Read alouds 2.0 in an Indonesian tertiary EFL classroom

Nita Novianti and Nur Hafiz Abdurahman

Department of English Education, Faculty of Language and Literature Education, Indonesia University of Education, Jl. Dr. Setiabudhi No. 229 Bandung 40154

ABSTRACT
Read alouds have long been advocated as a reading practice that is not only appropriate for children but also for adult learners. Empirical evidence shows that reading aloud could be an effective strategy for EFL students' reading comprehension. However, its practice in EFL literature classrooms has received scarce attention. To fill this practical gap, this article reports on the adoption of read alouds 2.0 in a tertiary EFL literature classroom. The read aloud 2.0 aims to help students make meaning of literary texts. In this practice, blended discussion was carried out through Edmodo as a learning platform for virtual engagement between teacher and students and between students and their peers. The implication of this practice is that both teachers and students maximize their engagement with literary texts both face-to-face and virtually.

Keywords: EFL undergraduate students; literature classroom; read alouds 2.0

INTRODUCTION

Read alouds have long been advocated as an appropriate instructional practice for not only young learners but also adult students (Dwyer & Isbell, 1989; Sanacore, 1992; Trelease, 2013). College literature teachers who experimented with read alouds found this practice useful in reading classes (Blau, 2003; Sommers, 2005). Sommers (2005), for example, reported that they regularly carried out read alouds in college English literature classes in the first language (English) context, and they reported that reading aloud could engage college students with literary texts. Despite this regular read aloud practice in an inner-circle (English-speaking) context, not much research has showcased how exactly read alouds in tertiary literature classrooms are practiced where English is still socio-politically deemed as a foreign language. Most research on the implementation of read alouds in the tertiary EFL setting focuses on how read alouds can improve such English skills as writing (Tseng, 2014).

So far, most of the read-aloud sessions in EFL classrooms are traditionally carried out although technology, such as Web 2,0 can offer a nuanced way of doing read alouds (Abdurahman, Gandana. & Novianti, 2018; Park, 2013; Serafini & Youngs, 2013). The term, technology 2.0 in this article, is defined as a technological tool or platform that allows both teachers and students to create, distribute, and respond to texts. Such technology 2.0 tools as YouTube, Edmodo, and Facebook allow both teachers and students to view the read alouds of certain literary texts, upload their own recording of their reading, respond to e-read-aloud recordings, and search for resources digitally. This technology-mediated learning platform can maximize students' engagement with their peers and teachers (den Exter, Rowe, & Lloyd, 2012; Kessler, 2009). To design read alouds that are more relevant to technologically-savvy learners, this instructional practice can be integrated with technology 2.0 (henceforth read alouds 2.0) to enable EFL college literature students to increase their participation in meaning making of literary works.

* Corresponding Author
Email: nitanoviantiwahyu@upi.edu

Studies into this area can also serve to address a gap in research on the detailed implementation of read alouds in the classroom (Shegar & Renandya, 2009). To continue this scholarship, this article explores the practice of read alouds 2.0 in an Indonesian EFL college literature classroom. The goals of this class are twofold: (1) to assist students in comprehending literary works and (2) to engage students in dialogical read alouds. In doing so, the read alouds 2.0 are integrated with other reading activities, such as chunking, vocabulary exploration, responding to comprehension questions, and close reading of literary works.

Contextual details of the class
The class in which the read aloud sessions were carried out consisted of 30 first-year undergraduate students who took the Foundation of Literature course. This is one of the compulsory courses for English literature students during their studies at the university. The recruited freshmen were between 17 and 19 years old, and they had different English skills and proficiencies. Several students had already good reading skills, while some others could read quite well, and a small number of students were struggling readers based on their reading score on the TOEFL$^{(R)}$ Test taken as part of the university admission requirements.

A survey of students' reading habits and motivation conducted by the authors revealed that this group of students did not have much experience reading literary works even in their own first language. The same case was reported by literature students in the Finnish context (Chesterman, 1983). The students were unmotivated to read texts in general and more specifically to read literary works. A lack of students' motivation to read literary texts was a major reason for students not to complete their reading assignments (Starcher & Proffitt, 2011). Only a small number of students read literary works on a regular basis, either in English or in Indonesian, and another group of students reads Indonesian literary works only during their leisure time. Furthermore, many students reported that they had no interest in reading literary works or even any texts in general.

In terms of reading aloud, most students did not have any experience of reading aloud guided by their teachers, and they were not engaged in the exploration of literary works. Consequently, they did not have any enjoyment of reading literary works. They saw reading literary works as a burden. Thus, enjoyment is the key to successful reading, and one of the most prominent features of read alouds is to promote reading enjoyment or joyful reading (Ledger & Merga, 2018; Shegar & Renandya, 2009; Trelease, 2013). Once students can read joyfully, they will be motivated to read more. The inclusion of Web 2.0 in read alouds, students are expected to engage with more literary works.

Read alouds 2.0
The read alouds 2.0 in this article were implemented as part of the Foundation of Literature course. The course is one of the compulsory courses that aims to introduce students to English literature and equip them with the basic knowledge of literature; more specifically how to read a literary text, understand its content, and understand how elements of literary work to build the meaning of the piece of literature being read. However, the most important objective of this class is to promote the enjoyment of reading and eventually build their reading habit.

Thus, the practice of read aloud 2.0 is considered meaningful instruction for students. Two technology 2.0 tools utilized for read alouds 2.0 were YouTube and Edmodo. YouTube, a video-sharing platform, was chosen due to its ease of access and students' familiarity with the platform. Edmodo, a social networking platform focusing on virtual classroom activities, was chosen because of its classroom features in which the teacher could manage the course, and both students and teacher could negotiate, discuss, share resources, and send assignments under the created class page on Edmondo. The students could also utilize the same platform for other classes, so they were quite familiar with Edmodo.

At the outset, the students viewed an example of a short YouTube video clip that showed the read aloud in which the genre of the text was a short story. Following this modelling session, a teacher explained how to read literary text by chunks, a strategy considered effective in helping students understand text (Nishida, 2013) during the classroom discussion. Afterwards, the students were asked to upload their recordings on the assigned Edmodo and have their friends comment on their impression of the recordings. By giving students the autonomy for a peer discussion, the students would be engaged more with reading materials.

THE PRACTICE
The read aloud 2.0 was designed to engage first-year university students in making meaning of literary texts. It is important to note that this instructional practice was integrated with other reading activities that helped students maximize their engagement with literary texts. For this reason, a series of learning activities are presented below.

Activity 1: Text Selection
A classic short story, 'A New England Nun' (1891) by Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, was selected for three reasons. First, it meets Lima's (2010) criteria for text selection, such as ease of access, various choices, and engaging texts. While the text is a classical and canonical literary work, compared to other works in the same category, the short story has a medium level of difficulty, allowing students to read with more ease. Second, it suits the course objective of introducing students to English literature. The topics of courting, love, and decision making for the future fit with the age of the students. Finally, the text meets the criterion of 'Web 2.0 tools,' such as free online accessibility in

various forms: text, audiobook, and even videos of its read alouds; and students can also read reviews, write summaries, and have discussion regarding the text that can further help them engage with the text.

Activity 2: Predictive Questions

Even though the teacher, one of the authors, was going to read the story aloud in the classroom, it is important to make sure that students have also completed their reading to better facilitate comprehension. Hence, the assigned reading was completed at home in a week. During the assignment of the reading, the teacher mentioned and wrote the title down on the whiteboard and asked some predictive questions. Asking predictive questions is necessary in read alouds. Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) and Wiseman (2010) underlined the importance of asking predictive questions to engage students with the story as well as to promote their comprehension. Transcript 1 captures the conversation taking place during the session.

Transcript 1

Teacher	: So, next week, we are going to read and discuss a short story titled 'A New England Nun.' Have you read this story?
Student	: The Nun? (*laughing*)
Student	: We watched it (*referring to the film that was being shown in some cinemas*)
Student	: But it's 'A New England Nun', not *The Nun*…
Student	: Is it a …. hm… horror story?
Teacher	: Well, probably…
Student	: Does it have something to do with a nun, like a Christian nun?
Teacher	: Probably (.) What do you think the story is like?
Student	: Maybe we are going to read about a nun who live(s) in New England…
Student	: Where is New England, anyway?
Teacher	: Maybe it will be about a nun who runs away from Old England to New England? I heard about a place named Old England.

The teacher initiated the discussion by asking "have you read this story?" after introducing the text to be read aloud in class. As shown in the transcript, students wondered about a few things, relating the title of the story to that of a popular film (*The Nun*) and made some predictions regarding the name of the place. The teacher gave open-ended questions that could activate student' schemata (Widodo, 2009) and did not tell students the answer to those initiating questions to arouse their interests. Arousing students' curiosity is important to make sure that they would be interested in reading the short story and finding the answers to their questions online.

Activity 3: Chunking

In the next meeting, the teacher checked whether students had completed the reading. Most of the students reported that they completed the reading, and some students just finished reading a couple of pages. In fact, most students recounted that they had difficulties in understanding the short story. Only a few students with good reading skills could understand the story quite well. This had a negative effect on students' motivation in reading the short story. The teacher then modelled the reading to the students, by showing them a video of the short story's read alouds from YouTube and by training them on how to chunk their reading. The following interaction took place, as seen in Transcript 2.

Transcript 2

Teacher	: Well then, how did you read the story?
Student	: What do you mean? Read well yeah… we read it… Reading was reading, right? Like, just read it. From page to page, left to right.
Teacher	: Well, that's true. I meant, did you read it sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase?
Student	: Sentence by sentence…
Teacher	: Okay, show me… Can you please read the beginning of the short story?
Student	: (*reading the first sentence*)
Teacher	: Are you sure you read sentence by sentence? Or did you cut the sentence into several chunks?
Student	: Chunks? What is that?
Teacher	: Do you know what "chunk" means?
Student	: Like parts, a part . . .
Teacher	: Yes, sort of. I guess you are familiar with this brand of chocolate (*mentioning the brand*). Why do you think this chocolate is called "chunky bar"?
Student	: Because the chocolate is cut into several parts.
Teacher	: Yes, several chunks. Why do you think it is cut into several chunks?
Student	: To make it easier to eat?
Teacher	: Exactly. So, we should also chunk the text we read in order to make it easier to read and understand…
Student	: But we already chunked it sentence by sentence…
Teacher	: Well, that is right. Good job, but chunking a text can be alternatively done based on units of phrase, especially because English employs nominalization a lot…

This classroom incident shows several initiation-response-feedback (IRF) sequences as shown in the above transcript, in which the teacher paraphrased the questions several times and also gave an illustration of chunking, acting as a "mediator for dialogic teacher-student interaction" (Widodo, 2009, p. 45). Once students understood the concept of chunking, the teacher continued showing them how to do chunk reading based on the video from YouTube and modelled the reading. As the teacher modelled the reading to the students by chunking the text, students were seen to gain more interest and enjoyment of reading. They practiced the reading with smiles on their faces. They were willing to demonstrate their own reading to the class. Almost half of the students raised their hands to volunteer reading the text aloud to the class, even those students who were previously observed showed a lack of motivation in participating in the reading class.

As reported by Nishida (2013), chunking could help students comprehend text and increase enjoyment of reading, as students know where to stop and how to use certain types of intonations in their reading as exemplified by their teacher and the read-aloud video. To keep students engaged, the teacher shared the read-aloud session with the students.

Unlike the practice of read alouds for children, in which the teacher reads the whole text from the beginning to the end, for college students, it is better to do a kind of chain reading. In this activity, the teacher may begin the reading as a form of modelling, and then students continue the reading in turn. During the chain reading, the author also reviewed some pronunciation errors once a student completed his or her reading before moving on to another student. Knowing how to pronounce well will help make reading more enjoyable and meaningful, and knowing what word to stress on and where to pause more specifically can help improve pronunciation, particularly among adult learners (van Loon, 2002).

After class, students were asked to record a video of their read alouds in groups and uploaded it onto the Edmodo-mediated class. They were also asked to comment on their friends' work regarding the read alouds as well as the content of the story.

Activity 4: Comprehension-related Vocabulary
After modelling reading by chunks and having the students record and upload their own read alouds onto Edmodo, in the following week, the read aloud session focused on helping students understand the short story being read. To facilitate this, it is necessary to make sure that students also understand some new words based on the context.

Transcript 3

Teacher	: Okay, so what is the story about?
Student	: It's about Elisa who decided to live as a nun.
Teacher	: Live as a nun? What do you mean? Like a nun in a church?
Student	: No, I meant live like a nun, not getting married and living alone…
Teacher	: How? Can you explain more? Which part of the text says so?
Student	: Wait, I think the last line of the short story says this. (*citing an excerpt from the short story*): "Louisa sat, prayerfully numbering her days, like an uncloistered nun."
Teacher	: Very good! What does uncloistered mean there?
Student	: Hm… let me see. Can I check with the dictionary?
Teacher	: Sure…
Student	: Well, we could not find uncloistered…
Teacher	: Try without "un"…
Student	: Secluded?
Teacher	: Good, so, what does "uncloistered nun" mean?
Student	: Ah, I see (.) It means she lives like a nun, not getting married, but she is not secluded like living in a church.

As shown in Transcript 3, students' understanding of new vocabulary was facilitated by their understanding of the context of the story. Moreover, the teacher asked for evidence of how the vocabulary was used in the text. This seemed to help students understand the meaning from the context, as suggested by their final comment. Looking up the meaning of certain words is helpful for students, and looking at the word in the context of the story can facilitate better understanding. In this context, the teacher provided "text-based input in the while reading activity" (Widodo, 2009, p. 51) to help students deal with new vocabulary and at the same time create interactions between teacher and students and between the students themselves.

Activity 5: Text Comprehension
While discussing some new vocabulary found in the short story, the teacher asked some comprehension questions. Students were required to provide textual evidence that supported the answers given. Comprehension is necessary to achieve the end goal of the course; namely, building students' understanding of how the literary elements in the short story convey meanings. Discussing comprehension questions with the whole class helps students with lower reading skills gain a better understanding of the story, as answers are shared among students and the teacher helps facilitate the sharing. Transcript 4 illustrates the interaction occurring during the comprehension question session.

Transcript 4

Teacher	: Okay, so what makes Elisa decide to live like a nun, that is not getting married to Joe Dagget?
Student	: She likes living alone…
Teacher	: Can you show me which parts of the text show that? I give you one minute to find them…
Student	: *(reading an excerpt from the short story)* "Her life, especially for the last seven years, had been full of a pleasant peace, she had never felt discontented nor impatient over her lover's absence; still she had always looked forward to his return and their marriage as the inevitable conclusion of things. However, she had fallen into a way of placing it so far in the future that it was almost equal to placing it over the boundaries of another life."
Teacher	: Okay, explain to me why you think this particular part tells that Louisa actually wants to live by herself…
Student	: It is said here that although she is always looking forward to Joe's return, she actually has been comfortable in her current life. And then she kind of wants this kind of life (to) remain the same forever, like the last line shows…
Teacher	: Good. Is there any other evidence showing that Elisa prefers to live by herself?
Student	: What about this one? *(reading another excerpt from the story)*
Teacher	: Very good. Can you also explain this one?

As seen in the transcript, the students could answer the questions and showed which parts of the text served as the basis for their answers. This appeared to have been facilitated by students reading the short story twice: first at home, and then in the class together with the teacher. In addition, the students discussed a new vocabulary. This discussion helped the students more easily comprehend the text (Widodo, 2016). What the students did can be categorized as close reading, a kind of reading that is really important for students reading challenging literary work. This is done partly by reading more than once and trying to provide in-text evidence to support answers to text-based questions (Jones, Chang, Heritage, Tobiason, & Herman, 2014; Showalter, 2005).

Activity 6: Analysing Setting, Imagery, and Other Literary Elements

The teacher moved to the last part of the series of read-aloud sessions; namely, teaching literary elements. Teaching these elements is intended to assist students in understanding the meaning of the story being read. Eagleton (2014) emphasizes the importance of discussing literary work using the appropriate terms, commonly called literary elements. Transcript 5 shows a talk on literary elements.

Transcript 5

Teacher	: Okay, pay attention to this line *(reading an excerpt from the story focusing on visual imagery)* "It was late in the afternoon, and the light was waning…There was a difference in the look of the tree shadows out in the yard…" What is the function of this particular part of the story?
Student	: It's like setting the story…
Teacher	: Good. How does this part set the story?
Student	: By setting the place of the story…
Teacher	: Yes, the lines set the place where the story takes place. So, you have found the setting of place or spatial setting. What about the time? At what time of the day is the story set?
Student	: Late afternoon?
Teacher	: Good job. Now, let's reread the lines. What do you see in the said village as a reader?
Student	: *(reading again the excerpt from the short story)*
Teacher	: So, what do you see?
Student	: What do you mean by seeing?
Teacher	: Well, as a reader you can visualize what is being stated in the lines. Can you tell me what you visualize?
Student	: Oh, you mean that it's getting dark, night is approaching?
Teacher	: Yes, very good. What else can you visualize?
Student	: The shadows of some trees?
Teacher	: Very good. What happen with the shadows?
Student	: They change…
Teacher	: Can you explain why and how they change?
Student	: I guess what is meant here is that the shadows look different in the evening?
Teacher	: Very good. What we have just discussed is called "imagery," more specifically it is called "visual imagery" because you can visualize it, using your vision…

As shown in the transcript, the teacher started the discussion on the literary elements by reading an excerpt of the text. She then gave questions that elicited students' inferential comprehension (Barret, 1972; Widodo, 2009) on certain literary elements. At the onset, the teacher focused on the setting, as found in the beginning of the short story. She continued discussing with her students other literary elements, such as imagery, characters, and characterization based on the excerpts of the short story. To make sure that students could identify the literary elements and understand how they build the theme, the teacher assigned them to participate in a group discussion. Students in groups identified the literary elements found in the short story and discussed how the literary elements conveyed the meaning of the short story.

By engaging in Activity 6, students were able to better understand how the meaning of the story was conveyed through its elements, such as a setting, imagery, characters, characterization, and symbols. One

student, for example, commented, "The house in which Elisa lives and the many little items that she has in her house help build her characterization as a feminine and very careful woman who is at the same time obstinate. It also strengthens the theme of the isolated life of a single, old woman who wants to live free from man's influence." Drawing on this personal testimony, the student shows her understanding of how setting and a character's properties indirectly characterize the character and also convey the meaning of the story. The previous sessions of read alouds—chunking, comprehension question, vocabulary exploration, and in-class and web-based discussion—to some extent facilitated students' comprehension of literary elements and their functions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The read aloud sessions involved students in reading the text aloud, chunking, responding to comprehension questions, exploring new vocabulary in context through both in-class and web-based discussion, and discussing literary elements. The long-standing practice of read alouds has been integrated with Web 2.0 in the teaching and learning of literary works in the EFL context. As data previously showed, read alouds 2.0 could help students better understand the literary text. Read aloud 2.0 is an attempt to answer the challenge of Web 2.0 utilisation in language education in Indonesia (Abdurahman, Gandana & Novianti, 2018). The read aloud sessions were designed to spark learners' joy of reading and promote students' comprehension of the text.

Overall, this best practice article suggests that read alouds can be practiced in an EFL undergraduate classroom. Therefore, this instructional practice is not limited to children and younger learners as previous studies reported (Eagleton 2014; Trelease, 2013; van Loon, 2002). Moreover, the practice of read alouds can be integrated with Web 2.0 to better engage technologically-savvy students in interacting with texts. To optimize student learning, read alouds 2.0 can also be integrated with other relevant activities, such as responding to comprehension questions and making meaning of texts. It is also possible to practice read aloud with other literary genres, such as poetry and plays, and use other Web 2.0 tools, such as Instagram and other social networking Apps or media. The adoption of Web 2.0 in read alouds can definitely open up many new possibilities of teaching and learning literary reading in a different way.

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