

**THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING READING  
COMPREHENSION OF SHORT FUNCTIONAL TEXTS**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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# THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION OF SHORT FUNCTIONAL TEXTS

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this research was to find out whether there was any improvement on students' reading comprehension of short functional text after being taught using authentic text materials. Therefore the method used in this research was classroom action research. This research was conducted in two cycles. Cycle 1 consisted of three meetings and cycle 2 consisted of two meetings. The subject of this research was 22 students of eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016. The researcher used observation and students' achievement test to collect the data. The researcher elaborated the result of observation and students' achievement test result in order to get the research findings. The results of this research showed that there was any improvement on students' reading comprehension after being taught using authentic materials. After the actions were implemented, the students showed some improvements. They could focus on the lesson and actively participated in teaching learning process. They showed their enthusiastic in reading the text. They also could find the detail information from the text and increased their vocabulary mastery. The students' individual score in comprehending short functional text also improved and the result was satisfying. In conclusion, the use of authentic materials improved the students' reading comprehension of short functional texts.

***Keywords: Authentic materials, reading comprehension, short functional texts***

## **INTRODUCTION**

English is learned as a foreign language in Indonesia. It was taught in junior high school and senior high school as a compulsory subject. In learning English, the students have to be able to achieve the four basic language skills; listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Reading has important role in the context of English teaching as a foreign language in Indonesia. To make the students able to speak, listen, and write, they should be good in reading skill first. The students get a lot of vocabularies from reading, it becomes the foundation to acquire and improve the other skills; speaking, listening, and writing. Reading also enables students to gain information and get a new knowledge. Based on these reasons, reading has an important role in English teaching learning process.

In junior high school level, students are introduced to short essay texts and short

functional texts. Both of those kinds of text are required comprehension. Students are categorized as good readers if they are able to comprehend the information of the texts. However, to some students of junior high school, especially in SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak, reading is considered as a difficult language skill to be mastered.

The researcher who is also a teacher at SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak found that the eight grade students at this school could not comprehend well in reading short functional text. The students also could not differentiate any kinds of short functional texts. The teacher also did not provide enough examples and knowledge for the students to learn more about the kinds of short functional text. In this school, the students only learn from their exercise book (LKS) that did not provide the complete materials. This limited reading materials made the students did not

accustomed to read English text. It affected to the students' vocabulary mastery. After reading, the students could not retell the information from the text because they did not know the meaning of the words used in the text. The students also had difficulty in differentiate the kinds of functional text, so that they could not determine the purpose of functional text they had read. Moreover, the students' backgrounds that just learn English at junior high school, makes English became a new difficult language for them. This problem makes the students had low motivation in joining teaching learning process. They were passive and unenthusiastic in reading class. The classroom situation was also noisy because the students did not pay attention to the lesson. As a result, the students' score of reading comprehension is lower than standard minimum score in this school that is 70.

To overcome the problems, the researcher tried to find solution. Providing the appropriate reading materials for the students is important to enhance their motivation and knowledge in reading activities. The researcher proposed that the use of authentic reading materials is a good way to attract the students' attention of the lesson and to help the students in comprehending short functional texts easily. Authentic materials are real-life texts, not written for pedagogic processes (Wallace, 1998:145). The authentic material such as advertisement from newspaper provides the real word using in real life, so it makes the students easier to remember the word and would enrich their vocabularies.

The use of authentic materials in reading class was also based on the consideration that teacher should not apply monotone reading materials that will make students bored. The researcher believed that through the use of authentic materials in teaching reading comprehension, the students would be more interested and enthusiastic in learning and the result of the study would be more satisfying.

The effectiveness of using authentic materials towards students' reading comprehension of short functional text also had been proven by Sari Anjani in 2014. From her analysis, there was a positive effect in

teaching reading comprehension of functional texts through the use of authentic materials. Another previous research also conducted by Siti Sundari from Airlangga University Surabaya, entitled "The Effectiveness of Pictures as Authentic Material to Improve Students' Writing in Descriptive." From her analysis, it showed that the mean of students' post test score was higher than the mean of pre test score.

Based on the description above, the researcher was interested in conducting a research entitled: The Use of Authentic Materials in Teaching Reading Comprehension of Short Functional Texts (A Classroom Action Research at the Eighth Grade Students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak in the Academic Year 2015/2016).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, the researcher used Classroom Action Research. Action research is a way teachers can develop an expanded understanding of their practice and critically analyze a particular approach to a problem or teaching and learning scenario in which requires continual disciplined inquiry (Levin, Smith, & Carr, 2009:153). While Nunan in Blazquez (2007:27) defines action research as a method that formalizes reflection by engaging the practitioners in a critical and reflective attitude.

The researcher used classroom action research based on the problems in the teaching and learning process during the researcher's teaching experience to the eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak. The researcher observed during the teaching learning process to find obstacles and weaknesses of reading comprehension process, identify the existing problems, plan and carry out the actions, then make an evaluation and reflection of the action implemented.

The research was conducted from 25th April 2016 until 17th May 2016 at SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak that is located at Jl. Gusti Situt Mahmud Gg. Swakarya 1 Pontianak. The participants of this research were the eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016. It was only one

class for eight grade in this school that consists of 22 students (12 male students and 10 female students).

The research was conducted through two cycles that consisted of three and two meetings respectively. The research followed the procedures of conducting action research by Kemmis and McTaggart as cited in Burns (2010:7). In each cycle, classroom action research consisted of four stages; planning, implementation of the action, observation, and reflection.

The researcher identifies problems of English teaching and learning processes of the eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak. After analyzing the field problems, the researcher planned possible actions to solve the problems. After the planning had been made, the action was implemented in the class. The teaching and learning process was recorded using video recorder. The researcher observed the teaching learning process through the video after the class had finished. After implementing the actions in the first cycle, the researcher made the reflection. It was to evaluate the actions implemented before. In the reflection, the researcher also analyze whether

the actions were successful or not and to analyze the failure and obstacles during the actions. Then, the result of the reflection was used to improve the next action in the second cycle.

In collecting the data, the researcher used classroom observation technique and students' test score. In classroom observation, the researcher used video recorder to observe the teaching learning processes. The researcher also took the individual score of students' task in written test.

After the data are completely collected, the next step is to analyze them. Data analysis was done to know whether there are changes or not after the action. The data analysis divided into qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data analyzed from the video recorder which recorded the activity during teaching learning processed in the classroom. The quantitative data was analyzed from the result of the test achievement. The data is the score of students' answer in multiple choice tests. There were 10 questions in each cycle. Each correct answer got 10 point. The individual score of the students' test are categorized based on the table below:

**Table 1. Criteria of the Students' Test Score**

<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
80 – 100	Good to Excellent
70 – 79	Average to Good
60 – 69	Average
50 – 59	Poor to Average
0 – 49	Poor

(Heaton, 1988)

After interpreting the data, the researcher would stop the actions if the result was satisfying. But, if the result of action was unsatisfying, the researcher would continue to the next cycle.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

This research was conducted to improve students' reading comprehension of short functional text to the eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak in academic year

2015/2016 through the use of authentic materials.

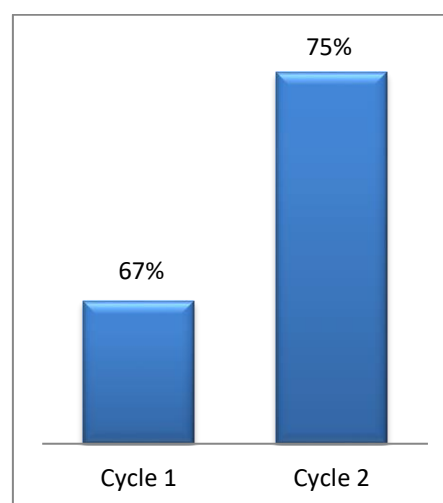
The findings of this research indicated that the use of authentic materials could improve the students' reading comprehension of short functional text. The teaching learning process has also improved from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The teacher could provide attractive reading materials that attract the students' attention. In line with that, the students were being more enthusiastic in learning. Almost all students took part in the classroom discussion, shared their ideas actively and answered the

teacher's question enthusiastically. The findings were explained as the following:

First, the authentic materials attract the students' attention in reading. The teacher provided authentic reading materials to solve the students' boredom when reading from the textbook. The authentic materials given to the students were contained pictured and colorful. The students showed their interest in reading by giving positive responses when the teacher asked them to read the text. They focused on their text and looked happy in reading. It also affected to the classroom situation that become more quiet when the students reading and being more lively in discussion activity.

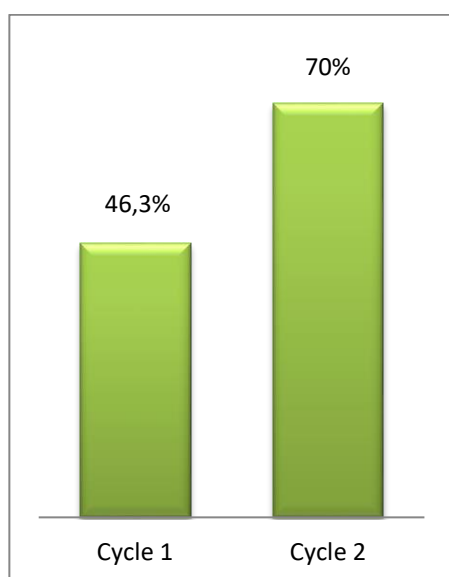
Second, the authentic materials improved the students' vocabulary in short functional text. the teacher provided authentic reading materials in English and in Bahasa Indonesia. The teacher guided the students to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words that used in English authentic text by compared it with the words used in Indonesian authentic text. By giving these bilingual authentic texts, the students were accustomed to recognize the words that commonly used in the text. It helped them to remember the words easily.

However, in the first cycle, the students still had difficulties in determining the meaning of unfamiliar word in English authentic text. In the second cycle, the teacher used additional way to help the students. The students could have pair discussion to recognize the unfamiliar words, and then they shared their findings in classroom discussion. After doing this activity continuously, the students' could easily remember the words that commonly used in short functional text. Moreover, the improvement of students' score in vocabulary mastery was 67% in cycle 1 and 75% in cycle 2. The improvement scores of students' vocabulary can be seen in the chart below:



**Chart 1. The Percentage of Students' Score of Vocabulary**

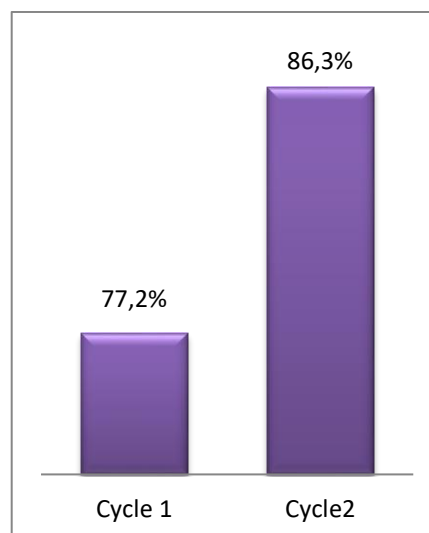
Third, the authentic materials help the students in comprehending the detail information of short functional text easily. In helping the students in determining the detail information of short functional text, the teacher explained the characteristic of the text first. By giving authentic materials, the characteristic of the text could be found easily. The detail information could be founded by scanning the text. The teacher guided the students to scan the picture on the text to determine what the functional text is about. The teacher also guided the students to find detail information by scanning the bold, big, and italicized letter in the short functional text. Actually the students could determine the detail information of the text after the teacher guided them in scanning the text. However, some authentic texts used in cycle 1 were not printed well. It made the students still had difficulties in scanning the text. To overcome this problem, the teacher prepared well printed authentic text in the cycle 2. The clear authentic functional text helped the students in scanning the text clearly, so they could find the detail information of the text correctly. The improvement of students' score in determining the detail information of the text was 46,3% in cycle 1 and 70% in cycle 2. The percentage of students' comprehension in determining detail information of the text can be seen in the chart as follow:



**Chart 2. The Percentages of Students' Score in Determining the Detail Information on the Text**

The last, authentic materials help the students in differentiate the kinds of short functional text. Formerly, the students had difficulties in recognizing and distinguishing the kinds of functional text. Providing students with authentic materials gave them opportunity in learning the real short functional text. The teacher introduced the students with any kinds of authentic functional text such as the advertisement and announcement. The teacher taught them those texts not in the same time. The teacher taught about advertisement first. The teacher was not only gave one example, but some example of product advertisement. In the first meeting of cycle 1, the teacher introduced students about the advertisement of product. In the next meeting, the teacher introduced students to another kind of advertisement that was advertisement of job opportunity. After the students had known about advertisement text, the teacher gave another kind of functional text in cycle 2 that was announcement text. While teaching, the teacher tried to connect the text with the students' real life, so the students could remember well the kind of the text and make conclusion about the purpose of the text. After learning many kinds of functional text, the students were able to differentiate the kind and

purpose of each functional text. The improvement of students' score in determining the purpose of the text was 77,2% and 86,3% in cycle 2. The percentages of students' score in determining the purpose of functional text can be seen in the chart as follow:



**Chart 3. The percentages of Students' Score in Determining the Purpose of The Text Discussions**

### Discussion

The classroom action research was conducted to improve the students' reading comprehension of short functional text through the use of authentic materials for eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya Pontianak in the academic year 2016/2017. The result showed there was improvement on students' reading comprehension on short functional text from cycle 1 to cycle 2.

Based on the observation through video recording, the activities in the first cycle did not run smoothly. There were some problems that happened in the first cycle. The first problem was the situation in the class. The students were less active and they looked strained. Some of them were closed their face with their book because they felt ashamed to be recorded. However, in the next meeting when the students were accustomed to be recorded during the teaching learning process, the classroom were noisy especially when they got the group works. The group works discussion was less effective. The second

problem was the students still confused in finding the detail information from the short functional texts. The students also had difficulty in finding the meaning of the words used in the texts. The last problem was some of the authentic texts were not printed well and not readably clear enough. As a result, the students' individual test score in the first cycle was unsatisfactory. The teacher decided to continue the action in the next cycle.

In conducting the second cycle, the researcher gave a well printed text to the students, so the text was readably clear enough. The texts were also completed with the meaning in Bahasa Indonesia so the students could recognize the word used in the text easily. The teacher also change the group works into individual and share discussion. The students had to finish the task by themselves, but they had to share the answer and compared their answer to their friends' answer. This activity made the students to be confident with their own answer. The discussion ran well and the students were more enthusiastic.

Based on the explanation above, it was seen from cycle 1 and cycle 2 when the teacher using authentic materials of short functional text, the students be more enthusiastic in reading the text. They could easily recognize what kind of functional text is it. The classroom situation was being livelier because the students took part actively in the classroom discussion. In conclusion, the research findings of the classroom action research were satisfying. The students' comprehension of short functional texts was improved significantly by implementing the authentic materials. The students showed their interest during the teaching learning process. The prediction of the action hypothesis was accepted.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings and discussion, the students participated actively during the teaching learning process through the use of authentic materials as the media. The students were being more interested in

study. Almost all students took part in the discussion. They shared their ideas actively and answered the teacher's question enthusiastically.

The improvement can also be seen from the students' understanding of short functional text. After being taught using authentic materials, the students could differentiate various kinds of functional text and determine the purpose of each kind of functional text. The students' vocabulary mastery also improved from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The students were accustomed to read the real short functional text, so they could recognize the meaning of the words that commonly used in the text. The improvement can also be seen in the students' comprehension on finding the detail information of short functional text after being taught to scan the important point on the authentic functional text. The weakness found in teaching learning process in cycle 1 had been successfully minimized by the teacher and students in cycle 2. The teaching learning process and the result in the cycle 2 were satisfying.

So, the researcher concluded that the use of authentic materials can improve the students' reading comprehension of short functional texts for the eight grade students of SMP Tunas Karya in the academic year 2015/2016.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher wishes to give some suggestion as follow:(1) Authentic material is recommended to be used in teaching short functional text in order to improve the students' reading comprehension because it represents the real language that used in real life and it can also attract the students' interest in reading. (2) The teacher should use the authentic material that related to students' daily life (related local materials) in order to make it easier to be comprehended by the students. (3) The teacher should provide the clear printed text so the text could be read by the students clearly. (4) Further researcher who will conduct the similar research should select the authentic materials properly according to the students' level.



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