SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITY FOR THE EIGHTH GRADERS OF SMPN 1 MALANG

Lukman Hidayat & Arwijati Murdibjono
E-mail: lukman.hidayat91@gmail.com; arwijatimurdibjono@yahoo.com
State University of Malang

ABSTRACT: This study aims at developing supplementary reading materials for extensive reading activity designed for the eighth graders of SMPN 1 Malang. Using research and development model adapted from Hyland (2003) and stages of materials development model adapted from Tomlinson (2012) as the bedrock of the study, supplementary reading materials containing 15 units are produced.

Key words: Supplementary Reading Material, Extensive Reading

Reading, which is one of the four language skills being taught in English subjects in school, plays an important role in acquiring English. To accommodate the needs of the students reading skills, the standard of competence and basic competence are formulated in the Standard of Content for each grade. Consequently, the students learn to read based on what has been directed from the curriculum.

Reading, however, can be defined variously by many language experts. Cline et al. (2006) define reading as decoding and understanding text for particular reader purposes. Reading itself, however, will vary according to the purpose of reading since different purposes to some extent will need different strategies in reading. For instance, the one who reads for pleasure will read differently from the one who reads to answer comprehension questions. Weaver (2009) further asserts that those conditions in reading can affect confidence, fear, anger, defiance, and/or other emotions. Therefore, it is important to create an enjoyable atmosphere for reading in order to help the students to understand the text better.

To create such an enjoyable atmosphere while reading, extensive reading can be a tremendous alternative for it. Krashen (1982) argues that extensive reading activity will lead the students to acquire language. Extensive reading aims at helping the students to become better at the skills of reading since when the students read extensively, they read very easy, enjoyable books to build their reading speed and reading fluency.
Accordingly, Day (2008) showed the result of the study of Extensive Reading piloted by Sheu (2003) in Taiwan, and Nishono (2007) in Japan. Both studies came to an upshot of increasing reading competence. However, Extensive Reading is rarely implemented in Indonesia, especially in the teaching of English at elementary or high school level. Hence, it is worth developing supplementary materials which are simultaneously designed to be an extensive reading activity by providing the students with various texts. Besides, it is going to be more meaningful and useful to start administering Extensive Reading from the early grade of Junior High, that is, seventh and eighth grade.

In addition to the micro reading skills, Munby (as cited by Grellet, 1983) mentions the following skills: recognizing the language, deducing the meaning, understanding explicit information, understanding implicit information, understanding conceptual meaning, understanding the communicative utterances, understanding relations within the sentence, understanding relations between the texts, understanding grammar, interpreting text, recognizing indicators in text, identifying the main idea of text, distinguishing the main idea from supporting details, summarising the texts, extracting relevant points, skimming, scanning. From these reading skills, the researcher only picked one reading skill namely understanding explicit meaning since it goes in line with the reading basic competence of the second semester of the eighth grade.

To fulfil the necessity of extensive reading implementation and also the students’ interest in reading, good reading materials should be created. The availability of interesting materials is hard to find in SMPN 1 Malang and the use of the internet which is actually aimed to facilitate their needs cannot be maximally utilised. In addition, the availability of reading books in the school library only concerns intensive reading.

In addition, some factors seem to affect students’ reading activity in a rather unfavourable way. Based on some observations and informal interviews in SMPN 1 Malang, the researcher found two factors that cause the unfavourable condition. Firstly, the course book does not maximally accommodate the students’ need to expand their reading competence. Secondly, it appears that the selected
texts in the course book cannot interestingly stimulate the students’ motivation to read more enthusiastically since the texts are monotonous.

In SMP 1 Malang, particularly VIII-C class, the teaching of reading was mostly focused on translation. The students were drilled to translate English texts into Indonesian. This sort of reading activity should no longer be used according to the curriculum; therefore, the present study can change the paradigm of teaching reading employed by the English teachers of SMPN 1 Malang.

Supplementary material for extensive reading in the market, especially in Malang, cannot be found easily. The bookstores in Malang only sell general course books intended for the eighth graders of junior high school. These books contain reading texts that are used for intensive reading activities in classroom. Therefore, supplementary materials for extensive reading are needed by the students. Consequently, the researcher decided to develop a set of supplementary readers to be read as an extensive reading activity by junior high school students.

METHOD

This study was designed as Research and Development (R&D) with research model adaptation proposed by Hyland (2003). This research model covers a set of stages starting from needs assessment, developing materials, experts and teachers validation, revision I, small group try-out, revision II, to final product.

Needs assessment was carried out to find out the actual learners’ needs focusing on (1) identifying the students’ previous learning experiences; (2) obtaining information dealing with a particular problem/difficulty that learners are experiencing in reading; (3) identifying students’ preferences and interest about the materials to be developed; and (4) probing the students’ frequency of reading. To obtain the answers, the researcher used questionnaires distributed to the students, and interviewed the teacher.

After conducting needs assessment, the data obtained were analysed descriptively and quantitatively, and then the researcher commenced developing the product based on the analysis. Materials development featured two stages namely drafting and organising. Drafting phase includes (1) designing the content;
(2) selecting the topic of texts; and (3) determining the reading skills. After the stage of drafting was accomplished, the researcher then continued to the organising stage. It features (1) constructing the texts; (2) determining the activities; and (3) making the answer key.

The following stage to establish after developing materials was validation from experts and teachers. The validators were 1) a lecturer of State University of Malang specialising in extensive reading and teaching English as a second language and 2) an English teacher of SMPN 1 Malang who had already been teaching for about 23 years. They were needed to constructively criticise the materials so that the researcher-writer was able to improve the quality of the materials being developed. The validators’ valuable comments were used as the basis on which revision was made. To conduct this stage, the researcher provided a checklist for the expert and the teacher to complete. They were requested to analyse and evaluate the product based on the checklist.

The improvements made after obtaining comments and feedback from the validators are stated as follows. Firstly, the expert suggested that the length of the text be reduced and that each text have approximately 200 words long. In addition, the expert further advised selecting texts about something new or unfamiliar in order to raise students’ sense of curiosity.

In terms of clarity of the instruction, the expert also criticised some of the instructions used in the exercises. Some of them were incorrectly instructed and caused ambiguity. For instance, the original instruction was written as follows: “Give tick mark (√) in column ‘yes’ or ‘no’.” This was revised into “Give a tick mark (√) in the ‘yes’ or the ‘no’ column”. After the validation and revision were managed, the product was then ready for the try-out.

The product was tried out to the 10 randomly chosen students of VIII C of SMP 1 Malang. The product was distributed to them to be read at home. The researcher gave time allocation for the students to read the materials for three days. Trying out the product was conducted in order to identify the suitability, acceptability, and some weaknesses of the materials. The weaknesses found were used to improve the quality of the materials. To know the quality of the materials the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the students. It covered: the level of
difficulty, attractiveness of the texts, variety of exercises, clarity of the instructions, and the content of the product.

After obtaining the data from the try-out, the researcher then scrutinised them descriptively and used them as the consideration of revision. The researcher also focused on students’ comments and feedback in order to make some improvement for the product.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The product try-out was undertaken on March 28th, 2013. The first aspect that needed to be investigated from the students was design and layout. Most of them were interested in the design of the book. They stated that the size of the book that is portable makes them easier to carry. In addition, most of the students were appealed by the illustrations provided. Some of their comments indicated that this product at least already achieved one of the criteria of good materials which had already been determined at need assessment stage, that is, the materials were attractively designed.

The second point of the result of the try-out dealt with suitability and exploitability of the content. Suitability of the content was still categorised into two points, namely: topic and language features. For topic suitability, 5 out of 10 students argued that the topics were suitable, 4 out of 10 students stated that they were suitable enough, and only 1 student mentioned that the topics were not really suitable. For the language features, most of the students argued that they were adequately suitable for their reading competence. Furthermore, exploitability of the content here was related to whether or not the texts provided were able to expand students’ knowledge as well as to make students understand the target language fluently. Based on the try-out questionnaire, it showed that most of the students had reason that the texts were able to expand their knowledge as well as trigger their willingness to read them.

The third worth-elaborating aspect is about variation of text-types and exercises. The result showed that the criterion of variation of text-types had already been fulfilled. In addition, the exercises provided to understand the texts
were considered various according to the students. The exercises interestingly and attractively triggered the students to do them. Accordingly, they came to enjoy reading the texts.

The fourth point deals with the level of difficulty, which covered three general points, namely: the length of the text, the diction, and the exercises. Concerning the length of the texts, only one student argued that some of the texts were too long so that he felt a bit bored while reading. Concerning the diction used in the texts, some of the students still faced difficulty dealing with the choice of words although at the end of chapter there are glossaries. Moreover, exercises provided in the text were still doable independently for the students.

After administering try-out of the product, the result of questionnaire distribution at try-out phase was used as the consideration of revision. The first revision was about the choice of font-style. At first, there were only two kinds of font-style used in the product; those are Garamond and Feast of Flesh BB but then some students suggested to use other various font-styles. Accordingly, the researcher revised it and used other font-style such as Di Murphic, Bell MT, Segoe Print and Euphemia.

Next, some of the students still faced difficulty in understanding some dictions or vocabulary items. Therefore, the researcher still changed some words which were considered difficult. In addition, to help students to understand some vocabulary items, eventually, the product included glossaries at the end of each chapter. However, the glossary was still monolingual and it somehow still confused the students who were trying to understand the items. Accordingly, the glossary was then revised into bilingual one, that is, English-Indonesian.

**Discussions**

The upshot of this study was a printed supplementary material designed for Extensive Reading activity entitled “CHEESE”. The product features three chapters: (1) Chapter 1 (*World of Fantasy*), which is about fairy tales and short stories; (2) Chapter 2 (*World of Curiosity*), which deals with informative passages on certain phenomenon; and (3) Chapter 3 (*World of Popularity*), which concerns description of famous people and places. The material consists of 15 texts, which
focus on one reading skill namely understanding the explicit meaning. This goes in line with basic competence which is to understand the explicit meaning perfectly and efficiently written functional and simple short essay texts in narrative, recount and exposition text related to the surrounding environment or in academic context.

After the product try-out, some strengths and conceivable weaknesses of the product were known. The first strength is that this product is exclusively designed for Extensive Reading activity. It is supported by Bamford and Day (1998 in ER Foundation) who asserted that when the students read extensively, they actually read very easy and enjoyable books to build their reading speed and fluency.

Secondly, this product provides various text types: narrative, descriptive and expository. The texts provide not only various topics but also unique information. The texts, for instance, are entitled *Do Fish Sleep?*, *Mobile Phone Throwing Championship*, *A City Without a Sun*, *Unusual Cell-phone*; and many more. The materials are also instructional and exploratory since they help the students to make follow-up activity after reading the texts. The researcher provides an example of a text in the product which has the unique information. In addition, each of the texts consists of approximately 200 words.

Thirdly, the activities are not considered as burdensome. This product promotes an edutainment activity. It means that any contents of this product focus on educating students as well as entertaining them. It is in line with Krashen (1984) who states that reading should be done enjoyably and students should feel motivated to read more if they feel they read well. This edutainment activity, for instance, appears in an activity dealing with crossword puzzle. In doing the crossword puzzle the students answer the comprehensive questions which represent educating activity and at the same time they are also doing game as entertainment activity.

Fourthly, in terms of layout and design, this product is attractive. The size of the product is 14.5 cm x 21 cm; it means that this product is so portable. In addition, colours and pictures make this product more attractive and importantly help the students to understand the texts more easily. It is proven by some
comments mentioned by the students at the try-out process. One of them claimed that the developed product brings pleasure and is able to broaden his knowledge.

Nonetheless, several weaknesses may appear in this product of study. In terms of the number of texts, the product consists of 15 texts. It may not be adequate since the students are expected to read more. However, this condition is because of time limitation and production cost.

Another weakness is that this product is in the form of printed-media. To some extent, the printer device affects the quality of printing. It makes some of the pictures or illustration unclear to the readers’ eyesight. However, this product is an alternative medium for the ones who do not like reading on the computer screen. In addition, not all students have computer device as their learning medium.

The researcher believes that this product still needs improvement in terms of many aspects. This product, however, can be used as reference for the ones who are going to conduct similar study so that in the future a better innovation for this product looks assured.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The texts in the supplementary material for reading are informative since they inform the students about the target language and some unique information to broaden their knowledge. The product also has already reached qualification in suitability and acceptability, that is, the texts and the activities enable the students to learn English more easily and enjoyably. The vocabulary items used were also appropriate to the students’ level of reading comprehension ability. The pictures and illustrations laid were able to assist the students in understanding the texts and also to attract them to read.

The students are expected to use this product as additional materials for extensive reading activity since such materials are not available in their school library and in the market. In addition, teachers can implement Extensive Reading activity by utilising this product since it can help the students to read more fluently and to expand their knowledge.
Suggestions

A suggestion for future researcher is that this book still needs expansion. This particular product contains 15 texts with a rough assumption that the students are going to read extensively once in a week. Hence, increasing the number of texts is highly recommended so that the students can be more skilful particularly in reading.

Furthermore, this product is in the form of printed book. It may be better for future researcher-writer to upgrade the product into the form of e-book or even sort of Macromedia Flash to attract students’ motivation in reading as well as to reduce the production cost. With all those possibilities, extensive reading activity can be more enjoyably conducted.

In addition, in order to achieve more valid qualification of the acceptability of the product, it is worth trying-out the product more than once and also to expand the numbers of population in following studies.

REFERENCES


Cline, F., Johnstone, C., & King, T. 2006. Focus Group Reactions to Three Definitions of Reading (as originally developed in support of NARAP goal 1). Minneapolis, MN: National Accessible Reading Assessment Projects


