

Using Authentic Materials to Enhance Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement

By

Kartika Wulandari, Ujang Suparman, Mahpul
Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Lampung
lagitika@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memeriksa i) efek signifikan secara statistik pada penggunaan materi otentik terhadap pencapaian pemahaman membaca siswa, ii) persepsi siswa pada penggunaan materi otentik terhadap proses pembelajaran siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode campuran dan kedua desain baik kuantitatif ataupun kualitatif sama-sama di gunakan secara seimbang. Subjek dari penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X IPA 2 di SMAN 2 Metro. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada efek signifikan secara statistik dari materi otentik pada pencapaian pemahaman membaca dengan nilai signifikan (2-tailed) 0.00. Siswa menganggap bahwa materi otentik dapat meningkatkan pencapaian pemahaman membaca berdasarkan dari hasil wawancara. Hasil penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa materi otentik dapat memfasilitasi siswa untuk meningkatkan pencapaian pemahaman membaca mereka.

Kata Kunci : *Materi otentik, Peningkatan membaca, Pemahaman membaca.*

The objectives of this research were to investigate i) a statistically significant effect on the use of authentic materials on the students' reading comprehension achievement, ii) the students' perceptions on the use of authentic materials toward the students' learning process. The research used mix method and both quantitative and qualitative design were equally employed. The subjects were the students of class X IPA 2 in SMAN 2 Metro. The results showed that there was a statistically significant effect on the use of authentic materials on the students' reading comprehension achievement with the significant value (2-tailed) was 0.00. The students perceived that authentic materials can enhance their reading comprehension achievement. This suggests that authentic materials facilitate learners to improve their reading comprehension achievement.

Keywords: *Authentic materials, Enhancing reading, Reading comprehension.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automatically or reading fluency (Alyousef, 2005:144).

The use of inappropriate learning materials in the classroom can be one of the problems that will occur during teaching reading in the classroom. Without proper reading texts that suit them, the students will spend long hours in the classroom with poor achievement. The students’ performance varies according to the type of reading texts given to them. Reading materials play an important role in reading because by giving the students the appropriate reading materials, it possibly makes the students’ motivation to keep reading increase. Nuttall as cited in Berardo (2006) gives three criteria when choosing texts to be used in the classroom *suitability of content, exploitability, and readability*.

The use of authentic text is now considered to be one way of maintaining or increasing students’ motivation for learning (Guariento and Morley, 2001:347). Authentic material provides the learners with many significant advantages and promotes them with high motivation and interest in language learning. The studies have confirmed that using authentic materials has great influence on developing reading comprehension by presenting new words and expressions to students Bacon and Finneman as cited in Omid and Azam (2016). Berardo (2006:60) states that one of the main ideas of using authentic materials in the classroom is to “*expose*” the learner to as much real language as possible. Even if the classroom is not a “*real-life*” situation, authentic materials have a very important place within it. Authentic materials are designed with a social purpose of communication in real life, using the language taking into the student's needs, interests and goals according to their English level, where it is necessary for terms of the experience and involves interaction between the teacher and the learners. On the other hand, some teachers can bring some TV commercials, broadcasts, paintings or other resources and they are considered authentic materials. That is to say, authentic materials are produced to promote and encourage students in environments (inside or outside the classroom) where communication takes place, stimulates and carries out students to learn about the real world (culture).

One of the accessible authentic materials is from English newspaper and magazine, by using the articles in English language newspaper would give the benefit for the students. The students can update the recent information and learning how to

read newspaper articles. In line with this, Fredrickson and Wedel as cited in Angga (2010) state the reason why teachers around the world use English language newspaper as an essential part of the reading program. One of the reasons is that English language newspaper is the one type of English reading materials that the students are most likely to continue reading after they complete their education. This research actually clarifies about reading comprehension as King and Stanley as cited in Riani et al., (2014) who explain that “reading comprehension skill has five components in reading texts that may help the students in understanding a text” the aspects are identifying the main idea, determining specific information, identifying reference, making inference and stating difficult vocabulary.

Klare as cited in Angga (2010) suggests that the readability of the text is ‘closely related with reading difficulty’. From those explanations above, it can be said that readability should be the most considerable thing when the teacher chooses the materials for the students. To measure the readability from the text, the researcher would use readability formulas. Johnson as cited in Angga (2010) states he measures some school books using four types of formulas; they are Fry, Flesch Kincaid, FOG and Forcast. In this case, the researcher preferred to use Flesch Reading-Ease (FRE) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade level (FKG) as the formulas to measure the readability of the newspaper article that would be used in the research. Besides, the Flesch Reading Ease Formula is considered as one of the oldest and the most accurate readability formulas. The Flesch Reading Ease Formula is a simple approach to assess the grade-one of the few accurate measures around that we can rely on without too much scrutiny. In this case, this research would use the Flesch Reading-Ease (FRE) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade level (FKG).

Learning is then described as a simple information processing model. The human memory is compared to the processing of information by a computer. A short term working memory shorts out incoming perceptions and relates them to previous knowledge, and the long-term memory stores experiences and conceptual knowledge. They are built up from sets of experiences which are only partially shared with others. The important point to be made is that research into both students conceptions and approaches to learning has increased the attention given to how learning is experienced, understood, or conceptualized by learners themselves and remains a powerful influence on student learning in higher education (Entwistle as cited in Marouchou (2012).

There were many studies revealed that authentic materials could improve the students reading comprehension achievement, such as Marzban and Davaji (2015:85) who explored the effect of studying authentic texts in the classrooms on reading comprehension, Hatimah (2013:35) found out the result of the use of authentic materials that had a significant effect on the students' reading comprehension achievement, Khoshbakht and Gorjian (2017:48) revealed that reading comprehension performance improved.

From the explanation above it could be summarized that the aims of this research are to investigate whether there is any significant effect of the authentic materials on the students' reading comprehension achievement and to investigate the students' perceptions of the authentic materials on their learning process.

METHODS

This study used mix method and both quantitative and qualitative design were equally employed. The integration of those two designs is to find out the complete result (process oriented and result-oriented) in one study Bryman as cited in Setiyadi (2006). Class X IPA 2 of SMAN 2 Metro has participated in this study. Then, there were two kinds of the instruments in this research; they were reading comprehension test and interview.

In this case, there were 30 items of the reading comprehension test and it was used to answer the first research question. This instrument was given to the students after they learned reading by using authentic materials. The students answered the questions based on the text individually. From the reading comprehension test, the researcher would find out the improvement of the students' reading comprehension achievement by comparing the result from the pretest and the posttest. This data was analyzed quantitatively.

Then, for the interview was conducted in order to answer the second research question; it was held after the students were being taught by using authentic materials as the treatment in teaching reading comprehension aspects. This interview was to know the students' perception of authentic materials in the classroom. In this case, the researcher would do the one-on-one interview with twelve students in the class as the research participants. The questions of the interview were about their perception during the reading activity using the authentic materials. There were eight questions for this interview; the data from the interview would answer the second research question and was analyzed qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are two results in this study. One result is for each research questions.

Results of The Research

This result addressing to answer the research question number one, that is "Is there any statistically significant effect from the use of authentic materials on the students' reading comprehension achievement?". In order to answer the first research question, the pretest and posttest were conducted. The result of pretest and posttest could be seen on Table 1. below.

Table 1. The Score Distribution of Pre Test and Post Test

No	Score Range	Pre Test	Post Test	Description
		Frequency	Frequency	
1.	40.00 – 50.00	8	2	Low
2.	51.00 – 60.00	4	4	Fair
3.	61.00 – 70.00	10	5	Good
4.	71.00 – 80.00	5	10	Very Good
5.	> 80.00	-	6	Excellent
	Mean Score	60.07	72.37	
	The Highest Score	40.00	50.00	
	The Lowest Score	80.00	90.00	

Table 1. above proved that the mean score of posttest was higher than pretest. This result also indicated that authentic materials could improve the students' reading comprehension as statistically could be seen on Table 2. below. The significant value (2-tailed) was $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.00$). So, H_1 was accepted, it meant that there was a statistically significant difference from the pretest and the posttest. It can be stated that there was a significant increase or effect of the students' reading comprehension aspects after being treated by using authentic materials.

Table 2. The Significant Increase of Students' Reading Comprehension Score

	Paired Samples Test						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Paired Differences								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
posttest - pretest	12,29630	5,71647	1,10014	10,03493	14,55766	11,177	26	,000	

From Table 3. below, it could be seen that the majority score of students in the pretest was at good level (37.0%) followed by low level (29.6%), very good level (18.5%) and fair level (14.8%). Unlike the pretest, in the posttest the majority of the students was at very good level (37.0%) followed by excellent level (22.2%) this level did not appear in the pretest because there were no students could not reach the score more than 80.00 (>80.00). The next was good level (18.5%), fair level (14.8%) and low level (7.40).

Table 3. The Score Distribution of Pre Test and Post Test

No.	Score Range	Pre Test	Post Test
		Frequency	Frequency
1.	40.00 – 50.00 (Low)	8 (29.6%)	2 (7.40%)
2.	51.00 – 60.00 (Fair)	4 (14.8%)	4 (14.8%)
3.	61.00 – 70.00 (Good)	10 (37.0%)	5 (18.5%)
4.	71.00 – 80.00 (Very Good)	5 (18.5%)	10 (37.0%)
5.	> 80.00 (Excellent)	-	6 (22.2%)
Total		27 (100%)	27 (100%)

After analyzing the significant improvement of the students' reading comprehension from the pretest and the posttest and the distribution score from pretest and posttest then the researcher trying to find out which of the reading comprehension aspect that mostly improved.

By analyzing Table 4. below the students' pretest and posttest score had a significant difference in every reading comprehension aspect. The result of the Paired Sample T-Test indicated the influence of the treatment on the students' scores was statistically significant, since the value of variable sign. (2-tailed) was <0.05. Then, the reading comprehension aspect that most improved after the treatment was vocabulary (22.8%) followed by main idea (19.1%), specific information (8.6%), reference (7.4%) and inference (4.3%).

The first reading aspect that had the most improvement was vocabulary with the increased gain of the mean score was 1.370 (22.8%). It indicated that authentic materials could facilitate the students in understanding vocabulary.

Table 4. The Increase of Each Reading Comprehension Aspects

No	The aspect of Reading Comprehension	Mean Score		The increase of Mean Score	Priority
		Pre Test	Post Test		
1.	Main Idea	3.296 (54.9%)	4.444 (74.0%)	1.148 (19.1%)	2 nd
2.	Specific Information	3.518 (58.6%)	4.037 (67.2%)	0.518 (8.6%)	3 rd
3.	Reference	4.259 (70.9%)	4.703 (78.3%)	0.444 (7.4%)	4 th
4.	Inference	3.481 (58.0%)	3.740 (62.3%)	0.259 (4.3%)	5 th
5.	Vocabulary	3.296 (54.9%)	4.666 (77.7%)	1.370 (22.8%)	1 st

In answering the research question number two, that is "What are the students' perceptions on the use of Authentic Materials in their learning process?" the use of the authentic materials in reading comprehension was done in three meetings. In these treatments, the teaching reading comprehension used the authentic materials in form of newspaper article from The Jakarta Post. Considering the results obtained from the analysis of the related data, it could be argued that the authentic materials used in teaching reading were effective. The students' perception could be categorized into four parts as seen in the Table 5. below:

Table 5. The Percentage of the Students' Perception

No.	Category	Percent	
		YES	NO
1.	Difficulty	58.3%	41.6%
2.	Success	66.6%	33.3%
3.	Interest	80%	20%
4.	Learning Opportunities	75.0%	25.0%

Table 5. showed that from the first category the majority students 58.3% stated that authentic materials were difficult and 41.6% of students stated that it was easy. For the second category 66.6% of students stated that they were success in reading the newspaper article, the reasons were they could get the high score by answering the question correctly. Then there were 33.3% of students stated that they were not successful in reading the newspaper article because they did not answer the question correctly and they did not understand the text. Next, for the third category 80% of students agreed that the newspaper articles

were interesting for them then 20% said that the newspaper article was not interesting for them. The last category (learning opportunities category) 75.0% of students agreed and 25.0% disagreed.

Discussions of The Findings

Referring to the research result previously, it can be stated that there was a significant increase or effect of the students' reading comprehension aspects after being treated by using authentic materials $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.00$). It proved that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted as the answer of research question number one.

This result confirmed the previous research from Hatimah (2013:35) who stated that her result showed the use of authentic materials in teaching reading is appropriate since they relate directly to the real world. From her research, it could be seen that the use of authentic materials had a significant effect on the students reading comprehension achievement. Furthermore, the study from Marzban and Davaji (2015:85) also revealed that reading authentic texts has a positive effect on the reading comprehension of intermediate students. In addition, many studies revealed that the four language skills are improved through the use of authentic materials (Maghsoudi and Alijani, 2014; Precisely and Pusparini, 2012; Masood and Farooq, 2013 and Berardo, 2006).

Then, from the score distribution of pretest and posttest it can be seen that only students at good and very good level reach the excellent level but the students at low and fair level cannot reach the excellent level. It might be because of the authentic material, in this case, was newspaper article seemed too difficult for the first-year students in senior high school. In line with Guariento and Morley (2001:348) they noted that at lower levels, the use of authentic materials may prevent the learners from responding in meaningful ways but can also lead them to feel frustrated, confused and more importantly, unmotivated.

The negative aspects of authentic materials are that they can be too culturally biased, often a good knowledge of cultural background is required when reading, as well as too many structures being mixed, causing lower levels problems when decoding the texts. It seemed that the difference of ability from the students should be considered if the teacher wants to take the authentic materials to their classroom. While Kilickaya; Kim as cited in Belaid (2015) believed that authentic material can only be applied on intermediate and advance level students. So, if the teachers want to bring authentic materials to their classroom as the materials, they should consider about the students' ability.

After that, from the reading comprehension aspect it can be seen that the most improved aspect after the treatment was vocabulary followed by main idea, specific information, reference and inference.

The first reading aspect that had the most improvement was vocabulary. It indicated that authentic materials could facilitate the students in understanding vocabulary. As the studies from Bacon and Finneman; Berardo as cited in Omid and Azam (2016) have confirmed that using authentic materials has great influence on developing reading comprehension by presenting new words and expressions to students. Additionally, Pereira as cited in Ruiz, et al (2015) stated that the students who had been taught vocabulary through authentic materials showed an improvement in vocabulary learning and knowledge after the exposure to these kinds of elements, while the learners who were taught vocabulary through textbooks and handouts did not increase their level of vocabulary knowledge. It could be concluded that the authentic materials were very effective to improve the students' vocabulary by presenting new words from the text that come from the real-life source.

Then the second reading aspect that had the improvement was the main idea. As the finding of Abid et al., (2018:1) showed that the students' ability in finding the main idea had improved when authentic news item text was applied. He concluded that the reading material used to teach reading should be renewed from LKS to authentic materials. By applying authentic materials in reading class the students had better motivation to read the materials. Authentic text successfully improved their enthusiasm to participate in the classroom discussion. Authentic in term of newspaper articles are in line with the trending issue nowadays. The students were eager to know more about the current trending issue brought by authentic text. It can be seen from their willingness to give feedback in the classroom discussion. The students' test score also increased.

The example of a question in identifying the main idea could be seen in pretest/posttest number 22 (What is the text about?) and number 29 (What is the news mostly about?) as Venzon et al., (2010:4) states that the main idea in a paragraph is the most important idea. It is the central point that an author is trying to get across to the reader. In other words, the main idea is the important ideas that are developed by the writer throughout the paragraph and sometimes are available in keywords and explicit or implicit message.

The third reading aspect that had the improvement was specific information. This aspect appeared after the main idea because after the students got

the main idea of the text they could also find specific information from the text. The supporting details describe the main idea. They make the main idea stronger and clearer (Venzon et al., 2010:4). Specific information or supporting idea is developed from the main idea by giving the specific definitions such as examples, facts, comparison, cause and effect that is related to the topic sentence. It could be seen from number 24 (The following statements are true, except?) in the pretest/posttest that the question number 24 asked about the fact then, another example in determining specific information in this term of comparison was on number 26 (What is the differences between the employees from Banyuwangi Savana Cake store?).

The fourth reading aspect that had the improvement was reference. According to (Louis and Pereira, 2010:8) reference is the words or phrases that are used either before or after the reference in the reading text. They are used to avoid unnecessary repetition of words or phrases. The example of the question about this aspect could be found on number 10 (“... the teenager who died within two hours of consuming *them* (paragraph 1) the word “them” refers to..?. The question asked about pronouns and the students could find the answer by reading the previous sentences and match the pronoun with the subject from the sentence.

The last reading aspect that had the improvement was inference. This aspect is the last aspect that had the lowest improvement, it might be because for this aspect the students had to understand about whole the text to make a conclusion or inference so the students got the difficulties. The example of this question could be seen from pre/posttest number 11 (What is the recommendation of consuming caffeine according to The US Food and Drug Administration?).

For the research question number two the finding revealed that the authentic materials used in teaching reading were effective because the students seemed to have a positive perception toward the implementation of authentic materials in their reading activity. The students’ perception could be categorized into four parts (difficulty, success, interest, and learning opportunities).

From the first category the majority students stated that authentic materials were difficult. From the interview of the student 1 said that;

“Topik dan kosa katanya yang sulit, jadi banyak gak pahamnya jadi susah buat paham isi dari teksnya Miss o iya sama panjang tadi Miss teksnya”. (*The topic and the vocabulary are difficult, so I don’t understand about the text, Miss then the text is too long Miss*).

The students stated that they found unfamiliar vocabulary and unfamiliar topic. The other students also said that the text is too long so they felt difficult when they read the text. As Nuttall as cited in Munir and Hartono (2016) states that there are three main criteria when choosing texts to be used in the classroom *suitability of content, exploitability, and readability*. When the teacher wanted to bring authentic materials to their classroom they have to fulfill those criteria so it can minimize the difficulties for the students. In addition, Hamed and Hilal (2014:250) state that using inappropriate teaching materials make learners face difficulties in learning a foreign language. Learners need to be motivated to succeed in learning any language. Therefore, teaching materials must motivate and raise learners’ interest. If teaching materials are not interesting and motivating, learners will learn nothing.

For the second category most of students stated that they were success in reading the newspaper article, the reasons were they could get the high score by answering the question correctly. Then there are students stated that they were not successful in reading the newspaper article because they did not answer the question correctly and they did not understand the text. It could be seen from the question in the interview and the answer from the student 2 was;

”Ya sukses donk Miss”. (*Yes I do Miss*).

”Karena kan habis baca teksnya ada pertanyaan terus aku sama kelompokku bisa jawabnya jadi bisa sukses buat paham in teksnya”. (*Because after reading the newspaper article we can answer the questions about it so I think I understand the text well*).

Next, for the third category most of students agreed that the newspaper articles were interesting for them then there are students said that the newspaper article was not interesting for them. It could be seen from the question in the interview, and the answer from the student 2 was;

“Tertarik soalnya tu macem-macem ada yang tentang artisnya juga ada olahraga juga jadi aku suka aja bacanya”. (*It was because there were various topics from the newspaper article such as about the actor/actress and also about the sport so I like to read it*).

The reasons were because the newspaper article has various topics so it makes the text interesting. Then, other students said that it can be accessed by the internet, the availability of the picture that can illustrate the topic of the text, there were various topics and it was up to date. For some students, this

was the first time for them reading newspaper in English form. In line with Nuttall as cited in Apsari (2014) states that the wide variety of different types of text means that it is easier to find something that will interest the learner and may even encourage further reading or reading for pleasure. The more learners reading, the better readers they will become. In addition, if the text interests the learners, they will feel more confident and more secure when reading the texts. It means they not only improve their language level but also their confidence. Brown as cited in Apsari (2014) also says that effective factors also play a significant role in how reading helps one learn a language. Motivation plays a vital role in reading a foreign language. Those who like what they read keep reading.

Widyastuti (2017:4) states the basic consideration in selecting the authentic material is the relevant and interest topic for the students. Providing materials that are both practical and applicable that can help students to relate themselves to real-life experiences. It can be concluded that authentic materials bridge the gap between classroom language use and real-life language use by bringing familiar linguistic situation and materials right into the classroom. When teachers use authentic materials, they are helping students to make comfortable learning to fulfill some social purpose in the language community.

The last category (learning opportunities category) most of students agreed and the rest disagreed. It could be seen from the question in the interview, and the answer from the student 2 was;

"Bisa buat kita nambah bisa paham teks dalam bahasa inggris bisa nambahin vocabulary kita sama nambah info kita tentang info-info baru gitu".

"It can make us more understand about the text in English and it can increase our vocabulary and also we can update the recent information".

The students said that by reading English newspaper article they could improve their reading comprehension ability and it could be good sources of English texts. Wallace as cited in Widyastuti, (2017) defines authentic texts as "real-life texts, not written for pedagogic processes." One of the main purposes of using authentic materials in the classroom is to "expose" students to as much real language as possible. Therefore, the students can gain real information and know what is going on in the world around them. Authentic materials are often more interesting because they reflect real life phenomena. The learners are eager to learn when the language is authentic or meaningful. Because of the authentic materials can be meaningful to the students it can make them enjoyable to read the

text. Well-chosen authentic reading materials provide meaningful content that is relevant; it connects with your students because it relates to their lives in a way that allows them to think both about the material and themselves.

Among the advantages of authentic materials, the naturalness and relevance with the learners' real-life experiences will make the students are interested to read the text more. Moreover, Hadley as cited in Omid and Azam (2016) pointed out: *use of real or simulated travel documents, hotel registration forms, biographical data sheets, train and plane schedules, authentic restaurant menus, labels, signs, newspapers, and magazines will acquaint students more directly with real language than will any set of contrived classroom materials used alone.*

By using authentic materials students know how to use language in the real world and improve their proficiency level in four skills of language learning. Authentic texts make the language learners feel learning the authentic and real-life language. Newspapers are one of the printed media beside the magazine. They contain local, regional or international news, opinion, job vacancy, small advertisement and other general interest such as music, art, sport, etc. Bantmeir as cited in Omid and Azam (2016) stated that real life reading comprehension texts should be used as an essential part of the language curriculum.

In line with the results from this research which found that most of the students enjoy the reading activity and gave a positive effect on their motivation in reading the text. Furthermore, by using authentic materials in reading activity the students could be more directly to their needs. They could increase their information, and the most important was it could be meaningful for them. The results revealed that most students hold positive attitudes into the use of authentic materials in reading comprehension. It could be seen from their perception towards the use of authentic materials on their learning process that they enjoy the reading activity and have a positive effect on their motivation, and they can be more directly to their needs.

However, in general, the students' level ability has to be considered if the teachers want to bring authentic materials into the classroom because not all the authentic materials are suitable with the students' level ability. Then, the teachers might use the various kind of authentic materials in their teaching-learning activity since the researcher only used one type of authentic materials that was newspaper article so by applying the various kind of authentic materials in the teaching-learning

activity it will create the variety of activities and make a good result in reading comprehension achievement.

In consideration of the findings of this research, the researcher came to the conclusion that the use of authentic materials has some advantages in reading comprehension since it can make the students' reading comprehension aspects significantly increase. Then, it can be revealed that most students hold positive attitudes of the authentic materials on the reading comprehension aspects.

With regards to the results of the research, the researcher provides several suggestions for English teachers. Firstly the teachers can use the authentic materials in the reading class by considering the students' difficulty level. Secondly, for the teacher should apply the various kinds of authentic materials in the classroom so it will improve students' reading comprehension achievement through interesting materials.

Additionally, the researcher provides some suggestions for further research who are interested in conducting relevant research. Since this research used the authentic materials to teach reading comprehension for the future researchers could be more concern in choosing the suitability types of authentic materials based on the students' level, so it could be more attractive and interesting for the students. As this study is only investigating the students' perception about the use of authentic materials knowing by the interview, the future research should carry out another data collecting techniques to complete this research.

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