

Designing Supplementary English Reading Material Based on Pos Bloc Medan

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Abstract

One of the causes of the lack of interest in reading is the lack of interesting reading materials. This study developed reading materials based on Pos Bloc Medan, a historic building in Medan, Indonesia that was transformed from a post office to a Pos Bloc. Creating new reading materials in the world of education is an important step to improve the quality of learning, expand access to knowledge, encourage innovation and creativity, and increase student engagement and motivation. This study aims to design new reading materials for students and college students to facilitate learning. The development technique used is descriptive qualitative and data collection is carried out by document analysis, observation and interviews. These findings provide important implications for the development of educational reading materials based on local culture in Indonesia.

Keywords: Reading, English Reading Text, Pos Bloc

Abstrak

Salah satu penyebab rendahnya minat baca adalah minimnya bahan bacaan yang menarik. Penelitian ini mengembangkan bahan bacaan berbasis Pos Bloc Medan, sebuah bangunan bersejarah di Medan, Indonesia yang disulap dari kantor pos menjadi Pos Bloc. Menciptakan bahan bacaan baru dalam dunia pendidikan merupakan langkah penting untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran, memperluas akses ilmu pengetahuan, mendorong inovasi dan kreativitas, serta meningkatkan keterlibatan dan motivasi siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merancang bahan bacaan baru bagi siswa dan mahasiswa untuk memperlancar pembelajaran. Teknik pengembangan yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dan pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan analisis dokumen, observasi, dan wawancara. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi pengembangan bahan bacaan pendidikan berbasis budaya lokal di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Membaca, Teks Bacaan Bahasa Inggris, Pos Bloc

1. Introduction

One of the four fundamental language abilities that are essential for learning is reading. According to Pujiono (2012), reading is a linguistic ability that seeks to comprehend concepts, ideas, and emotions. A person will go through a thought process to comprehend concepts and ideas in general as a result of reading. According to Burns and Page (1991:45), reading is a participatory process in which the reader and the author exchange ideas through the text. Burnes (1991:45) asserts that the purpose of reading is to understand written speech. Through the text, readers and authors participate in an interactive idea sharing process. What we refer to as a message is the

process by which the writer conveys meaning to the audience. If the reader is able to understand the writer's message, the transfer process will proceed smoothly. The message itself may consist of the writer's thoughts, feelings, facts, information, and opinions.

According to Grabe (2009), reading is done for a variety of reasons, including finding information, absorbing it quickly, learning how to integrate it, evaluating, critiquing, and using it for general comprehension. According to this viewpoint, reading should be done in order to learn new information about a subject, develop comprehension of existing concepts, enhance language proficiency, evaluate and channel information, and develop opinions and arguments based on a thorough understanding.

One of the primary means of acquiring new knowledge and information on a variety of subjects that can be applied in daily life is through reading. Ramelan (1990:1) asserts that reading is a beneficial activity for students and that it is also essential and necessary because their ability to read is mostly responsible for their academic performance. Reading has a significant impact on our lives. Reading may give us access to a wide range of knowledge and information on a number of subjects, from science, technology, history, and culture to the most recent advancements in a number of other sectors. It can also teach us how to assess, analyze, and create arguments based on the information we acquire.

According to research, pupils who struggle with reading typically struggle to meet academic standards. It is true that achievement is threatened by weak reading abilities. their schooling. A key component of students' academic achievement is their reading proficiency. However, a lack of suitable reading resources is frequently the cause of the reading difficulties that many pupils have. Students' reading comprehension and proficiency may suffer greatly as a result of this dearth of reading resources, which may then have an effect on their academic achievement. Students' reading habits are further hampered by the lack of functional libraries and the unavailability of books (Arafat, 2017; Ogunrombi, 1995). The lack of a reading culture, misconceptions about reading, and ineffective teaching strategies are the main causes of Indonesia's low reading proficiency (Tahmidaten, 2020). Together, these studies highlight how important it is to provide kids with a variety of easily available reading materials in order to enhance their reading skills. One of the main causes of kids' poor reading proficiency has been shown to be a lack of reading materials. Ogunrombi (1995) and Zakiah (2024) both draw attention to the part that dull books and underdeveloped libraries play in this problem. Tahmidaten (2020) goes on to stress the significance of creating a reading culture and the necessity of varied and appropriate reading resources. According to Fatmawaty (2024), integrating content based on local wisdom can enhance kids' reading proficiency. All of these research highlight how important reading materials are in determining pupils' reading proficiency.

Researchers visited SMK TELKOM 1 MEDAN, a private school, to gather precise data on the low reading proficiency of today's kids. One class of twenty-eight students majoring in computer engineering and networking in the twelfth grade was the subject of the study. In order to start, researchers went into the classroom and asked the students to discuss what they knew about the reading texts they had studied. However, many of them were still unsure of the categories of texts. In order to assess students' comprehension, including their capacity to recognize the primary components of descriptive texts, researchers also presented them with descriptive texts and examples. A series of questions about students' reading preferences, particularly with regard to English reading materials, was then provided by the researcher as part of a survey. Finding out respondents' preferences for several parts of material design, such as English language proficiency, content relevancy, visualization, interactive elements, and understanding help, is the goal of this survey. Following receipt of the survey responses from the students, the researcher reviewed the responses. When it came to the design of reading materials for computer and network engineering, the researcher discovered that many students expressed that there were a variety of needs. English proficiency, content relevancy, visualization, translation requirements, explanation clarity, and visually appealing design are all important aspects of effective reading materials. English proficiency levels must be taken into consideration while creating reading materials, particularly for individuals who are not native English speakers or who struggle with the language. This demonstrates that reading materials should be created to promote active learning and give students chances to assess their own comprehension. According to this argument, the researcher discovered that pupils have very little motivation to read, hence there must be strategies and concepts for igniting students' interest and affection for reading.

According to the above research's analysis findings, it's critical to develop fresh, engaging reading materials to aid in students' reading proficiency development. Reading resources that can pique pupils' interest in

reading will be developed by researchers. In the province of North Sumatra, specifically in the city of Medan, researchers will investigate the Pos Bloc building. Developing fresh reading materials can expose students to subjects and fields of study that may be unfamiliar to them, enhance the excitement and stimulation of new reading, and pique their curiosity about the text's contents. Since the world is always changing and new information is discovered every day, students who have a broad background in knowledge are better able to comprehend the context of more difficult content. Students are guaranteed to obtain up-to-date information that is pertinent to current events thanks to new reading materials. Researchers developed novel reading materials with descriptive text kinds for this investigation. The goal of descriptive writing is to give a thorough account of a person, place, thing, or event. According to Mulyasa (2007), a descriptive text is one that provides readers with detailed descriptions of an object so they can visualize it. Typically, this prose makes extensive use of comparisons and adjectives. The primary goal of descriptive writing is to utilize vivid, precise language to let readers visualize and experience what is being described. Authors can provide readers with a more vivid and engaging experience by employing descriptive prose, which enables them to feel and visualize the object being described as though they were actually viewing it.

2. Literature Review

Reading Materials in English Language Teaching Reading materials play a crucial role in language acquisition, as they provide learners with exposure to authentic language use, vocabulary, and discourse structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). According to Tomlinson (2011), effective reading materials should be engaging, contextually relevant, and tailored to students' needs to maximize comprehension and motivation.

Authentic materials, such as articles, brochures, and historical texts from real-world sources, have been found to enhance reading engagement and comprehension (Gilmore, 2007). Research suggests that using authentic materials can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life communication, helping students develop critical reading skills (Berardo, 2006). In the context of Pos Bloc, authentic reading materials derived from its historical, cultural, and commercial background can provide meaningful content for English learners.

Place-based learning emphasizes the use of local contexts to create meaningful educational experiences (Sobel, 2004). Studies have shown that incorporating familiar and culturally relevant contexts into reading materials can enhance learners' engagement and motivation (Gruenewald, 2003). Pos Bloc, as a revitalized cultural and historical site, offers rich resources for place-based reading materials, fostering deeper connections between students and their learning environment.

Designing reading materials requires a structured approach to ensure effectiveness and engagement. Nation and Macalister (2010) propose a model for material development that includes principles such as:

1. Input: Selection of appropriate texts based on learners' proficiency levels.
2. Process: Activities that facilitate comprehension and interaction.
3. Output: Tasks that encourage students to produce language based on the reading material.

Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasize the importance of learner-centered materials, which cater to students' interests and real-world experiences, making reading more meaningful and motivating.

Research highlights that integrating cultural and historical aspects into language learning materials enhances students' intercultural competence and language proficiency (Byram, 1997). Pos Bloc, as a historical landmark, serves as an ideal foundation for designing culturally relevant reading materials that provide both linguistic and cultural insights, thereby enriching students' learning experiences.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a design-based research (DBR) approach, to develop and evaluate reading materials based on Pos Bloc. According to Reeves (2006), DBR is an iterative process that involves designing, testing, and refining educational materials in real classroom settings.

The participants in this study include English teachers and students from a secondary school in Medan. The selection of participants is based on purposive sampling (Creswell, 2018), ensuring that individuals with relevant experience in reading instruction and material development contribute to the study.

The data were collected through multiple sources to ensure the validity and depth of findings:

1. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with English teachers to understand their perspectives on reading material design.
2. Classroom Observations: Observing reading lessons to analyze how students interact with existing materials and the newly designed materials.
3. Document Analysis: Reviewing existing textbooks and supplementary reading materials to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.
4. Material Trial and Feedback: Implementing the designed reading materials in the classroom and gathering feedback from students and teachers.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be used to identify key patterns and insights from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, feedback from students and teachers on the designed materials will be analyzed to refine and improve the materials.

4. Results and Discussion

Pos Bloc Medan, originally known as the Medan Post and Telegraph Office, is a historic building located in Medan, Indonesia. Designed by Dutch architect Ir. S. Snuyf from *Burgelijke Openbare Werken (BOW)*, the building was inaugurated in 1911. Strategically situated in downtown Medan, it stands near other colonial-era landmarks such as the Old City Hall, Inna Dharma Deli Hotel, Grand Mosque, Maimoon Palace, Immanuel Church, Tjong A Fie Mansion, and Sri Mariamman Temple

The Medan Post Office has been a significant icon and strategic landmark in the city since its inauguration. In 2022, the building underwent a transformation into Pos Bloc Medan, a multifunctional creative hub. This initiative was a collaborative effort between PT. Ruang Kreatif Pos (a subsidiary of M Bloc Group) and PT. Pos Indonesia, aiming to rejuvenate the historical asset into a vibrant space for creative communities.

Today, Pos Bloc Medan serves as a public creative space, hosting various events and providing a platform for local MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) to showcase their products. The building's unique architecture, blending European style with local character, continues to attract both locals and tourists, making it prominent cultural and historical landmark in Medan.

4.1 Results

The study aimed to design reading materials based on Pos Bloc Medan to enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement with local cultural content. Data were collected through a needs analysis questionnaire, interviews with English teachers, and document analysis of existing reading materials.

Needs Analysis Findings

The needs analysis revealed that students prefer reading materials that are contextually relevant and incorporate authentic texts. Many students expressed interest in topics related to cultural heritage, history, and urban development, which align with the features of Pos Bloc Medan. Additionally, teachers highlighted the necessity of materials that integrate vocabulary enrichment and comprehension exercises tailored to students' proficiency levels.

Developed Reading Materials

Based on the findings, the reading materials were designed using texts about the historical significance of Pos Bloc Medan, its transformation into a creative hub, and notable events held at the venue. The materials were structured into pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities to scaffold learning effectively. The texts were supplemented with vocabulary glossaries, comprehension questions, and discussion prompts.

Pilot Testing and Student Feedback

The developed materials were piloted in an English reading class. Student feedback indicated increased motivation and engagement when reading texts related to Pos Bloc Medan. A majority of students found the activities interactive and beneficial in improving their comprehension skills. However, some students suggested adding more visual aids and multimedia elements to enhance understanding.

4.2 Discussion

The findings suggest that incorporating local cultural elements into reading materials can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By contextualizing texts with familiar settings such as Pos Bloc Medan, students develop a deeper connection to the content, making reading activities more meaningful.

The study also highlights the importance of balancing textual complexity with student proficiency. The structured pre-reading and post-reading tasks helped scaffold comprehension, supporting students in grasping new vocabulary and ideas effectively. Furthermore, the feedback suggests that multimodal approaches, such as integrating images and videos, could further enrich the learning experience.

Overall, the research underscores the pedagogical value of designing reading materials that align with students' interests and real-world contexts. Future studies could explore digital adaptations of these materials to enhance accessibility and engagement.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to design reading materials based on Pos Bloc Medan to enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement through culturally relevant content. The needs analysis revealed that students preferred reading texts related to local culture, history, and urban development, highlighting the significance of integrating authentic and meaningful materials in English language learning.

The developed reading materials successfully incorporated texts about Pos Bloc Medan, structured with pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities. These materials provided opportunities for vocabulary enrichment, critical thinking, and discussion, making the learning process more interactive and engaging. The pilot testing indicated that students responded positively to the materials, demonstrating increased motivation and comprehension. Additionally, feedback from both students and teachers suggested that adding visual and multimedia elements could further enhance understanding and engagement.

In conclusion, the integration of local cultural content into reading materials proved to be an effective approach to fostering students' interest and improving their reading skills. Future research could explore digital adaptations of the materials or expand the study to different cultural landmarks to provide a broader and more diverse learning experience. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on contextualized English language teaching and emphasize the importance of culturally relevant learning resources.

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