Developing reading tasks for autonomous learning for grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman

Sungkawati Kardi Wahyuningsih and Joko Priyana
Yogyakarta State University
e-mail: kardisungkawati@gmail.com

Abstract: This research study was aimed at developing reading tasks for autonomous learning for grade X students of Senior High School 1 Sleman to help the students improve their reading skills independently. This research was a Research and Development study that included the steps of needs analysis, course grid design, product development, product validation, product revision, try-out, and study of the final product. This research developed five units of reading tasks for autonomous learning. The reading tasks were developed according to the needs analysis data. The need of grade X students of Senior High School 1 Sleman in learning reading autonomously is to improve their reading skills. The appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning are that they give clear instructions, describe the language skills clearly, look nice, give a lot practice, give feedback and give answers or let the learners know how to complete the tasks, give examples and tell the learners how to learn best. The needs-related appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning in terms of their components that are: the goal of learning reading autonomously is to improve the students' reading skills; the input presents interesting pictures; the procedure presents interesting and enjoyable activities; the learners' role is as the active reader; the teacher's role is the feedback giver; and the setting is individual work. The components of appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning in terms of their organisations are arranged into four stages, namely introduction, activities, self-assessment, and check your achievement.

Keywords: reading, tasks, autonomous learning

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the notion of autonomy has come to play important role in English foreign language learning. Autonomy refers to a capacity to take charge of or control one's own learning (Benson in Pemberton, Toogood, & Berfield, 2009: 14). Students are targeted to be autonomous learners. They should

be able to learn independently, to self-manage study and learning, and realistically to appraise their strengths and weaknesses. Considering their strengths and weaknesses in learning foreign language, students are able to decide the target competences. On the other hand, students have freedom to choose the materials, time, and strategies according to their interest. Learning

autonomously is one of the effective ways to improve students' language skills.

Autonomous learning helps students enrich their knowledge and improve their language skills. In studying English, there are four skills that the students must master. They are listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Reading is the basic skill in learning. Reading consists of gaining meaning rapidly and accurately from the printed page. Reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word (Nunan, 2005: 69). The reading skill is emphasized since the students are expected to be able to understand and comprehend the English text related to their studies. To understand a written text, one should be able to extract the required information from the text as efficiently as possible. One way to improve students' reading skills is by learning independently. To learn reading autonomously, students need appropriate materials. They need sources to help their learning, such as textbooks, workbooks, CDs and cassettes, and e-learning webs.

In today's classroom, textbooks serve as a tool, a tutor, and a guidebook in a teaching and learning process. The use of textbooks in the classroom gives some advantages for both the teachers and the students. Textbooks help the teachers to provide the teaching materials as the resources of the teaching and learning process. Textbooks also give some benefits to students. Textbooks serve quality materials and meaningful learning experiences for them.

Unfortunately, the results of observation and interview with the students and the English teachers of State Senior High School 1 Sleman show that the textbooks which are used in the teaching and learning process do not support the students to learn independently, as they: (1) often have limited practices; (2) are not interesting; (3) do not allow students

to improve language skill independently; and (4) do not give chance to students to improve their autonomous learning skills. They hinder students to improve language skills. In other words, learning with the textbooks has some weaknesses such as limited input and learning opportunity. Therefore the students need other sources which are adequate for them to attain the targeted competences, especially in reading.

Due to the problems above, it is necessary to develop reading tasks for autonomous learning. Tasks encourage participants to make explicit and to analyze a wide range of factors relating to their own experience of learning and teaching, and investigate the experience and opinion of students (Parrott, 2003: 2). The reading tasks motivate students to study autonomously. Besides, the reading tasks are also used as self-access learning sources.

This research focuses on developing reading tasks for autonomous learning. The tasks are developed according to the target needs, learning needs, and current theories in language learning. The materials include tasks to learn invitations, descriptive texts, and narrative texts. The reading tasks are used as supplementary materials which are used independently by the students. They use the reading tasks without teachers' instructions. The reading tasks consist of five chapters which are developed according to the learner needs, and learning needs. The reading tasks are also developed according to the curriculum of the Senior High School.

2. Method

This study is classified as research and development. The research and development model which was adapted in this study was the model by Dick and Carey (2001). The steps in this study are analysis, design, development, implemen-

tation, and evaluation. The developing reading tasks are according to the target needs, learning needs, and the appropriate materials include invitations, descriptive and narrative texts for grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman.

The subjects of this research were grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman. The needs analysis data were collected from the students in the academic year 2011/2012. There were six classes. The selection of the subject in this research used the confidence interval by Vocckell 1983 (Mulyatiningsih, 2011: 20) which states that 190 population members have the confidence interval ±7. It was consulted by the formula of Harry King's nomogram (Mulyatiningsih, 2011: 21) and the consisted of 72. On the other hand, Sugiyono (2011: 126) states that the larger number of the sample will minimize the generalization mistakes. To minimize the mistakes, this research took 100 participants. The total number of the subjects in this research was 100 students who were chosen by random sampling. The questionnaires were administered to the students. The try-out data were collected from the students in the academic year 2011/2012. This research applied cluster sampling. There were six classes of the first grade students X of Senior High School 1 Sleman. The result of the random sampling put class X A and X C. The total subjects in this research were 63 students.

There were two kinds of data, qualitative data and quantitative data in this research. The qualitative data were the needs analysis data. There were gathered from questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were collected in the expert judgment and the try-out of the product design. The quantitative data were obtained from the closed-ended items of the questionnaire.

The qualitative data were obtained from the needs analysis questionnaire.

The data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis. The needs analysis data were described systematically to increase understanding of them and to present what has been discovered to others. The collected data were identified, categorized, and analyzed based on the components of tasks. The descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics was used as a means to present and to describe some of the data in the questionnaire. For this purpose, the researcher used the central tendency measure (means) and the variability measure (standard deviation) of the students' and the experts' responses to the questionnaire. This research used the mean to analyze the response using Linkert scales.

3. Findings and Discussion

The need of grade X students of Senior High School 1 Sleman in learning reading autonomously is to improve their reading skills. Regarding the reading subskills that students wanted to improve, it was found that 84% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding detailed information of the text, 74% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding implicit information of the text, 84% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding explicit information of the text, 85% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding the main ideas of the text, 80% of the students wanted to improve their ability to find the moral related to the text, 74% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding the reference word related to the text, 82% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding the word meaning of the text, and 75% of the students wanted to improve their ability in finding the communicative purpose of the text.

There were 82% of the students claiming that they needed to improve their reading strategies of how to do previewing for the main ideas. It was also shown that 80% of the students wanted to improve their strategies of how to skim the text for the communicative approach. In terms of speed reading, 80% of the students wanted to improve their skimming for general description, 82% of the students wanted to improve reviewing for the moral of the text, 82% of the students wanted to improve predicting for the reference words, and 81% of the students wanted to improve predicting for the word meaning. Meanwhile, in scanning the text, it was found that 71% of the students wanted to improve their strategy of scanning the text for specific information, 73% of the students wanted to improve their strategy of inferring for implicit information, and 82% of the students claimed that they needed to improve the strategy of inferring the text for explicit information.

The data of the students' proficiency level show that 57% of the students claimed that they were in the level of intermediate. It seemed that the students were able to locate and integrate information of the meaning and forms of the text. They were able to provide specific text support for inferences, interpretative statements, and comparisons within and across the texts. Meanwhile, 27% of the students were in the advanced level and 16% of the students were in the elementary level and it was the less prominent level.

According to the needs analysis data, 96% of the students stated that reading comprehension was useful for their next career, 66% of them would use reading comprehension to support their study, and 34% of the students would use reading comprehension to support their job. On the other hand, 4% of the students thought that reading comprehension unhelpful for their next career.

In learning reading independently, students needed media to help them to understand the text. From the finding, it showed that 57% of the students preferred to use the picture illustrations to help them to understand the text, 29% of the students chose the vocabulary lists, 13% of them liked reading text, and only 1% of them liked watching films.

Referring to the students' preference of the text types, the needs analysis data showed that the fiction stories were the most favorite for the students' reading materials where 39% of the students preferred to choose them. It was followed by newspaper/ magazines articles (36%), brochure/advertisement (14%), text books (4%), comics (3%), infotainments (2%), biography (1%), and war (1%).

In preferring the topics in learning reading, it was found that the most popular topics chosen by the students were about tourisms, where 32% of the students preferred to choose them. It was followed by arts (30%), sciences (21%), sports (11%), psychology (3%), films (2%), and history (1%).

In relation to the length of the text, the most prominent length of text preferred by the students was 150 words of 3 paragraphs, they were chosen by 39% of the students. The next was 200 words or 4 paragraphs which were chosen by 37% of the students. The third was 100 words or 2 paragraphs which were chosen by 31% of the students. The less prominent length of text was 250 words or 5 paragraphs which were chosen by 3% of the students.

Concerning the authenticity of texts, there were 77% of the students needed authentic texts as the reading materials. On the other hands, 23% of the students did not need authentic texts as their reading materials.

The most interesting activities in learning reading independently were reading then finding new vocabularies. It was chosen by 28% of the students. The next was reading then answering multiple choice questions where it was chosen by 17% of the students. The third was reading then matching the answers where it was chosen by 14% of the students. There were 13% of the students who liked reading then answering true or false, and 9% of the students liked reading then finding references. The last was reading then paraphrasing the text which was chosen by 2% of the students.

In learning English, there were 48% of the students who were able to study independently. However, 52% of the students said that they could not study independently.

The most interesting activities according to the needs analysis data were group work which was chosen by 35% of the students. It was followed by pair work (20%), individual work (22%); and out of class activities (14%). The less interesting were activities in class chosen by only 9% of the students.

In learning independently, there were 73% of the students who chose to spend 90 minutes. On the other hands, there were 18% of the students who chose 60 minutes. It was followed by 120 minutes which was chosen by 9% of the students.

Design of the Course Grid

Based on the results of the needs analysis and the theory of autonomous learning and reading, the course grid of reading tasks for autonomous learning were designed. Here, the invitation, descriptive text, and narrative texts were designed into five units. Each unit is a 90 minute lesson. The texts were taken from the internet. Each of the texts consisted of two or three paragraphs. However, there were some modifications of the texts to make them easier to understand. Each unit had various activities, such as stating true or false, matching the questions with the clues, completing the paragraphs, and answering multiple choice and essay questions. The indicators in each activity were varied. The reading skills developed were different in each topic. There were six to eight skills in each topic.

Development of the Product

The title of the book is *Reading Tasks for Autonomous Learning for Grade X Students*. To develop the reading skills, this book presents tasks which ask the students to read texts and answer the questions that follow. This book is also facilitated with the answer keys. The answer keys are designed and provided with explanations which help the students to understand the materials.

As stated before, this book consists of five units namely *Invitation*, *Beaches*, *Ceremony*, *Legend*, and *Myth*. Each part is arranged into four stages. These are *introduction, activities, self-assessment,* and *check your achievement*. The *introduction* consists of information about what the students are going to learn. The second stage is the *activities*. In this stage, the students complete the tasks independently. They can use a dictionary or internet access to help them. The next stage is *self-assessment*. It is used to assess the students' competence. When the students think that they fail, there are some suggestions to follow. The last stage is the *check your achievement*. In this part, the students apply the knowledge that they have learned in the previous stages.

Description of the Expert Judgment

The reading tasks used in this research were validated by some experts. There were four experts who gave their judgments and advise. The experts were

expert of language, the methodology, and graphic. There were six aspects that were asked, namely the appropriateness of the content, goal, procedure, input, layout, and presentation.

In relation to the expert judgments data it can be concluded that the reading tasks are appropriate. The content was appropriate according to the means ranges from 3.75 to 4.25. The goals of the tasks are appropriate. It was indicated by the means ranges from 3.75 to 4.50. The procedure was appropriate which was indicated by the means ranging from 3.50 to 4.50. The input of the tasks was appropriate according to the means ranging from 3.75 to 5.00. The lay-out was appropriate which was indicated by the means ranging from 4.00 to 4.50. The presentation of the tasks was also appropriate. It was indicated by the means ranging from 4.00 to 4.25.

Try-out of the Product

The try-out was done to get the empirical feedbacks which later would be used to evaluate and revise the tasks. Each unit in the reading tasks was implemented in class X1. After getting the feedbacks from that class, the researcher made some revisions of the tasks and then the revised materials were implemented in class X3. There were twelve questions according to the components of tasks, namely goal, input, procedure, teacher's role, students' role, and setting.

According to try-out data, it can be concluded that the reading tasks are appropriate. The goal of the tasks was achieved. It was indicated by the mean of the students' agreement ranging from 3.94 to 4.06. The inputs which were texts and pictures were comprehensible. The means of the students' agreement ranging from 3.90 to 4.29. In relation to the procedure, the mean of the students'

agreement ranging from 3.67 to 4.19. It means that the students enjoyed doing the task. The activity of the task could also help the students improve their reading skills. The leaner role was appropriate which was indicated by the mean of the students' agreement ranging from 4.26 to 4.32. The teacher as the feedback giver was appropriate. It was indicated by the mean of the students' agreement ranging from 3.74 to 3.97. The settings were also appropriate according to the mean of the students' agreement ranging from 3.77 to 4.16.

Study of the Final Product

The tasks which fulfil the criteria of the effective tasks are appropriate and have good results. It can be seen that the goals of the tasks were achieved. The input of the tasks was comprehensible and authentic. The input which was comprehensible made the tasks easier to do. In addition, the content of the reading tasks is graded as the easier ones are placed at the beginning and then it is followed by that which is more difficult and the most difficult place in the last part.

The appropriate reading tasks are arranged into four stages. Those are *introduction, activities, self-assessment,* and *check your achievement.* Self-assessment is used to assess the students' competence. These tasks are also completed by answers keys. It is used to check the students' answers whether they are correct or wrong. The answer keys are designed with some explanations which help students to understand the materials. Finally, it could be concluded that the appropriateness of the autonomous learning tasks depends not only on the appropriateness of its component but is also influenced by the sequence and the gradation of the tasks.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the research are as follows (1) The need of grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman in learning reading autonomously is to improve their reading skills. (2) The needs of grade X students of Senior High School 1 Sleman in learning reading autonomously in reference to the target need is the goals of learning reading autonomously to improve the students' lacks in reading skills, as finding detailed information of the text, finding explicit information of the text, finding implicit information of the text, finding main idea of the text, finding moral value of the text, finding reference of the text, finding meaning of the text, and finding communicative purpose of the text. The proficiency level of the students should be in the intermediate. (3) The needs of grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman in learning reading autonomously in reference to the learning needs are the input of the tasks helps students to understand the text, like picture illustration and vocabulary list. The topics which are the most popular in daily reading activity are tourisms with two to three paragraphs in each text. The procedure of the reading tasks are varied from stating true or false, matching the questions with the clues, completing paragraphs, and answering multiple choices and essay questions. The learner role in learning independently is learner as the active reader to find information. It means that the students are able to learn independently. The teacher role is the teacher as the feedback giver. The time allocation in learning autonomously is 90 minutes. According to the setting, the students are able to complete the tasks individually. However, they need to consult their achievement by working in pairs or in group. (4) The appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning for grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman are that the content of the reading tasks is graded as the easier are placed in the beginning then it is followed by that which is more difficult and the most difficult place in the last part. The characteristics of the appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning are that they have clear instructions, describe the language skills clearly, look nice, give a lot practice, give feedback and show answers or let the learner know how they are doing, contain examples, and tell the learner how to learn best. (5) The needs-related appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning for grade X students of SMA 1 Sleman in terms of their components are that the goal of learning reading autonomously is to improve the students' reading skills. Students are the basic factor. They should be able to learn independently. The teacher role is the feedback giver. In relation to the input, the pictures which are presented in the tasks are appropriate since the pictures are interesting and they help the students to understand the information. The tasks present some interesting activities. By doing the activities, the students get the information and develop their reading skills effectively. In addition, they also enjoy the activity. They think that the activity is interesting and is not difficult. The tasks also can be completed by the teacher role and the learner role which are designed. Students are able to do the tasks in enough time individually. (6) The components of appropriate reading tasks for autonomous learning for grade X students of SMA Sleman in terms of their organizations are arranged into four stages. Those are *introduction, activities, self-assessment,* and *check your achievement.* Self-assessment is used to assess the students' competence. These tasks are also completed by answers keys. They are used to check the students' answers whether they are correct or wrong. The answer keys are designed with some

explanations which help students to understand the materials.

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