wait time after posing questions was done in order that students discover the relationship between new knowledge and prior knowledge to construct meaning or interpretation.. At the while teaching stage, the lecturer asked comprehension questions orally and in written form to identify problematic areas individually. Group assessment was conducted through the group presentations.

Summative assessment given at the post teaching stage were in written and spoken form by distributing a test paper and asking students to answer the multiple choice test. Oral test was given in reflection activity by asking students to conclude the reading material or construct the meaning individually or group presentation.

Media used in teaching reading activities were categorized into printed and electronic media. Watching demonstration and looking at visual illustration seem to be a powerful influences on students and to promote learning lesson [17]. Reference [18] said that by using media, the class begins with the lecturer introducing a key word, concept, or picture to stimulate discussion. Visuals like diagrams, maps, and photographs can also be used as the setting for answering questions [19]. Unfortunately, the observation illustrated that no interesting media was used by the lecturer except students themselves use mobile to search the new vocabulary. The real media used was only scrabble. Lack of media employed may have contributed to the negative attitude towards learning particularly at the pre-teaching stage. Shortly, the use of conventional media also contributed to problems on students ability in comprehending a reading text.

A good classroom instruction would create a good learning environment. The lecturers maintain their management system by preventing problems and keeping students engaged in the learning activities [20] for a conducive learning environment. How a lecturer creates or conducts the classroom will have an impact on learning environment that may or may not promote learning. It would be an environment that suited the students as it was a SCA classroom. The classroom environment created by the lecturer seemed to have an effective impact on the teaching and learning process. The lecturer created a good classroom environment by developing and using initiating questions and encouraging active interaction. She also guided students to answer questions related to their personal experiences or opinion that made the students had fun and happy to talk about. Most students observed communicating actively and working seriously and engaged in the learning activities. This positive learning environment appeared at the pre and while teaching stage. However, towards the end of the while teaching and post teaching stage, no positive environment in teaching reading activity. This implies that lecturer was not able to maintain the positive learning environment in teaching reading until the post teaching stage. The environment does not reflect a total positive learning environment as it must be established and maintained throughout the teaching process [15].

In short, the characteristics of a SCA were mostly observed in the teaching reading III course activities through the pre, while and post teaching stages. The lecturer encouraged peer

interaction, played her role as a facilitator and leader of the class activity to which students respond actively individually or group. She also allowed students' response to drive lesson, shift instructional strategy, and alter content. The only aspect that was observed not reflecting a total SCA was classroom environment at the pre while and post teaching stage where a SCA was not maintained until the end of the lessons.

#### **The Lecturer's Interview on the Teaching Reading Activities, Assessment, Media, and Classroom Environment**

The thematic analysis of the interview responses illustrated that the lecturer encouraged students' inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask each other [5] which allowed students to learn content and process at the same time [22]. The lecturer also enhanced comprehension through instructional strategies and assessed knowledge to ensure all students comprehended the concepts learned. The lecturer responded that in a SCA principles, students are the center of learning, most of the time students do their own activities. To promote an active learning category, the lecturer facilitated students through some activities. The lecturer encouraged or supported active interaction and encourage students to engage in the dialogue both with lecturer and with each other. Peer learning category illustrated through engaging students in discussions, teamwork and social negotiation where students must talk and listen to each other and respect others' idea [15]. The category lecturer' role as a facilitator, motivator, and observer illustrated when she controlled the class to make sure that the all students shared their ideas and comprehended the text.

Assessment is any set of measurement or procedure or recording of students performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decision [23]. The lecturer "observed" her students' progress in reading through "observation" to "see whether the students do all reading tasks that were designed. She did it by monitoring, asking orally or written form. This was categorized as the formative assessment as it guide or help students identify area(s) that need(s) work and help form instruction [15].

She said "I did evaluation to ensure the achievement on the learning objectives and give feedback through comment". As a facilitator, "I gave lot of chances to students to handle their skill on reading" by asking students motivating question to tap their prior knowledge and to engage them to a learning process. This is a humanistic approach that lecturer applied to increase learners' motivation and personal freedom, choice, self-determination, and striving for personal growth [21]. The thinking category was allowing the students to learn content and develop their thinking process at the same time [22].

The use of media in teaching reading through SCA, lecturer only used the printed media or books to helps students acquire a higher reading comprehension beside the real media around the class. The lecturer provided students only with printed media and support them for an electronic media. She said "I give lots of chance to students to handle their ability or reading skill"

Learning environment leads to the motivation in learning. The lecturer created good classroom environment not by

arranging the physical environment but by making the environment "conducive for learning". This implies that the lecturer created a positive classroom environment by understanding the students that motivated the students to learn. This is a reflection of a SCA where lecturer's social and physical environments for learning is created [15].

Independent reading or extra reading was a form of autonomous learning category as the side impact of the implementation of the principles of SCA gathered from lecturer's interview. Students wrote a reading without waiting for lecturer's instruction. Shortly, a SCA was implemented in teaching reading activities. Lecturer encouraged and accepted students' creativity, autonomy, and initiative in order to achieve the learning objectives. The students make choices about what they want to learn and how they want to learn and were allowed to make a decision [15] as an autonomy in learning. This implies that lecturer felt that a SCA is effective to be used in teaching reading practices.

#### **The Students' Interview on the Lecturer's Teaching, Assessment, Media, and Classroom Environment**

In implementing a SCA, the lecturer's role is vital as she determines the strategies employed. The pre-questioning and background knowledge at pre-teaching stage were categorized as lecturer's role. The students said that the lecturer always began the class by asking "How are you feeling?" and "guide [students on how] to answer to given questions based their personal opinion". What a lecturer does at the beginning of the lesson is to motivate students [5]. "She was asking our background knowledge at pre reading activity" students worded. This pre-questioning potentially activated 1) linguistic information, or knowledge of the target language code; 2) knowledge of the world; 3) knowledge of discourse structure [24]. The lecturer tried to gauge information about the students' reading comprehension ability before starting the lesson.

At pre teaching stage, lecturer gives information, tells objectives and reading skill like predicting, themes etc, gives support and suggestion, and makes class comfortable to make her role as facilitator. These indicate that the lecturer was facilitating the students in reading a text to increase students' involvement [24]-[25]. The teaching strategy category illustrated that the lecturer used many teaching strategies of a SCA in teaching reading course. Students interview responses illustrated that lecturer introduces material, asks to find main idea and inference, gives reinforcement, asks to participate, invites idea, greeting and apply the three reading skill. In Activities category, she explains material in details through using more methods of reading and gives instruction. The lecturer mostly gives solution, additional knowledge related to topic, information of sources, and motivation. Classroom management through monitoring, asking for presentation, and project run well as well as control and practices exercise to improves students' knowledge on aspects of the TOEFL text.

The interview with students revealed that the lecturer assessed the students through formative and summative assessments. In formative assessment category, there were

individual oral assessments where the lecturer was “asking [questions] orally and [asking the students to] read aloud.... “We were also assessed by task by participating group and individually through written, spoken work or observation”. The summative category of assessments was assignment, task, test, and quiz which were all written work.

No electronic media used by the lecturer in teaching reading. The lecturer did not realize that the ways in selecting the media to enhance students’ reading comprehension is also significant. Teaching aids or media need to be prepared in learning. Watching demonstration and looking at visual illustration seem to be powerful influences on the students and promote learning lesson [17]. “we are asked to search through internet using our mobiles” students worded. It illustrated that “no interesting media used by lecturer”. This was the contributing factor to the students’ failure on learning reading test. This implies the students’ attempt to learn by other source of knowledge seems to be lacking that the lecturer did not provide more current or interesting media. The students wished the lecturer would “give them more facilities like media”.

A good classroom instruction would create a good learning environment where the lecturer maintain their management system by preventing problems and keeping students engaged in learning activities [20]. The students’ responses illustrated that in general, the learning environment was firstly conducive. The students were active, classroom was comfortable, competitive and fun for learning. Classroom environment promoted reading in a SCA context at pre and while stage while at post while and post stage it became crowded. This implies that the lecturer have created a good classroom environment where the students were “happy to learn” but not totally work.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study illustrated that a SCA was applied by lecturer through the three steps of teaching procedures i.e., pre, while and post teaching steps together with assessment procedures, the use of media, and the classroom environment which are not not fully done. They are presented in the four research questions.

##### Research question 1

How was the lecturer teaching reading through a student-centered approach at University of Sumatera?

The main data from the observations and triangulated with the interviews illustrated that the lecturer teaching reading applied the principles of a SCA. The lecturer developed and used initiating questions, encouraged peer learning, encouraged active interaction, encouraged and accepted the students’ role as autonomous learners and initiative, sought elaboration to students’ initial response (attitude of caring), allowed a waiting time after posing questions, took into account students’ beliefs and attitude, did summarizing and reflecting activities, evaluating and preparing for test [21].

##### Research question 2.

How was the assessment process carried out in teaching reading through a student-centered approach at University of

Sumatera?

The assessment carried out in the reading classroom illustrated that the lecturer applied formative and summative assessments in teaching reading. The daily assessment, presentation, interview, participation and discussion were means of ongoing or formative assessment carried out by the lecturer. The summative assessment was carried out at the post teaching stage. These two assessment categories were applied either individually or in groups through written, spoken work or an observation on students’ activities. The requirements of assessment for formative and summative purposes differ in several dimensions and the reference base of judgments and the focus of the information used [16].

##### Research question 3.

How was the lecturer’s media in teaching reading through a student-centered approach at University of Sumatera?

Printed media only used by lecturer but the electronic and real media were provided by learners in reading III course. It illustrated that the principles of a SCA are reflected in the lecturer’s use of media and in line with the principles stated in the Indonesian curriculum [6] and the principles of a constructivist underpinning a SCA.

##### Research Question 4.

How was the lecturer’s classroom environment in teaching reading through a SCA at University of Sumatera?

The lecturer created a positive classroom environment by developing and using initiating questions and guiding students to answer questions related to their personal experiences or opinion that made the students had fun and happy to talk about. She created a positive environment at pre teaching stage by managing or monitoring students’ learning. Re - reading the questions were the lecturer’s way of managing the classroom environment by making students focus on the learning process. This was carried out to gain as a positive learning environment [15] in which students were communicating actively, working seriously, and engaging in the learning activities. Positive learning environment still appeared at the while teaching stage but becoming crowded at post while and post teaching stage. This does not reflect a total positive learning environment as it must be established and maintained throughout the teaching process [15]. This implies that lecturer was not able to maintain the positive learning environment in teaching reading well.

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