PICTURE STORY BOOKS FOR EXTENSIVE READING IN MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH

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Abstract: Picture story book is an interesting source of reading for pleasure or extensive reading. Picture story book is very beneficial to improve the students’ motivation in reading; however, the availability of the English story books that meet the Islamic Junior High students’ needs is not sufficient. This study was intended to develop Islamic English picture stories for extensive reading activity in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Using Borg and Gall’s research and development model as the basis for the study, four Islamic picture story books were produced. The products were: (1) Islamic short stories, (2) Islamic humorous stories (3) Stories of the Sahabah, (4) and Stories of the Prophets.

Keywords: Islamic picture story books, Extensive Reading, Madrasah Tsanawiyah

Reading should be an integral habit and culture of the students to gain their success in learning everything, including learning English as foreign language. Renandya (2007) says that reading is an underlying means of supporting the success of the learning process. The students’ quality is also determined by the amount they read and the intensity of their reading activity. When the students read a lot of good reading materials, they will be good persons; however, if they read nothing, they will be nothing.

One of the atmospheres to promote the reading habit is by having an activity of reading for pleasure. According to many experts, pleasure reading is the key to improve students’ English. Bamford (1998:4) states that reading activity that promotes the students’ reading habit is not the intensive reading program with difficult words and sentences but it is on the extensive reading program. Krashen found that those who do more recreational reading show better literacy and language development, with the strong impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing (Krashen, 2004). Chan’s study (2011) suggests that implementing FVR (Free Voluntary Reading) proves to be effective in developing reading competence in the aspects of reading comprehension and attitudes or motivation in English learning. Renandya (2013) states that the students obtain all of the benefits of reading by simply doing something that is pleasurable. They just read anything that they find enjoyable. Students read pages by pages and hours by themselves if they find them interesting.

The availability of interesting books is a crucial factor in extensive reading activity that aims at developing reading habit. It is hard to establish a reading habit if the students have less access or without proper access to books or other learning resources. Makotsi (2005) stated that children and adults need to have access to a wide range of reading materials to help them acquire and maintain fluent reading skills, broaden horizons, and think independently and critically.

Picture story book is one of interesting and enjoyable sources of reading for pleasure or extensive reading. Pictures are good learning aid to attract students’ attention. Stories promote language learning, understanding of genre, and community building, while also enhancing authenticity, affect, and motivation (Nicholas, 2011). Furthermore, a research done by Sheu Hsiu-Chih (2008) shows that picture story books have three main educational values in EFL classroom: providing a meaningful context for language learning (linguistic values), stories have the potential to motivate learning, and pictures increase comprehension, and stimulate imagination.

Picture story book is very beneficial to improve the students’ motivation in reading; however, the availability of the English story books that meet the Islamic Junior High students’ needs is not sufficient. Therefore, this study was intended to develop Islamic English picture stories for extensive reading activity in Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

There are some criteria of books for extensive reading activity in Islamic Junior High school. First, they should use simplified text within controlled vocabulary which Nation (2002:24) calls ‘graded readers since the students are in the beginning or intermediate level learners. The students in these levels need to get easy, fun and understandable materials. It is in line with the motto of extensive reading proposed by Bamford (1998: 121) that is ‘reading gain without reading pain’. Beside using simple language, the reading materials of the books should also consider the cultural appropriateness. It means that the materials should be in line with the culture, the social or the religious values the students have. Rohmah (2009) stated that the contents of reading materials in Madrasah should also discuss Islamic culture and values. Furthermore, Rohmah (2012) states that often the
culture embedded in the second/foreign language being taught is sometimes in conflict with the culture held by the learners. Her proposed solution to overcome the conflict in Islamic learners is by using material selection, that is, for example, by tailoring English teaching materials with Islamic themes, such as discussing religious lesson using English. This idea is not in contradiction with the concept of teaching English as an international and global language. Being an international and global language, English learners do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers (Inner Circle Countries) of that language. The educational goal of learning English is to communicate the learners’ ideas and culture to others using this language (McKay, 2002:12). Considering the issues above, the development of picture story books for Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) should also contain Islamic culture and values.

Method

The study aims at producing Islamic English picture story books for the students of Islamic Junior high school (MTs) for extensive reading activity. The model of R&D suggested by Borg and Gall (2003:573) was applied and adapted in this study. The adapted model was as follows: (1) Need analysis (it is called research and information collecting in Borg and Gall’s model, (2) developing materials (simplification of Borg and Gall’s planning and developing preliminary form of the product) (3) expert validation (preliminary field-testing) (4) first revision (main product revision), (5) try-out (main field testing) (6) second revision (operational product revision), (7) Final product.

Finding and Discussion

Need analysis

Needs Analysis was done by giving questionnaire to the students to know the availability of reading materials for extensive reading and the types of reading materials they like and dislike. From the questionnaire distributed to the 58 respondents who were the students of MTs Babul Khairat Lawang, it is found that most of the students (62%) said that the existing reading materials in the library were very difficult for them and there were no Islamic reading materials in English. The 98 % of the students prefer the story books with pictures to those without pictures. The genre of the stories the students like most is stories of the prophets (87%). Other genres the students like are stories of the sahabah (82%), short stories (79%), and humorous stories (72%). The stories they like are those containing Islamic messages. They do not prefer the stories containing myth, cultures of other religions, or other cultures that are not suitable with Islamic teaching. From the data obtained in the needs analysis, it can be concluded that the students wanted to have picture stories containing Islamic messages.

Development of the Materials

The result of the need analysis became the basis in developing the materials. The development of the materials included several steps: First of all, the researchers selected many Islamic reading materials from internet and books that were related to the Islamic reading material the students like. Then, the researchers classified the texts into four types of the texts: Islamic humorous stories, Islamic short stories, stories of the sahabah, and stories of the prophets.

The next step of developing materials was that the researchers read all the texts thoroughly and then did the adaptation. The adaptation done by the researchers was intended to make the materials more suitable to the students’ level.

The last step was giving pictures to illustrate the stories. The illustrations given were intended to make the stories easy to understand, attractive, and more interesting.

Expert Validation

The checklist given to the expert covered three main variables: design and layout, the topic and the content, and the language used.

From the score given by the expert on the design and layout variable, it can be concluded that in the aspect of design and layout, the three books (humorous stories, short stories, and stories of prophets) are very good (mean= 4.29). This means that the design and layout of the books does not need to have revision and improvement. However, the means score of the design and layout of the stories of the Sahaba was 3.33. It means that the design and layout in this book needed a little bit improvement. The expert commented that the researchers should add some more illustrations.

The topic and the content aspects of these story books has met the criteria (mean =4.72). In the two books (short stories and the stories of the prophets) the expert gave score excellent (mean =5.00). It means that the topics of these developed books are interesting, challenging, and suitable to the junior high students' level. It also means that all of the books have met all the criteria in the content aspect, that the books are meaningful; in which they can help the students expand their awareness and enrich their experience in their Islamic life.
The contents of the books are also culturally accepted; i.e. suitable to Islamic teaching and culture. However, the researcher should think over the two stories in humorous stories (‘Arabic Vs American’ and ‘No Muslims in the hell’). Although these two stories are accepted in Muslim society, they potentially will irritate other religion or other tribes. Therefore, the expert suggested dropping these two stories.

The three books (humorous stories, short stories, the stories of the prophets) have met the three criteria in language aspects. The expert gave score ‘excellent’ and ‘very good’ in the criteria of the language aspect in these four books. It means that the use of vocabulary and the grammar in the three books have been suitable to the learners in the beginner level. In the stories of the sahabah, the language is considered a little bit difficult for the beginner level of the students. Therefore, the researcher should simplify the language or make it simpler.

The First Revision

The first revision of the developed materials based on the data obtained from the expert validation. Summarizing from the score, the comment and suggestion given by the expert, the first revisions are the improvement of the cover of the books, The addition of some illustrations, the changing of the illustration from the internet into the illustration from illustrator, the deletion of two stories (‘Arabic Vs American’ and ‘No Muslims in the hell’).

The Result of Tryout

The tryout in this study was conducted by giving the students the picture story books to be read. The subjects to conduct the tryout were 80 students of MTs Babul Khairat Lawang Malang East Java. Each student was asked to read one book they had chosen. They were also encouraged to read all the books by exchanging the books with their friends. They could take the books home for two weeks. After having tryout, the students were given a set of checklist about the books they have read. The score the students gave in the checklist are as follows.

In the students’ opinion, all the aspect has met the criteria. The layout and the design were attractive to the students. The students like the topics of these prophets’ stories. The scores given by the students were in line with the students’ comment. The students commented that the language in this book is easy to understand and the illustrations are funny and interesting. The students also commented that this book is very good that could help them learn English meaningfully. However, like the suggestions on the other books, the students suggested that the book would be more interesting if the book was printed colorfully.

Second Revision

Based on the data obtained from the tryout, the second revision in this step concerned on the improvement of the way the books printed from the black and white style into the colorful one. Another revision was simplifying the language used in the stories of sahabah.
Final Product

After having the second revision, the final product was published. The published final product was in the form of four picture story books that were used as the supplementary books for extensive reading activity in MTs. The four picture story books are Islamic humorous stories, Short Stories, Stories of the Prophets, and Stories of the Sahabah.

The specific characteristic of these picture story books is that they contain Islamic messages; i.e. the Islamic teaching found in the reading texts. There are exercises in these books to facilitate the students if they want to check their comprehension about the stories in the books. The paper book size used was A5 (14.8 cm x 21 cm). The choice of the paper size is under the consideration that the books will be handy, portable, and easy to carry anywhere. The paper used is HVS 70gr and the font used in the books is Arial Unicode Ms 12 pts.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

The products in this study are supplementary reading materials in the form of picture story books. They are humorous stories, short stories, stories of the Prophets, and stories of the Sahabah. These picture story books are equipped with the tasks, and answer keys. These books have met the criteria of good books. The expert validator of the books gave very good scores to all aspects of the book. In the tryout process, the students were enthusiastic to read these books. They commented that the books were very good and they liked to read the books because of attractive illustrations, interesting topics, meaningful contents, understandable language. These findings show that the researchers have been successful to be a facilitator and a motivator (Harmer, 2007:284), in which they were successful in providing good reading materials in English that can increase the students’ motivation to read and learn English.

Suggestion

The products in this study should be used as the reading materials in the extensive reading activity. As being used as the extensive reading materials, these books should be read by students independently. However, the teacher should be a facilitator in the extensive reading activities. The teacher can assign the students to read the books at classroom, at home, or outside the classroom. The teacher should ask the students to report their progress in reading.

References


**Biodata**

**Nur Taslimah** was born in Ngawi, December 15th 1974. She received her undergraduate (S1) degree in English Language Teaching from English Department, IKIP Malang (1993-1999). She has been teaching in Junior High School since 2000. Now, she is teaching in SMPN 4 Lawang Satu Atap Malang. She is also teaching in Islamic Junior High School (MTs) Babul Khairat Lawang Malang. In 2012, she continued her study in English Language Teaching, Graduate Program, State University of Malang with the scholarship from P2TK, Ministry of Education and Culture.