THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING AUTHENTIC TEXTS IN TEACHING READING ON SECOND GRADE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Anisa Purnamasari, A. Dahlan Rais, Gunarso Susilohadi

English Education Department
Teacher Training and Education Faculty
Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta

Abstract: Theoretically speaking, using authentic texts in teaching reading is more effective since authentic texts expose 'real life language' used in the daily communication. This paper is written to report the result of the research on the effectiveness of using authentic texts in teaching reading on high schoolers. The research uses quasi-experiment design. The data are gathered by using quantitative and qualitative methods. The data got are analyzed by using t-test. The result of the data analysis shows that there is a significant difference in reading achievement between experimental group taught using authentic texts and control group taught using non-authentic texts. Before the treatment, there is no significant difference in both groups' reading achievement proven by the t_o value 0.66 less than t_t (46, 0.95) = 1.684. After the treatment, t_o value of both groups' post-test scores is 1.87 higher than t_t (46, 0.05) = 1.684 it means there is a significant difference in reading achievement between experimental group and control group. Therefore, authentic texts are more effective to use in teaching reading than non-authentic texts.

Keywords: authentic texts, non-authentic texts, teaching reading

INTRODUCTION

Reading is related to decoding written symbols to get meaning by using strategies (Aebersold and Field, 1997; Nunan, 1989). Some strategies used to decode written symbols are predicting, extracting specific information, getting general picture, extracting detailed information, recognizing function and discourse patterns, and deducing meaning from the context (Harmer, 1991: 183-184). Therefore, the role of teachers in teaching reading is to teach those strategies to help their students become skilled-readers.

In teaching reading, authentic texts are so recommended that the students will be able to recognize "the real-language". Authentic text is a text which is not created for language teaching purposes (Tomlinson, 1998: viii; Martinez, 2002; Dickinson, 1996: 68). Some reasons why authentic texts are so recommended to be used in the classroom are: 1) authentic texts expose the students to the real language; 2) authentic texts can affect the students' motivation, empathy, and emotional environment; 3) authentic texts provide rich and comprehensible input for the students; 4) the texts can be used to create various activities and tasks; 5) the texts may fulfill the students' communication needs; 6) there are various genres, styles, and formality of the authentic texts (Martinez, 2002; Mishan, 2005: 41; Berardo, 2006: 64).

Although authentic texts are so highly recommended, there are some considerations not to use authentic texts: 1) authentic texts are too difficult because of the culture gap; 2) authentic texts are too difficult for beginner learners; 3) preparations of the texts or activities are

sometimes time consuming (see Martinez, 2002).

Non-authentic texts or simplified texts are texts which are made for educational purposes (Daskalos' and Ling's, 2005; Tomlinson's, 1998: xii). In simplifying a text, teachers should consider on some principles so that the simplified text is able to fulfill students' needs. There is a profitable way to modify an authentic text, that is, by lengthening the text through giving examples, using repetition and paraphrase and increasing redundant information. Elaborative modification is better in improving the students' comprehension towards the texts than simplification (Tomlinson, 1998; Mishan, 2005). "Language difficulty should be dealt with in terms of content, context and intent" (Daskalos and Ling, 2005: 14). That means if every language difficulty in a text has been replaced or removed, the students might not be able to deal with the difficulty if they find it in their future.

This experimental research is conducted to find out whether or not there is a significant difference in reading achievement between the students taught using authentic texts and those taught using non-authentic texts. Based on the theoretical descriptions which are related to the research and the research objective, the hypothesis of the research can be formulated that there is significant difference in reading achievement between the students taught using authentic texts and those taught using non-authentic texts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research had been done at a state senior high school in Surakarta. Research activities consisting of research preparation, data collection and analysis, and report writing had been done for about

five months started from August 2013 up to December 2013.

The experimental research was chosen since the essence of the experimental design is comparison (Griffee, 2012: 72). Therefore, this design needs two groups; *experimental group* and *control group* to be compared with. The experimental group is the group receiving the treatment and the group which does not receive any treatments is called control group. The researcher decided to use quasi-experimental design since the research was conducted at schools where it is impossible to allow the random selection of students out off classes for the research samples (Yount, 2006).

The population of this research was the second grade of a state senior high school in Surakarta divided into ten classes consisting of 277 students. The sample drawn by using *cluster sampling* was 48 students consisting of 24 XI IPA3 students as the experimental group and 24 XI IPA4 students as the control group. The cluster sampling was used since the research was conducted at school where it is difficult to draw sample based on individual.

The data needed in this research is quantitative data (the student's reading scores). Therefore, the data was collected through pre-test and post-test. The instrument being used is a set of reading test consisting of 20 items test in the form of multiple choices with five options. Before giving a pre-test, the researcher did a cloze test to test the readability of the texts used in the pre-test items.

The cloze test consists of three authentic texts taken from internet. There are 15 missing words in the first text, 20 missing words in the second text, and 15 missing words in the third text. The cloze test was tested to XI IPA 2 class consisting of 24 students. Bormuth (1971, in Wagner,

p.71) classifies a cloze score range of 0 to 34% is 'frustrational' level; 35 to 49% is 'instructional' level; 50% and above is 'independent' level. If a teacher wants to test the readability of a textbook, s/he might expect that the cloze test result shows that the students are in instructional and independent levels (Bormuth, 1971 in Wagner, p.71).

After doing the cloze test, the researcher tried the test items out to test the validity of the test items. The test consists of 50 items of multiple choices. The try-out of test items was tested to XI IPA 2 students as well. The researcher gives one score for the correct answer and zero for the wrong answer. After doing the try-out, the research analyzed how many test items are valid. An item is valid if the result of the computation is higher than $r_t = 0.404$ and invalid if the result of the computation is less than 0.404. From the computation of the validity of the test items, there are 22 valid items and 28 invalid items. Therefore, the researcher took 20 items for the pre-test and post-test. The scores of the pre-test and post-test are then analyzed by using t-test. Aside from quantitative data, the researcher also gathered qualitative data by asking students' testimonies towards the use of authentic texts in English learning.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before giving the treatment to both groups, a pre-test was conducted to know the students' reading achievement. Based on the data obtained from the pre-test scores, there is no significant different between the two groups. It is shown by the t-observation (t_o) value which is lower than t-table (t_t) value or $t_o = 0.66 < t_{(46, 0.95)} = 1.684$. Therefore, experimental research can be conducted in both groups.

In this study, both groups were taught by using the same method namely Know – Want to know – Learned (KWL). Different treatment given to the students was the texts used in teaching reading process. Authentic texts are used to teach experimental group while non-authentic texts are used to teach control group. The selection of the authentic texts was based on the students' level and also the learning objectives. The cloze test has been done to know the students' level so that the texts would not be too difficult or too easy for the students.

Texts given to the experimental group are *"One Thursday at Four Thirty"*, *"The Krusty Krab Nabbed"* and *"Bleeding Sink"*. The texts given to the control group are *"Nang Butuh Mosel and His Magic Ring"*, *"Kelingking"* and *"Just Because"*. Since the teaching method used was KWL, the researcher did not need too much time to design classroom activities for the students.

After giving the treatment for three meetings, the post-test was conducted. Based on the data obtained, it can be described that in the experimental group the highest score is 10, the lowest score is 5, the mean score is 7.58, and the standard deviation is 1.62. While in the control group the highest score is 9, the lowest score is 3, the mean score is 6.63, and the standard deviation is 1.59.

Before analyzing the data, the data were firstly tested the normality and the homogeneity. Normality test is used to analyze whether the samples taken from the population are from normal distribution or not. Normality test using *Lilliefors test* tests the experimental group normality towards reading authentic texts resulting $L_o = 0.152$. Based on critical value table for Lilliefors test with n = 24 and level of significant α = 0.05 obtained $L_t = 0.181$. From that

comparison, it can be seen that L_o is less than L_t, meaning that the experimental group are from normal distribution.

Normality test using *Lilliefors test* tests the control group normality towards reading authentic texts resulting $L_o = 0.136$. Based on critical value table for Lilliefors test with n = 24 and level of significant α = 0.05 obtained $L_t = 0.181$. From that comparison, it can be seen that L_o is less than L_t, meaning that the control group are also from normal distribution.

Homogeneity test is used to find out whether the populations are homogenous or not. By using *Bartlett-Test* computation, the value of χ_o^2 is found to be 0.01 while the value of $\chi_t^2{}_{.95(1)}$ at the level of significant α = 0.05 based on the critical value table of *chi-square* is 3.841. By comparing the value of χ_o^2 and the value of $\chi_t^2{}_{.95(1)}$, it can be seen that χ_o^2 is less than $\chi_t^2{}_{.95(1)}$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data are homogenous since $\chi_o^2 \leq \chi_t^2{}_{.95(1)}$ or $0.01 \leq 3.841$.

The t-test is used to test null hypothesis (H_0) of this thesis, stating that there is no significant difference in reading achievement between the students taught using authentic texts (experimental group) and those taught without using authentic texts (control group). In other words, the mean scores of both groups are equal. The statistical hypothesis of H_0 is $H_0 : \mu_A - \mu_B = 0$.

Aside from H_0, there is an alternative hypothesis (H_1), stating that there is a significant difference in reading achievement between experimental group and control group. In detail, the mean score of experimental group is higher than control group's mean score. The statistical hypothesis of H_1 is $H_1 : \mu_A - \mu_B > 0$

H_0 is accepted if t-observation (t_o) is lower than t table (t_t) or $t_o < t_t$. On the other hand, H_0 is rejected if (t_o) is higher than t table (t_t) or $t_o > t_t$. After being analyzed by using the t-test, the t_o value is found to be 1.87. Compared to the t_t (46, 0.05) value, that is, 1.68, the t_o value is higher than t_t. Therefore, it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected, meaning there is a significant difference in reading achievement between experimental group and control group ($t_o > t_t$ or $1.87 > 1.68$).

The result findings of this study were obtained from the students' reading achievement and the students' testimonies. Based on the students' reading achievement, the mean scores both of groups increased after the treatment. The experimental group's mean score improved from 6.79 up to 7.58, while the control group's increased from 6.44 up to 6.63. Though both groups showed improvement in their reading achievement, the t-test computation result shows that t_o (1.87) is higher than t_t (1.68) which means that there is a significant difference between experimental group and control group.

Aside from obtaining data from pre-test and post-test scores, the researcher also observed the students' response towards the texts. Before starting the teaching and learning process, the teacher divided the students into six groups consisting of four students in each group.

The students in experimental group were more active in making predictions and checking their predictions and questions than the control group students. Being taught by using the authentic texts, the experimental group students seemed very interested in and curious about the stories in the texts just right after they read the title. To make predictions, they made some relations between the title and what tragedy might be in the texts. When reading, all the students were seriously reading the texts to match their predictions and to get the

answers of their questions. After reading, all groups were excited in answering the questions from the teacher and in every group, the students helped each other in finding the answer.

On the contrary, some students in control group did not make predictions and only depended on their friends in a group. When reading, some students did not read the texts. They would read the texts when the teacher came closer to them. After reading, all the groups were also excited in answering the questions like the experimental group but some students in some groups did not help each other in answering the questions.

To convince the students' response towards the authentic texts, the researcher also asked the students' testimonies about their opinion in the use of authentic texts in English lesson. Most of them gave positive testimonies such as *"Pertamanya agak bingung, tapi lama-kelamaan bisa memahami dan mengerti."; "Menurut saya, penggunaan teks authentic dalam proses pembelajaran sangat menarik karena dapat melatih pemahaman soal atau teks serta dapat memperkaya vocabulary..."; "Membosankan karena kata-katanya sulit dipahami. Nggak tau vocabnya. Sebenarnya bagus karena kita dapat belajar bahasa Inggris yang asli."; "Penggunaan kata-katanya sulit dimengerti. Teksnya terlalu panjang tetapi membuat penasaran."; "Sedikit menyulitkan karena kosakatanya yang jarang digunakan / ditemui. Tapi cukup menarik dan menantang."*

Based on some students' testimonies, the researcher concluded that though the vocabularies in the authentic texts are difficult for the students to understand, they found that reading the authentic texts could enrich their vocabularies. It is because authentic texts provide rich and comprehensible input by which the students are able to enrich their vocabularies and their knowledge of the language being studied.

Besides, because of rich and comprehensible input, the students are also able to practice and improve their reading strategies to convey the whole text meaning. They could apply reading strategies to find the difficult words' meaning by deducing the meaning by the context; by looking the previous word, phrase and/or sentence.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study is about comparing the use of authentic texts and non-authentic / simplified texts in teaching reading towards students' reading achievement. Based on the hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in reading achievement between experimental group and control group. In addition, some students' testimonies on the use of authentic texts show that though dictions in the authentic texts are difficult, they are able to enrich their vocabularies and knowledge by reading the authentic texts.

To sum up, using authentic texts in teaching reading is more effective than using non-authentic / simplified texts. Some advantages of authentic texts concluded from doing this study are: 1) authentic texts can enrich the students' vocabularies; 2) authentic texts are challenging for the students since the words used in the authentic texts are rarely found in their textbooks so that they can practice in using their reading strategies to grasp the message of the texts; 3) authentic texts can build the students' reading interest since there are various genres and stories.

After concluding the result of the research, the researcher would like to give some suggestions to reading teachers. First,

the teachers can use authentic texts for teaching and learning process to introduce the 'real-life language' to the students so that they are able to accustom to the 'real language' and use it in their future communication. Second, in selecting the authentic texts, the teachers should also consider the level of difficulty, the students' needs, the suitability of the topic and the learning objectives. Third, if the teachers want to make any changes on the authentic texts which will be used in teaching and learning process, it is recommended that the teachers lengthen the texts rather than shorten the texts. Elaborating the texts by providing repetition and paraphrasing do better in enhancing the students' reading comprehension than simplifying the texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aebersold, Jo Ann and Mary Lee Field. (1997). *From Reader to Reading Teacher: Issues and Strategies for Second Language Classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Berardo, Sacha Anthony. (2006). *The Use of Authentic Materials in the Teaching of Reading. The Reading Matrix, Vol. 6, No. 2, September 2006*, 60-69.

Bormuth, John R. (1971). *Development of Standards of Reliability: Toward a Rational Criterion Passage Performance. Final Report, Project No. 9-87*. Year of Research, US Office of Education cited from Wagner, Graham. *Interpreting Cloze Score in the Assessment of Text Readability and Reading Comprehension,* 68 – 72. [PDF]

Daskalos, Konstantinos and Jeppe Jellum Ling. (2005). *Authentic Texts or Adapted Texts – That is the Question!*. Höstterminen: Malmö högskola.

Dickinson, Leslie. (1996). *Self-instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Griffee, Dale T. (2012). *An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods: Design and Data*. Berkeley, California: TESL-EJ Publications.

Harmer, Jeremy. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. New York: Longman.

Martinez, Alejandro G, M.A. (2002). *Authentic Materials: An Overview* [online]. Mexico City (taken from http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/authenticmaterials.html accessed on Monday, February 18, 2013 at 10:32 a.m.)

Mishan Freda. (2005). *Designing Authenticity into Language Learning Materials*. Bristol, Portland: Intellect Books.

Nunan, David. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, Brian. (1998). Materials Development in Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yount, William R. (2006). *Research Design & Statistical Analysis in Christian Ministry (4th Edition)*. USA

Yousda, Ine I. Amiran, Dra. Ny. M.Pd, and Zainal Arifin, Drs. (1993). *Penelitian dan Statistik Pendidikan*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.