MANGA COMICS AS APPEALING EXTENSIVE READING MATERIALS FOR THE TENTH GRADERS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract: Manga comics are known as interesting reading materials for students in learning. Due to the fact that intensive reading in English teaching and learning has many problems especially dealing with limited class time and uninteresting materials, teachers can develop manga comics as extensive reading materials to motivate students to read enthusiastically. The present paper reports the development of prototypes of manga comics as extensive reading materials for the tenth graders of senior high school. The research design was Research and Development. The setting was class X-1 in the academic year of 2012/2013 of SMA Negeri I Bojonegoro, East Java. This research used the validation questionnaire for the expert and the teacher and the try-out questionnaire as the instruments to collect the data. The results of the research show that the drafts had to be revised in terms of the manga comics’ components, the level of difficulty, and the self-assessment. However, the final products are proven as good extensive reading materials for the tenth graders of senior high school and can enhance students’ motivation to read English texts.

Keywords: manga comics, extensive reading materials

Initially, the overview about the use of comics in general as one of effective educational tools can be proved from the early of 40’s to date, in which many educators have conducted a series of research on using comics in education. Many studies have provided the usefulness of comics as an effective educational tool. For example, Tatalovic (2009) describes that comics provide a potential medium for science education and communication. In her paper, Pertiwi (2010) shows that comics can help young learners learn about the present tense in English. In addition, Versaci (2001) points out that comic books and help students to change their perspective about literature as well.

In this paper, the researcher specifically takes manga comics as the topic of her present study as she is interested in Japanese culture and literature. Manga is a Japanese comic book or Japanese illustrated comic with Japanese style of drawing. The educational potential of manga comics inside the classroom is an issue worth researching. Many journal articles and research have investigated the potential of manga comics as an educational medium and different point of views often appeared which make the use of manga comics in the classroom as debatable issues.

One of the significant strengths of manga comics as educational tools is stated in Murakami and Bryce (2009) that “By combining visual and verbal texts with stories, manga is able to make difficult topics easy to understand.” In their study, manga is seen as a representative of Japanese culture. The study introduce unexplored area of manga that is the subset of educational manga in which it informs the reader with valuable real-world information while entertaining with engaging stories and characters. Kaneko (2008; in Unser-Schutz, 2011) also mentions that “the familiarity students have with the materials may allow learners to become more engaged than with the text-only materials.” Thus it can be concluded that manga comics have a strong sense of context as visual medium because the drawings make clear who is speaking, to whom it is spoken, and in what situations. In KOMPAS newspaper, Arif (2012) provides two examples of 4-panels manga comics in his article made by Hanii Nayu and Matsumoto Yuka being used to educate about disaster as well. As additional information, manga comics can also be materials for extensive reading in general. As Krashen (2004) points out in his study, reading comic books is associated with greater enjoyment of reading in general. Comic books play an important role in helping readers gain confidence and learn to enjoy reading.

Regarding the fact that manga comics have positive significances as educational tools, the researcher tries to use manga comics as tools to teach English as a major subject of this study, specifically in teaching reading. It is due to the fact that intensive reading in English teaching and learning, precisely in Indonesian context, has many problems generally dealing with limited class time and uninteresting materials which hinder students’ motivation to read English texts and improve their reading skills. To overcome the problem, teachers can develop manga comics as learning materials to motivate the students to learn enthusiastically.

In the school chosen as a research subject, namely SMA Negeri I Bojonegoro in East Java, the intensive reading program inside the tenth grade classes was not conducted satisfactorily. The results of the preliminary study on the tenth graders of SMA Negeri I Bojonegoro show that the students were not interested in reading English passages. This was due to some factors, namely the limited class time as well as the limited number and...
uninteresting module book. However, the results of the students’ needs survey indicate that more than half of the tenth grade students in this school like to read comics, especially manga. Therefore, in order to arouse the students’ interest in reading English passages and to overcome the limited class time, the researcher used manga comics as extensive reading materials to support the teaching and learning activities.

However, there is a problem dealing with the accessibility and suitability of the manga comics to teach English in Indonesia. In fact, manga comics with English conversations are only available online and students do not always have access to the internet. Moreover, some online manga comics may contain gender bias sometimes. Thus, the researcher decided to develop prototypes of manga comics with English conversations as extensive reading materials for the tenth graders of senior high school.

Method

The design of the study is Research and Development (R&D). The setting of the research is class X-1 of SMA Negeri I Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2012/2013. The product development procedures consist of five stages: (a) the pre-development, (b) the development of the first draft, (c) the product validation by the expert and the teacher, (d) the product try-outs, and (e) the development of the final product. The research instruments are the validation questionnaire for the expert and the teacher, and also the students’ try-outs questionnaire. The products are revised based on the results of the product validation and the try-outs. For the product validation, the validated components include: (a) the components of manga, (b) the level of difficulty, (c) the self-assessment, (d) the checklist of students’ progress, (e) the gender bias, and (f) the benefit to increase the students’ motivation in reading extensively.

The data analysis uses the content analysis and the descriptive analysis. The content analysis is done to check the feedbacks from the questionnaire of the validation stage. The data is analyzed qualitatively. While for the descriptive analysis, the data is taken from the questionnaire of the students’ try-outs. The data is analyzed and described qualitatively with a little quantitative calculation. The formula to analyze the data per item uses the mean calculation. The interpretation of the data validation is adapted from McClave and Sincich (2003). It can be seen in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.3 – 4</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 – 3.2</td>
<td>Quite valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 – 2.5</td>
<td>Not valid enough and need to be revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 1.7</td>
<td>Not valid and need to be revised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The range of scores refer to mean calculation.

Results of the Development

The analysis of the expert validation showed that some aspects of the prototypes were revised and revalidated. Those aspects were the components of manga, the level of difficulty, and the self-assessment.

The Components of Manga

The first component was characterization. The expert commented that there were some expressions which were overstated and need to be revised, for example the angry expressions. The second component to revise was panels. The expert gave a feedback that the flow of some panels had to be rotated from left to right and up to down followed the western format of comic since this meant to be for English learning.

As for word balloons, the expert commented that some balloons contained Indonesian expressions. Then, the expert gave a feedback to change those expressions with the English equivalents. The next to be revised was onomatopoeia (sound effect). The expert gave a feedback to modify some sound effects which sounded Indonesian into English.

The next component to improve was motion depiction. The expert gave a comment that some motion effects were drawn incorrectly, such as head and body moving positions. The expert also advised that the movement line needed to differentiate between the beginning and ending of the movement.

The cover needed a revision as well. The expert gave a remark that the title needed to be more eye-catching. In addition, the introduction part had to be more consistent from general into specific, containing (a) title, (b) level of difficulty, (c) aim, (d) preparations, (e) instructions, and (f) introduction.

The color aspect was revalidated as well. The color had two revisions before it was considered valid. After the 1st revision, the expert commented that the color used was too dark. Then, she suggested that the researcher used the softer color to make the products more attractive.
The Level of Difficulty
The expert gave a feedback that all components of the level of difficulty needed to be revised. Since the feedback for each components were similar, the researcher summarized the problems into one analysis. The language use and vocabulary components needed to be changed into more polite form so students would be able to learn good English instead of impolite words. Moreover, the expert suggested the vocabulary be simplified in order that the students enjoyed the reading without looking up the dictionary too often.

As for the readability component, the expert suggested that the language required being corrected into more suitable level for students and not too difficult.

The Self-Assessment
In self-assessment aspect, the expert advised the researcher to be more careful with the open-ended questions which did not need an answer key.

The results of the teacher validation indicate there was no revision for the components of the developed product. The teacher stated that the whole aspects were appropriate; therefore, there were no suggestions for further improvement. According to the teacher, the product is good and interesting.

In the product try-outs, consisting of small group and large group try-outs, most students gave points on the validity of the components between 3 points which means “good”, 4 points which means “very good”, and none chose 1 or 2. Based on the feedbacks in the try-outs, the products are valid and already good.

Conclusions
Based on the research findings, the products are proven as good extensive reading materials for the tenth graders of senior high school.

The final products of this study are the prototypes of 5 short serial manga comics with 5 different topics, the self-assessment including the comprehension questions and the answer key, and the checklist of students’ progress. The materials cover the recount story for the 1st semester of grade X. The final products are produced two-sided on CONCORDE A4 200 gram/m2, bound, and laminated as well.

Nevertheless, there are also several limitations in developing this product. After conducting this study, the researcher finds that to develop manga comics is very demanding. It consumes a lot of time if the teachers are not accustomed to drawing comics. In addition, producing a good product requires funding.

Recommendations
This section presents some recommendations for the classroom English teachers and the further researches. It is suggested that the English teachers use easier and more enjoyable materials in teaching English. In this case, the manga comics can be an alternative materials in teaching reading. In addition, since the materials only covers one text-type for grade X (in this case recount text), it is advisable that the teachers develop the materials with more various topics and text-types not only for grade X, but also for the grades XI and XII.

Thus, to overcome the problems in the drawing and topic selection, the English teacher can collaborate with other teachers. For example, asking the art teachers to help drawing the comics and other teachers to help finding interesting topics for the students. As for the efficiency, the products can be printed by waterproof ink instead of being laminated. It is also urgent for the future researchers to develop other kind of materials for extensive reading materials since materials that suit the students’ needs, interest, and level are not available yet.

Bibliography