SUPPLEMENTARY READING MATERIALS
FOR INTERNATIONAL-_STANDARD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS
GRADE SEVEN

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ABSTRACT: This study aims at developing supplementary reading materials for the International-Standard Junior High Schools. Using Borg and Gall’s research and development model as the basis for the study, three packages of supplementary reading materials are produced. The packages deal with reading materials on announcement, advertisement, and memo.

Keywords: development, supplementary reading materials, International-Standard School (SBI)

Considering the fact that the result of teaching English has not been satisfying yet (Lengkanawati, 2004) and to improve the quality of education and human resources in order to be equal to other developed countries, the Indonesian government decided to establish International-Standard School (SBI)(Direktorat Jenderal Manajemen Pendidikan Dasar, 2011b). As other previous curriculum, the curriculum of English subject of SBI also emphasizes the four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, at the international-standard junior high school level, learners are required to master English for daily and scientific communicative purposes.

Among the four English skills, reading is explained by several educational experts and several studies to have many benefits. Hammer (2007a) states that reading is useful for language acquisition. In line with Hammer, Lu (2002) mentions that reading is the foundation of all other skills in language learning. In addition to that, Burn (1996) quoted in Ihsan (2011) explains that every aspect of life involves reading, both for enjoyment and for obtaining knowledge. To emphasize the importance of reading, Crandall (1995) quoted in Lu (2002) states that reading is the single most powerful source of language input. In education field, Maria (2011) emphasizes the process of learning which needs reading a lot as the demand of education system.

Considering the vast benefits of reading skills, there should be more time allocation for the students to have exposure to read before they can use it in their real need in school Cotteral in Hammer (2007b). Ironically, in our curriculum English class has only six sessions a week, each of which lasts in 40 minutes. These six sessions should be use to cover four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Direktorat Jenderal Manajemen Pendidikan Dasar, 2011a). To compensate for lack of time, efforts should be made to develop the students habit of autonomous learning(Direktorat Jenderal Manajemen Pendidikan Dasar, 2011a,Hammer, 2007b).

MacDougall (undated) defines autonomous learning as type of learning which is characterized by personalization, self-directedness and less dependency on the educator for affirmation. In addition, Little (1991) as quoted by Koçak (2003) states “ being autonomous enables learners to determine their objectives, define the content and process of their own learning, select their
methods and techniques, and monitor and evaluate their progress and achievements”. To reach such learning situation, however, schools do not only need to change the students’ mind-set and learning habit but also to improve their learning facilities including reading materials.

To seek appropriate materials that can meet the students’ need, however, is not always easy (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004). Preliminary study conducted for this research shows that three electronic books (BSE) provided by the government: English in Focus (Wardiman, Jahur, and Djusma, 2008), Contextual Teaching and Learning (Kumalarini et al, 2008), and Scaffolding (Priana, Riandi, and Mumpuni, 2008) do not provide adequate materials which suit with the syllabus of SBI. Therefore, developing supplementary reading materials which suit with the syllabus of SBI and which can be used independently needs to be carried out. This study is intended to provide the solution to the above mentioned problems by providing supplementary materials needed to improve the students’ reading mastery.

METHOD

This study adapted Borg and Gall’s (1983), research and development design resulting in these steps: needs analysis, materials development, expert validation, revision I, try-out, revision II, and final product. The needs analysis was conducted focusing on three aspects: learners’ want referring to what actually the learners’ want to be; necessities denoting to what are actually needed to support the students’ want; and lacks which refers to the gap between the necessities and the students’ present competences (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This lacks is the important aspect to be used as the basis to develop appropriate materials, since this is what actually the students need to master.

Having reviewed the English syllabus for the seventh grade of the Junior High Schools as the necessities and the students’ mastery of the syllabus the lacks were found as the basis to develop three packages of materials: announcement, advertisement, and memo. Each package consists of cover, instructional objectives, six texts with various types of exercises based on the texts used related to reading comprehension and vocabulary, summary, and answer key with clear explanation.

The material development process involved two main stages: drafting and organizing. Drafting stage consisted of designing the content which consisted of selecting topics and identifying the subskills of the reading skills, and writing the materials which involved constructing the text, writing communicative activities, and writing answer keys. The texts and some activities such as word search and comic strip were designed by using Adobe Photoshop CS3 program. Finally, the materials were organized in packages in terms of their genre.

The next step was to validate the materials. The validation was carried out twice by an experienced English lecturer specialized in English Language Assessment and has written many books regarding this area of expertise including reading comprehension. After the validation and the revision, the materials were ready for the try-out.

The try-out was conducted at SMPN3 Malang which is one of International-Standard Junior High Schools in Malang. As well, SMPN 3 Malang
is considered as one of prestigious schools. The instrument used for the try-out was questionnaires which covered the appearance, the level of difficulty, the attractiveness, the coverage, and the content of the product. The samples of the subjects were eighteen students which were randomly taken from thirty five research subjects of class 7-4.

After the data were collected from the questionnaires, the researcher searched for the most relevant suggestions and advises from the students which were considered able to improve the product’s quality from its users’ perspectives. The researcher also examined the frequency of each suggestion and advice to determine whether it actually could improve the product’s quality or simply one student’s subjective opinion.

**FINDINGS**

The objective of the product try-out was to collect data from the subjects related to the appearance, the level of difficulty, the attractiveness, the coverage, and the substance of the product. There were three packages of the materials and each package was tried out to six students of the seventh grade of an International-Standard School. The product try-out was carried out on 10 April 2012.

Related to the appearance of the materials, twelve students working on announcement and advertisement (100%) stated that the fonts used were readable and consistent; there were no mistakes in the typing; the spacing was regular and clear, and the design was interesting. However, only 16.67% respondents on memo stated that the fonts used were inconsistent and the rest of the criteria get full positive agreement from the six students (100%).

In terms of the attractiveness, only 16.67% respondents of each package stated that the topics used in the supplementary reading materials were not interesting. Related to the texts used, six students in each package (100%) agreed that the texts used were interesting, could broaden their knowledge, and helped them in improving their reading skills.

The difficulty level of the materials had the most various responds. First, four students (66.67%) in both announcement and advertisement and two students (33.33%) stated that the length of texts used was considered appropriate with their reading skill level.

Six out of six students working on announcement, four students (66.67%) working on advertisement, and four students (66.67%) working on memo believed that the language used in the product was appropriate with their level. Six students (100%) of each package admitted that the instructions were appropriate, but only one (16.67%) student working on memo could not understand the instructions.

Eighteen students (100%) agreed that the activities on announcement, advertisement, and memo were understandable. However, only students doing announcement and advertisement admitted that they were able to do the activities and four students (66.67%) were able to do the activities available in the Package C.

Regarding the coverage of the materials, one student (16.67%) judging announcement and three others (50%) working on Advertisement thought that the number of exercises still needed to be added. On the contrary, according to the six students (100%), memo already had sufficient number of exercises.
Leaving out one student (5.56%) doing memo, the rest of the students working on announcement, advertisement, and memo claimed that the answer key was clear for them and suitable with the activities. The last component assessed is the substance of the materials.

Twelve students stated that the texts used in the announcement and memo were appropriate with the text type stated in the cover of the package. Only one student (16.67%) thought that the texts presented in advertisement was not advertisement.

In addition, it was found that there were some tasks related to vocabularies in each package which learners found it difficult. It was because they were unfamiliar with the vocabularies and it took a long time for them to find the vocabularies in the text. Besides, there was a part of activities that did not have instructions and complete answer keys. Still, most of the students claimed that the materials were interesting, able to widen their knowledge, and able to reduce their boredom in learning English.

DISCUSSIONS

The final product of study was designed to meet the demand of the International-Standard School (SBI) syllabus. The product which is in the form of paper-based supplementary reading materials was improved and was much better than the initial draft. Several improvements were made based on the results of the try-out. However, some aspects in the product were kept because not more than half of total number of the students gave negative comments about the criteria.

As with the appearance of the materials, almost all students provided positive feedbacks and only one responded negatively about the consistent use of font in the product. Based on the Cunningsworth’s checklist of good coursebook (1995), the layout should be clear. Because there was only one student stated that the font use was not consistent, there was no change made upon the materials.

The researcher as well did not alter any parts of the product in term of its attractiveness. Although almost all students admitted that they were familiar with the topics in the product, three out of eighteen students (one for each package) claimed that they were not familiar with the topics. Therefore, 16.67% of negative subjective feedback could not cause any changes to the product.

The following aspect was the difficulty level of the product. This aspect covered the length of the text, the language, the instructions and the activities. Both length and language of the text had quite a number of students who claimed that the length and language of the text were not suitable with their level. Yet, the researcher considered that the product was already appropriate with most of its users’ ability level and left unchanged. The next two criteria in this aspect were instructions and activities towards which only a very few students provided negative feedbacks. There was feedback from one student who noticed that a certain exercise in the memo lacked instruction. This feedback made the researcher add the instruction to improve the quality of the product.

The coverage of the materials, another examined aspect, received much positive feedback for both exercise and key answer. The researcher also did not consider there were any relevant suggestions or advices, thus leaving no need of improvement in this section. The last aspect was the substance of the materials. This aspect dealt with the appropriateness of text provided with the text type.
mentioned in the package cover. Only one student said that text in Package B was not appropriate with the text type aforementioned which the researcher took it as a subjective opinion of the particular student since the rest of the students claimed that the texts were already appropriate.

**Revision**

The product was revised based on the result of the product try-out. A major change was made to the texts used in the three packages. Originally, in the activities dealing with synonyms, meanings, and reference words, there was no hint related to the vocabularies used in the texts. According to learners, this situation made the activities difficult to do. In order to overcome the problem, the font colour of all vocabularies used in the aforementioned activities was changed and the alteration of the font colour was followed by alteration of the font size to make the texts easier to read.

The instructions and the answer key had been made for particular tasks which did not have ones earlier. Paraphrasing the instructions was also carried out in order to make the instructions more simple and easy to follow. As well, due to the changes of the colour of certain words in the text, an alteration also occurred on the directions of the task dealing with finding synonym of certain words or phrases.

**CONCLUSION**

The result of the product try-out showed that the product of this study was good in terms of its appearance, level of difficulty, attractiveness, coverage, and substance. However, several revisions were still needed. The revisions were not merely based on the result of the try-out but based on the frequency of each suggestion and consideration whether the advice actually was the fact simply one student’s subjective opinion. Therefore, revisions carried out were related to the colour and the font used in the text because the number of the subjects giving negative response was more than half of the total number of the subjects involved in the try-out. Another revision was made due to the fact that the exercise lacked instructions.

Having been revised, the final product of this study is satisfying and possesses the four criteria. The first is that the supplementary reading materials cover short functional texts stated in the syllabus namely announcement, advertisement, and memo. The second criterion is that the supplementary reading materials imply communicative purpose which are information (main idea and supporting details), language (grammar and vocabulary), and genre. The next one is that the supplementary reading materials vary in terms of topics which are science, technology, and academic life. The last criterion is that the supplementary reading materials enable learners to work independently.

Overall, the final product was much better than the initial one. However, the final product of this study contained three constraints. The first is that the final product only covered three types of short functional text which are announcement, advertisement, and memo. The next constraint is that the final product did not provide other content areas suggested in the curriculum, namely mathematics and social science. In addition, the product try-out was conducted just once to one particular school. The researcher did not make another try-out. Yet, the researcher
suggested that the materials should be implemented and later be evaluated for further improvement.

As the supplementary materials were designed on the basis of the demand of the syllabus of the first semester of the seventh grade, the seventh graders should use the supplementary reading materials to improve their reading skills and teacher should facilitate the students to be autonomous learners by using the product of this study. As well, these supplementary reading materials can be used at any schools which have the same standard as International-Standard School.

Revisions based on the feedback have been made. However, some improvements may still need to be made. Therefore, for other researchers who want to conduct similar study, these are some useful suggestions. First of all, various text types needs to be developed. Secondly, a wider topic in reading materials needs to be considered in order to avoid boredom because of the few varieties of topic. Last but not least, because product try-out is one of crucial steps in developing materials, the product try-out is required to be conducted more than once at least at two different schools.

REFERENCES


