

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION AND
INTEREST BY USING MODIFIED READING MATERIALS
AT GRADE IX.2 OF SMP NEGERI 4 PEKANBARU**

THESIS



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ABSTRAK

Sri Romadhona, 2009. Improving Students' Reading Comprehension and Interest by Using Modified Reading Materials at Grade IX.2 SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. Tesis. Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa, Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Berdasarkan pengamatan dan pengalaman selama mengajar siswa kelas IX.2, peneliti mendapat beberapa data bahwa rendahnya nilai membaca pemahaman mereka disebabkan oleh kurangnya minat mereka dalam membaca sehingga mereka tidak melakukan latihan membaca alami yang melibatkan teknik-teknik membaca seperti menggunakan pengetahuan dasar yang dimiliki tentang bacaan, konteks bacaan dan perkiraan tentang isi bacaan untuk mendapatkan pengertian dari apa yang mereka baca. Keadaan tersebut mendorong peneliti untuk menghubungkan materi bacaan untuk kelas membaca dengan apa yang dipelajari sebelumnya di kelas pengetahuan sosial. Materi tersebut kemudian disesuaikan dengan tingkat kemampuan yang ada pada siswa tingkat Sembilan sehingga mereka bisa berlatih teknik-teknik yang biasanya dipakai dalam membaca.

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dan peneliti. Penelitian ini dilakukan dalam dua siklus yang masing-masing terdiri dari dua pertemuan. Di tiap akhir siklus, siswa diberikan sebuah test membaca pemahaman. Data diperoleh melalui pengamatan yang dilakukan peneliti sebagai instrument utama penelitian, tes membaca pemahaman yang diberikan, observasi yang dibantu oleh guru pendamping serta catatan lapangan yang dibuat oleh peneliti dan guru pendamping. Data tersebut dianalisa baik secara kuantitatif maupun kualitatif.

Temuan-temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terjadi peningkatan sejak pertemuan pertama pada siklus 1. Tetapi peningkatan tersebut masih belum memuaskan. Pada akhir siklus dua, peningkatan cukup memuaskan baik dari segi membaca pemahaman siswa maupun minat akan membaca itu sendiri. Pada akhir siklus 2, nilai membaca pemahaman siswa meningkat untuk tiap-tiap indicator sebesar 7% hingga 23%. Dalam proses pembelajaran, siswa menunjuk peningkatan minat. Mereka tertarik untuk terlibat aktif dalam setiap kegiatan yang dilaksanakan. Dari hasil pengamatan dan catatan lapangan yang diambil terlihat bahwa minat membaca siswa meningkat sebesar 34%. Selanjutnya, peneliti dapat simpulkan bahwa materi bacaan yang telah dimodifikasi dapat meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pemahaman dan minat membaca siswa pada kelas IX.2 SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru.

Key Words: Membaca Pemahaman, Minat Baca dan Materi Bacaan

ABSTRACT

Sri Romadhona, 2009. Improving Students' Reading Comprehension and Interest by Using Modified Reading Materials at the Ninth Grade of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. Thesis. English Education Section, Language Education Program, Graduate Program of Padang State University.

Based on the researcher's observation and experience at Class IX.2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru, it was noted that the students has low reading comprehension scores. This happened because they had low interest in reading so that they did not practice to apply the natural reading strategy to cope with the text such as using their prior knowledge, context clues and prediction. This condition has brought the researcher to link the classroom reading materials to what the students had previously learnt in their social science classes. The reading material was being modified to meet the students' level so that they practiced the techniques of reading.

This research was a classroom action research that was aimed to improve the students' study and the researcher's way of teaching. It was done in two cycles and each cycle consisted of two meetings. The data was collected through reading comprehension tests, observation and field notes. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The activities of the students and the researcher were observed and analyzed each meeting and the comprehension tests were given after each cycle.

The result of this research shows that since the first cycle there was an increasing but it was not satisfactory yet. In the second cycle, there is an increase of students' reading comprehension score; that is 7% to 23% for each indicator. In the process, the students' reading interest was also improved. The students were interested in getting involved in every activity carried out. The students' observation sheet and field notes show that the students' interest improved 34%. Thus, the researcher can conclude that modified reading materials can improve students' reading comprehension and reading interest at Grade IX.2 SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru.

Key Words: Reading Comprehension, Reading Interest and Modified Reading Materials.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Naturally, people read when they want or need to read to find the information or just to get entertainment. It flows as they decode the printed pages to get what they need. When they face unfamiliar words, they do not stop reading but using their background knowledge, context clues and prediction to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar words. These factors should help him to predict what is in the text, to guess the meaning of the unknown words, and further, to apply the reading comprehension skills naturally. The reader does not need a dictionary to convey the meaning of unknown word. He just uses his prior knowledge about the topic and the text organization to comprehend the text and his intention to start reading.

The condition of natural reading above is also expected in language learning especially in reading classes of English as the second language. The students are expected to practice and acquire the reading comprehension skills using the techniques in natural reading such as using their background knowledge, context clues and prediction to cope with the unfamiliar words that may hinder them from reading. They are intended to be able to apply the comprehension skills such as skimming, scanning, finding the general idea of the text and others. Thus this kind of skill is tested nationally focusing on the

ability to get the gist of the text, the details and specific information, implied information, and to answer the inference and reference questions.

But what the researcher has observed during the reading class is that the students did not seem to have the reading practice naturally. Once the students were asked to do some reading comprehension task after a pre reading activities, they directly opened their dictionary and struggled to find the meaning of a single word. It caused longer time to finish the activities and usually it became a home work when the session was due.

During the process of reading, those students did not show that they were interested in the process. It could be seen clearly when the pre reading process took place, only few students answered and responded. A quarter of the class showed their desire to study and the rest were busy chatting or drawing. If the teacher observed them seriously, they not only stop talking or drawing but working.

The researcher had tried to activate the students' background knowledge on the topic that was usually followed in order to apply the natural reading. The students seemed not to have enough insight on the topic to make the discussion go fluently. The practice worked for the students who was already good or had good interest in English. When they were given a reading comprehension task, they did not practice the strategy they had discussed but relying heavily on the dictionary. Thus the task took longer time to finish. So when the time was off, they usually copied their friends' work or it became the homework because they did not finish.

The condition above became a problem when the students face a reading comprehension test that should be done in a certain period of time without the assistance of the dictionary. Their scores were not satisfying. The researcher took a class of grade IX (IX.2) of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru as the focus of the preliminary observation. The previous reading test of this class showed a very unsatisfied result. With the minimum standard score of 75, only 15 students of 40 were considered successfully passing the minimum standard score. 62% of the students have got scores below 75.

On the other time, when they were given homework on reading, again, only one third of the class did it properly and submitted it punctually. Others came up with incomplete work or submitted later than the deadline. There were some who submitted very late after being asked several time and punished for the lateness. It is not reliable with the condition of the students in my school. With good economic condition and good average capability, this kind of result is really not good.

These findings drove the researcher to do some interview informally during the break time with some students either from my classes or from the other teachers' classes. It is surprising that the students came up with some reasons. They did not like reading because they did not like the topic, they did not get anything from it, the text was not in their interest or even they thought that it was boring just sitting and reading. On the other side they also said that the teacher did not teach them interestingly.

Those conditions above drove the researcher to think about the way to respond to those students concerns about the reading class. Something in reading classed that can arouse the students need to read so they can practice using all the techniques that usually occur in natural reading. Thus it can help them to comprehend the text completely since the reading comprehension is tested nationally. The researcher thought about using a specific material that could make students practice using all points that occurs on the natural reading, fulfill the interest of all students in general and be able to nurture the reading interest of the students themselves. The researcher decided to use the topic taken from the other school subject such as social science and science and modify them to fit the class condition. With this kind of reading material, students would have similar interest to get the information and they could work with their background knowledge.

B. Identification of the Problem

The researcher has seen that there are some problems occurred in the reading classes that burdened the natural reading to take place. The problems were as follow:

1. The reading materials were too difficult for the students so they relied too much on the dictionary.
2. The students did not have enough vocabulary to understand the text.
3. The reading materials were not interesting and not up to date.

4. The students have low interest both in reading activity and the reading material so they did not really practice the strategy of natural reading such as using prior knowledge, context clues and prediction.
5. The situation in the classroom does not make the students enjoy the reading.
6. The teachers have less knowledge, techniques and strategies to make the reading classes alive.

Based on the problems above, the researcher decided to work on the material that can make the students practice to use strategies mentioned above and fulfill the interest of a class of 40 students. These kinds of material would be related to what the students had stated shortly before in other classes and carefully designed to meet the students' level of English and their needs of information. The researcher would focus on the text that could be used to make the students practice to comprehend the reading text.

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the problem identified above, the students are expected to have natural reading comprehension practice and nurture a good interest in reading, this research is focused on Improving students' reading comprehension and interest by using modified reading materials.

D. Research Questions

This research is also aimed at answering the following questions:

1. To what extend can modified reading materials improve students reading comprehension at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru?
2. To what extend can modified reading materials improve students reading interest at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru?
3. What factors cause the improvement of the students' reading comprehension and reading interest at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru?

E. Purpose of the Research

In this research, the researcher will find out:

1. To what extend modified reading materials can improve students reading comprehension at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru
2. To what extend modified reading materials can improve students reading interest at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru
3. What factor causes the improvement of the students' reading comprehension and reading interest at Grade IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru.

F. Importance of the Research

The result of this research is expected to help the students of Grade IX.2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru to improve their reading comprehension skills and to

nurture a good interest in reading since reading is all the way of students' life. This research was conducted to make the students active during the classroom activities.

This research will also help the researcher as well as the other teachers improve their ways of teaching, especially teaching reading comprehension skills. This research is hoped to give ideas to find new ways in teaching, to overcome problems that they encounter during the classroom activities and to give a simple ideas how important varieties of materials and techniques in teaching.

The result of this research can be useful for educators to plan and improve the teaching reading curriculum, reading materials and teaching and learning process.

Thus the result of this research is hoped to be useful for other researcher as the information in doing the further research.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

In this thesis, the writer uses some terms that might need to be clearly defined. Here are some terms used:

1. Modified reading material refers to the reading text which has similar topic with the other school subject. This text would be modified in term of vocabulary and the students' level of understanding.

2. Reading comprehension refers to the natural activities of reading that is in process the reader is trying to get something without being interrupted or bothered with the problems in finding the new words meaning.
3. Reading interest refers to the students' eagerness or desire in their reading classes that is shown in the process of the class. Someone is said having good interest in doing something when they show their active and positive movement and attitude during the activity.

2. This research was conducted at Grade IX for the report text so it cannot be generalize into the other grades or kinds of text.
3. The items used in the research have been discussed with the other English teachers.

BAB V

CONCLUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

After conducting the classroom action research on the improving students' reading comprehension and interest by using modified reading materials at grade IX, Class IX.2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru, it can be concluded that:

1. Modified reading materials improve students' reading comprehension at Grade IX, Class IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. The improvement of the students' reading comprehension skills are in term of finding the main idea of the text, recognizing the specific information or details, stating the implied information, finding reference and finding the meaning of the word in context.
2. Modified reading material improve the students reading interest at Grade IX, Class IX2 of SMP Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. The improvement of the students reading interest is in term of their activeness, attitude and punctuality in the classroom activities, and their eagerness, punctuality and completeness of doing their homework.
3. The factors that influence the improvement of students' reading comprehension are:
 - a. The modified reading materials that are designed and modified based on the students' need and level of thinking help them practice to use the prior knowledge context clues and prediction to understand the reading text.
 - b. Students' time allocation in practicing those reading strategies and techniques is enough so that each student gets the idea clearly.

4. The factors that influence the improvement of the students' reading interest are:
 - a. The activities arranged in the classroom make students enjoy reading.
 - b. The modified reading materials help the researcher create the environment where the students find that they need to read.
 - c. The instruction given is clear and there is a kind of reward given when the students are able to finish a certain task on time.

B. Implication

Based on the result of the research, there are several implications for the researcher and other teacher who has similar condition with what the researcher have faced. They are:

1. The modified reading materials are effective to activate students' prior knowledge to comprehend a reading text. When the students' prior knowledge has been activated, the students, then, use the context clues and prediction strategies to go on with the comprehension. The modified reading materials help students practice those strategies.
2. The modified reading materials are effective to create the good reading environment because they cope the need of most students in the classroom. This condition is useful to nurture an interest in reading.
3. The modified reading materials are possible to apply further for other kinds of text. For SMP level, it is known that the students study two kinds of text; they are functional text and monolog.

4. The modified reading materials also help teachers with different school subjects to develop mutual relations that is good for the teacher themselves as well as their students.

C. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this classroom action research, it is suggested that:

1. The researcher as an English teacher should continue using modified reading materials in teaching reading.
2. The researcher should overview the other school subject to explore any topic that can be applied in the reading classes.
3. The researcher also should focus on the students' level of thinking and weaknesses so that the plan made will be on the students' need.
4. The researcher as an English teacher should continue doing the action research on using modified material to see the possibility of using this in other language skills such as writing, speaking and listening.
5. The researcher as an English teacher should continue doing the action research to improve the teaching skills and students' ability in using the language skills.
6. The other teacher who has faced the similar problems and can follow the steps correctly can apply this technique to help their students practice the reading skills.

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