

SELECTING MATERIALS AND DEVELOPING EXERCISES FOR TEACHING READING AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This paper is aimed to discuss how to select appropriate texts which fulfill the aspects to represent students' competence. To help the students comprehend the texts, the following texts and exercises are expected to be applicable for teaching reading at Junior High School. Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF), Modeling of Text (MOT), Joint Construction of Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of Text (ICOT) are four stages suggested in teaching English.

Keywords: appropriate text, students' competence, BKOF, MOT, JCOT, ICOT

Introduction

A language has significant roles for intellectual, social, and emotional development. A language is expected to facilitate learners to formulate their idea and thought, to observe their analytical and imaginative skills in order to participate in their social-life well (Depdiknas, 2004). Further, Depdiknas (2004) proposes that to set up learners communicate (using language) and participate in their social-life well, it is needful for them to develop their communicative competence.

In order to develop learners' communicative competence, Celce-Murcia, et.al (1995) cited by Depdiknas (2004) state that the main competence of language learning is Discourse Competence. Discourse competence can only be achieved if learners provide other competences, such as Linguistics Competence, Actional Competence, Socio-cultural Competence and Strategic Competence.

To comprehend and to produce texts (discourse) well, according to Depdiknas (2004), people/language learners must use their ideational function, inter personal function, and textual function. And also context of culture and context of situation are two other terms should be considered in English learning. Context of culture bears types of texts (genre). Context of situation covers three aspects, such as topic of discussion (field), the ways of communication, oral or written (mode), and interpersonal relationship of language users (tenor).

Reading as one of the four language skills plays an important role in English teaching context. There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. Many of them want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purposes, or simply for pleasure. Anything we can do to

make reading easier for them must be a good idea (Harmer, 1998). That's why teachers of English should have competence to select appropriate texts which fulfill the aspects above. Besides, English teachers have to be skillful to develop exercises which represent students' competence. To help the students comprehend the texts, the following texts and exercises are expected to be applicable for teaching reading at Junior High School.

Teaching Reading for Junior High School Students

Stated in 2006 Curriculum that within of the scope of English lesson in Junior High School (as stated in the Competence Standard) is the ability to understand functional texts and short essays in the form of descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, and report to interact in social-daily context (Depdiknas, 2006). Based on such a Competence Standard targeted by curriculum, a teacher who is supposed to be a decision maker in the classroom (Hunter, 1994) should be able to apply the strategies for the purpose of comprehending the texts.

There are three different kinds of texts according to 2006 Curriculum. They are functional text, transactional and interpersonal text, and short essay (monolog). The examples of functional texts are any texts in the form of advertisements, menus, signs, manuals, announcements, graphs, etc. How to express 'Agreement/Disagreement', 'Certainty/Uncertainty', 'Thanking', 'Apologizing', etc are some examples of transactional and interpersonal texts, while short essay refers to text types (genre). The presence of such kinds of texts provides the students with various kinds of texts which enable them to enrich their comprehension.

Referring to the notions above, English teachers should consider the following questions of teaching reading:

1. What aspects should teachers consider in selecting reading materials?
2. What reading skills should students acquire?
3. What kinds of reading should students be familiar with?

Principles of selecting the texts

Nuttall (1982) proposes three points of how to choose supplementary materials for the reading lesson; they are *readability*, *suitability of content*, and *exploitability*. For terms of readability, teachers need to provide texts that should be at the right level of difficulty for the students. Teachers also need to carry out an investigation of what the students like before they order books or select class reading materials. Suitability of content refers to the tastes of the texts whether students like or not toward the texts. Exploitation of texts means facilitation of learning. When a teacher exploits a text, he/she makes use of it to develop students' competence as readers. What we want students to

learn in a reading lesson and for what purposes we should exploit the texts are the leading questions for exploiting the texts.

Skills of reading the texts

Students, like us, need to be able to do a number of things with a reading text. They need to be able *to scan, to skim, and reading for detailed comprehension* (Harmer, 1998:69). Scanning the text means searching one piece of information from the text. Students do not have to read every word and line. To skim the text means to get general idea of what it is about. Reading for detailed comprehension, whether looking for detailed information or language, must be seen by students as something very different from both reading skills before. When looking for details, we expect the students to concentrate on the finer points of what they are reading.

Discussion

There are two different kinds of written languages aimed to develop students' comprehension. They are continuous text and non-continuous text (Depdiknas, 2004). Continuous text refers to short essay or monolog. The type of continuous text selected here is descriptive text. It is a kind of text which is proposed by 2006 Curriculum. According to this curriculum, non-continuous texts refer to functional texts which are written in the forms of announcements, labels, advertisements, manuals, menus, etc. The scope of English lesson at Junior High School is the ability to understand and to create various kinds of short functional texts, monologs, and essays in the form of procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, and report (Depdiknas, 2006).

The texts presented above (continuous and non-continuous) meet the criteria of selecting reading materials. The texts are at the right level of difficulty for Junior High School students (Suitability), the contents are considered to fulfill students' reading tastes (Readability), and the texts are sufficient to develop students' competence as readers (Exploitability).

Considering the text-attack skills proposed by Nuttall (1982) and the expected competence stated in Competence Standard of 2006 Curriculum, the table below might be clear to follow:

No.	Skill	Kind of text	Number
1.	Providing certain information by glancing the text or speed reading strategy	Descriptive Announcement (Wanted)	1, 2 18
2.	Providing general description about the text: theme, topic, title	Descriptive Information (Hotel Prices)	3 12

3.	Providing the main idea of the paragraph explicitly	Descriptive	4
4.	Providing the main idea of the paragraph implicitly	Descriptive	5
5.	Providing detailed information which is unclearly stated in the text	Descriptive Family tree Information (Hotel Prices) Advertisement Announcement (Wanted person) Cinema	6 11 13 15 17 20
6.	Providing implicit information which is indirectly stated in the text (reading between lines)	Descriptive Graph	7 14
7.	Determining reference words	Descriptive	8
8.	Determining Synonym or similar meaning	Descriptive Advertisement	9 16
9.	Determining definition of terms	Descriptive Description of certain animal	10 19

Sport is a theme which is suggested by 2006 Curriculum for grade VIII. To lead students comprehend the text well, the teacher can start his/her teaching by stimulating them with games, such as competition game (letting the students to write down the sports' names as many as they can), guessing game (of sports branches description). Since games have power to arouse students' motivation, it will be easier for the teacher to lead them to the main topic. Football which is supposed to be the most popular sport in the world is a nice topic to discuss. Providing instruction in the form of interesting games and activity (Steinberg. et al, 1982) makes teaching and learning process joyful. And providing students with the tasteful text means the text fulfill suitability of content (Nuttall, 1982).

Referring to continuous text, the teacher can apply reading aloud activity. By reading aloud the teacher knows students' pronunciation. Corrective feedback on students' mispronunciation can be done directly or indirectly. However, immediate correction is done to ignore fossilization while repetition of the correct pronunciation can

be done at the end of reading practice. Both feedbacks are called Get it right from the beginning and Get it right in the end proposals (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

Top down technique (Brown, 2001) is applicable to find general idea of the text. The exercises can be formulated in the form of questions, such as *What is the title of the text?*, *What does the text mostly talk about?*, etc. Talking about topic or theme is term to find general description too (Question 3, 12). Scanning technique (Nuttall, 1982) can be found in the exercises of providing detailed information which is unclearly stated in the text. Reading between lines which ask the students to provide information is a type of scanning too (Question 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20). Besides, technique of skimming is available at question 5 which asks the students to find the main idea of the paragraph.

Question 1, 2, 18 might be the simplest ones. The students are only asked to provide certain information of the text. The students can find the answer fast and easily because the information is clearly stated in the text. Predicting the meaning of the words, phrases, and sentences based on the context can be achieved by developing students' reading skills of referencing the words, providing synonyms and antonym, and formulating definition (Question 8, 9, 10, 16, 19).

Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF), Modeling of Text (MOT), Joint Construction of Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of Text (ICOT) are four stages suggested in teaching English. BKOF can be applied in Pre reading activity. Including in this stage are presenting vocabulary, introducing new grammatical rules, etc. MOT is meant to provide students with exemplified texts. JCOT is the stage to give chance for the "expert" students to share their knowledge. The teacher can facilitate students with cooperative learning, work together, share idea in completing academic task (Jacob, 1999). ICOT gives students opportunity to explore their ideas. The teacher should appreciate the heterogeneous available on the students. Therefore, Independence becomes parts of strategy of teaching and learning. Summarizing, retelling or free writing activities give students chance to improve their skills.

Conclusion

Teachers' creativity in selecting the texts and developing their exercises facilitate the students to develop their reading skill. The texts and the exercises developed are expected to lead students to be skillful readers. Students are familiarized with continuous and non-continuous texts in order to enrich them with various kinds of texts.

Providing exercises from the simplest to the most complicated ones give the class a wide range of material (Nuttall, 1982). Further, she stated that the texts should be able to invite students with new and relevant ideas, challenging students' intelligence, helping them to understand the way other people think or feel, etc.

Lastly, it is hopefully the teachers can select the texts appropriately as it is proposed by Nuttall (1982) and develop the exercises according to the skills they want to achieve in their class. It can be done well if the teachers also consider the class atmosphere during the instruction. Conducive atmosphere will influence toward students' success in learning.

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