

Environment-Based Supplementary Reading Materials for Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

One effort toward instilling environmental care in students is the development of environment-based supplementary reading materials. The objectives of this article are to investigate the need of junior high school students for environment-based supplementary reading materials, and to develop environment-based supplementary reading materials suitable for these students. The subjects of this research and development were eighth grade students of a junior high school. The resulting reading material has been developed into three units, each unit consisting of a list of new vocabulary, a comic, a main text, and exercises. The exercises at the end of each unit have the purpose of confirmation. The texts aim to convey an ideal relationship between humans and environment.

Keywords: environment-based materials, junior high school, reading

Programs focused on taking care of nature have been actively developed in Indonesian schools over the last few years. These programs can provide numerous benefits, such as providing knowledge, sharpening skills, and inculcating values so that learners can choose appropriate behavior to treat the environment (Scott & Oulton, 1998, p. 213). The programs introduce and instill the values of preservation and good management of the environment not only to students, but also to school members and the surrounding society

(Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p. 4). The spirit of care toward nature is instilled in the hope that environmental problems can be minimalized or even prevented.

Care toward the environment is firmly stated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 20, 2016 on Graduates' Competency Standards, both in the elementary and secondary schools. This means that a graduate from any level of education is expected to master the concepts of environmental awareness in order to develop ethics and skills in caring for and preserving the environment. Scott & Oulton (1998, p. 214) state that schools have an important role in preparing citizens that can value, think, and act wishfully toward nature. The first step that a school should do is identify the environmental care value to be integrated into the curriculum.

To support the implementation of care toward nature programs in schools, the Indonesian Ministry of Environment has produced the Guidelines for the Development of Environmental Education Material Content Outlines, which contains the material scope as a reference to integrate it in every subject. In secondary schools, the material scope in question includes humans and their surroundings, types of physical environment, physical environment changes, ecosystems, maintaining environmental cleanliness and health, natural resources, water, coasts and oceans, air, global environmental damage due to pollution, energy, the forest, natural disasters, and man-made disasters (Ministry of Environment, 2011, p. 49-72).

Developing values in the school classroom, however, is not an easy task. Caduto (1985), as cited by Scott & Oulton (1998, p. 216), mentioned factors that hinder the development of values education in schools. Some of these factors are: (a) doubts of teachers, administrators, and parents about using the classroom to give value education; (b) uncertainty among teachers on how best to deal with student values; (c) inadequate training on values education; (d) fear of the surrounding society's reaction to values-based activities in the classroom; and (e) too much focus on subject matter. These various factors can also become obstacles in the implementation of environment-based curricula in schools.

Research conducted by Ela and Siti (2015, p. 11) indicated that one of the hindrances of the implementation of an environment-based curriculum for secondary schools is low teacher ability to develop integrated environmental content. In addition, research by Ahmad (2014, p. 170) found that an inability of teachers to connect materials to the school's environment also hinders the implementation of environment-based curricula.

Both aforementioned studies show that instilling caring attitudes toward the environment in the classroom is a challenging task. Difficulties are also noted when trying to instill this value through English learning.

Furthermore, the material scope to be covered in English classes has been specifically outlined by The Ministry of Education and Culture's Regulation No. 24, 2016 on Core Competency and Basic Competency.

Although it is difficult for the teachers, it is still hoped that they can develop caring attitudes toward the environment in their students as this provides a considerable benefit to society. One approach that can be used by teachers is introducing the values through literature. Edgington (2002: p. 113) has stated that literature that is relevant to children's lives can be used in character education. In the case of this research, the literature is in the form of supplementary reading materials.

Research has also been conducted on supplementary reading materials. Research conducted by Thakur (2015) used jokes, anecdotes, stories, situations, and journalistic cartoons as supplementary materials. Thakur suggested that these materials were advantageous to the students because they enabled the students to raise subjective analyses, improve self-awareness, and identify correlations and complexities in the materials. Supplementary reading material research conducted by Abbasi, et. al. (2015) on the effects of using supplementary textbooks (Gaj and Khate Sefid) on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' reading skills also showed advantages. This research indicated that the use of supplementary materials can help learners to improve their autonomous learning of English, improving reading comprehension and other skills.

Thus, previous research has already shown positive impacts from the use of supplementary materials, and their use should be recommended to teachers. The previous studies did not, however, integrate environmental values into their supplementary materials. Hence, it is the aim of this research to develop environment-based supplementary reading materials for junior high school students.

It is hoped the results of this research motivate teachers to develop their own supplementary materials containing values education. Research conducted by Sailors, Martinez, Villareal (2015) has shown that teachers can author their own reading materials. The topics they included were the role education plays in improving lives, and the richness and diversity of South Africa. The research shows that when teachers create the materials they can relate it to the culture, linguistics, and lives experienced by their students. Students then have a greater understanding of the material and a greater ability to implement the values within their society.

When developing environment-themed reading supplements, the learning approaches must also be considered. Environmental education is closely related to the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach, which encourages students to learn from their surroundings. In other words, learning

must reflect the real-life situation of the students. This then supports the development of students' creativity and critical thinking, so that they can apply the knowledge learnt to solve problems that they encounter around them (Johnson in Dharma, 2010, p. 13). In regard to developing English reading materials, content

and outside the classroom.

Extensive reading aims not only to provide entertainment for students as they read, but also to expand the students' understanding of the language so that their skills will develop. "...[R]eading for pleasure (extensive reading) is the major source of our reading competence, our vocabulary and our ability to handle complex grammatical constructions" (Krashen in Miculeckly and Linda, 2007, p.3). Another opinion on the benefits of extensive reading is expressed by Day and Bradford, also in Miculeckly and Linda (2007, p.3): "Extensive reading may play a role in developing the capacity for critical thinking that is so important for success in higher education." By getting the students accustomed to extensive reading, we can expect that they will be able to solve relevant to the students' lives helps them to understand the passages as a whole.

It is also hoped the results of this research provide authentic supplementary materials that can support both inculcating environmental care values and improving students' reading comprehension. This aim is in line with Guo's research (2012) which showed that authentic materials expose students to English usage as it is used in real life. Additionally, Guo's research showed that extensive reading of authentic texts can improve students' vocabulary mastery and motivation for learning English. Extensive reading activities can be done both inside many problems and continue to higher levels of education.

In developing such materials, attention must be paid to the principles. The materials to be developed must be aimed at fulfilling students' needs and developing students' potentials. Material developers must understand that every student has different characteristics in terms of personality, intelligence, interest, talent, and learning style and such differences must be well accommodated. Furthermore, the development of communicative competence must also be given attention by allocating ample opportunities for students to use the language according to context, feedback, and authentic assessment (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 8-23).

Based on the above literature review, it can be concluded that extensive reading of environment-themed texts is a very possible means of instilling environmental awareness values, while at the same time providing motivation for students to read English texts. However, the availability of environment-themed English texts is still limited as they are not easy to develop. Therefore,

the researcher is interested in 1) investigating the need of junior high school students for environment-themed texts; and 2) developing environment-themed texts that are suitable for junior high school students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Instruments

The questionnaires used in the research consisted of two types: 1) questionnaires given to students to determine their needs when it comes to supplementary reading materials, and 2) questionnaires given to the language education experts to assess the materials produced and provide revisions. The data obtained from the first set of questionnaires was used to develop the final draft of the materials.

Procedures

This research is developmental research. The procedures used in this research followed a modified version of the research and development steps proposed by Borg & Gall (1983, p. 775-776). The procedures were of four development types, namely, the exploration stage, prototype development stage, revision stage, and finalization stage. The exploration stage included a needs analysis, which involved collecting information from questionnaires to obtain the preliminary data about the need of supplementary reading material. The prototype development stage included the stages of planning and developing the format/draft. The activities performed during this stage were preparing questionnaire sheets and a prototype, and the result was the new supplementary reading materials. The revision stage was completed through assessment of the preliminary draft of the materials by two experts of language education. In the finalization stage, suggestions and input from the experts formed the basis of the product evaluation and improvement to the final product.

Data analysis

Data was obtained through the distribution of questionnaires. The responses given were analyzed quantitatively based on frequency and percentage. The questionnaires employed the Likert-scale of measurement which consisted of the four options Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

FINDINGS

The development of the environment-based supplementary reading materials began with a needs analysis in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions that were compiled according to the guidelines of Nation and Macalister (2010), which states that a questionnaire should be divided into three parts: necessities, lacks, and wants. The questionnaires were distributed to 36 8th grade students of a junior high school in Yogyakarta. They were allowed to choose more than 1 answer provided in the questionnaire or write their own answers.

The findings are as follows:

Junior High School Students' Need for Environment-Based Supplementary Reading Materials

1. Necessities

Based on the results of the need analysis, three types of text were developed in this research: Narrative, Descriptive and Recount Text. Narrative and Descriptive text are the text types considered to be necessary reading by the students, whereas Recount text is the one the students consider difficult to understand. Texts with an environmental theme will be developed by combining the topics of human and the environment. Students have also shown a tendency to choose texts related to the topics of health and education.

Table 1. The necessary texts for students

No	Type of text	Percentage
1	Narrative text	47.2%
2	Descriptive text	30.6%
3	Recount text	25.0%
4	Procedure text	16.7%
5	News item	5.6%
6	Report text	16.7%
7	Analytical Exposition text	13.9%
8	Hortatory Exposition text	16.7%
9	Discussion text	5.6%
10	Review text	0%
11	Spoof text	0%
12	Explanation text	2.8%

Table 2. The important topics for the students

No	Topic	Percentage
1	Humans and the environment	94.4%
2	Air	8.3%
3	Water	5.6%
4	Soil	8.6%
5	Energy	5.6%
6	Forest	16.7%
7	Disaster	13.9%

Table 3. The related discipline (to environmental issues) considered to be essential for the students

No	Discipline	Percentage
1	Health	33.3%
2	Education	50%
3	Tourism	11.1%
4	Technology	19.4%
5	Science	11.1%

2. *Lacks*

To gain an understanding of the students' level of English proficiency, the researcher asked for the students' average English test scores during the need analysis. The majority of students stated scores within the range of 80-89. Even so, the students admitted that their mastery of English vocabulary was still poor and created an obstacle for reading English texts. The students also stated that they seldom read English text, and only do this 1-2 times a day. On the contrary, their reading skills, in terms of understanding content, are good as they only need 10-20 minutes to finish a text.

Table 4. Score range of students' English tests

No	Score	Percentage
1	90-100	8.3%
2	80-89	52.8%
3	70-79	30.6%
4	60-69	8.3%

Table 5. The difficult texts for students

No	Type of text	Percentage
1	Narrative text	11.1%
2	Descriptive text	22.2%
3	Recount text	41.7%
4	Procedure text	5.6%
5	News item	16.7%
6	Report text	11.1%
7	Analytical Exposition text	13.9%
8	Hortatory Exposition text	13.9%
9	Discussion text	5.6%
10	Review text	2.8%
11	Spoof text	2.8%
12	Explanation text	0%

Table 6. The biggest obstacles in reading English texts

No	Obstacle	Percentage
1	a lack of vocabulary mastery	69.4%
2	a lack of grammar mastery	33.3%
3	not being familiar with the topic/ title/ reading content	5.6%

Table 7. The English text reading frequency of the students

No	Frequency	Percentage
1	1-2 times per day	72.2%
2	3-4 times per day	16.7%
3	>5 times per day	11.1%

Table 8. The time needed by students to complete an English text

No	The time needed	Percentage
1	10-20 minutes	16.7%
2	21-30 minutes	44.4%
3	>30 minutes	38.9 %

3. *Wants*

Supplementary reading materials for intensive reading should be suited to the students' interests and relate to their daily activities. These criteria became the focus for the researcher when formulating supplementary materials to support the pre-, main, and post-activities of reading. According to the results of the need analysis, the students are accustomed to finding the

meaning of new vocabulary before starting reading. While reading, the students take notes about points related to the aspects of 5W+1H (what, when, where, who, why, and how). The students prefer to answer questions about the text upon finishing reading.

Table 9. The pre-reading activities needed by students

No	Pre-reading activity	Percentage
1	finding the new vocabulary that appears in the text	83.3%
2	identifying the types and generic structure of the text	27.8%

Table 10. The while-reading activities needed by students

No	While-reading activity	Percentage
1	taking notes of the important information from the text	94.4%
2	drawing a graph, diagram, or table based on the text	8.3%
3	finding main the idea of each paragraph	8.3%

Table 11. The post-reading activities needed by students

No	Post-reading activity	Percentage
1	answering the question	75%
2	making a synopsis	16.7%
3	discussing opinions and solutions regarding the issue or problem that appears in the text	8.3%

For the material design, the students requested texts of 150-200 words in length. However, there were also many students who preferred texts of 250 words. They stated that an enjoyable reading time was about 30-60 minutes per text, and only one text per day. The students also stated the use of images was important and requested many appear in the text, like a comic would appear. In addition, the students also wanted to have illustrations of the vocabulary. The students indicated that texts with relevance to their surrounding environment were more interesting and quicker to read (due to greater ease of understanding). In short, the texts should be contextual and meaningful to the students.

Table 12. The word range per text preferred by the students

No	The word range per text	Percentage
1	200-250 words	36.1%
2	100-250 words	11.1%
3	150-200 words	2.8%
4	>250 words	50%

Table 13. The enjoyable amount of time to read a text

No	The enjoyable amount of time to read	Percentage
1	30 minutes per day	33%
2	30-60 minutes per day	52.8 %
3	60-90 minutes per day	13.9 %

Table 14. The preferred number of texts to be read in a day

No	The preferred number of texts to be read	Percentage
1	1 text per day	50%
2	2 texts per day	27.8%
3	>2 texts per day	22.2%

Table 15. The appearance of images in the text

No	The appearance of images	Percentage
1	Some images	66.7%
2	One image	30.6%
3	No image available	2.8%

Table 16. The appearance of English equivalent in the text

No	The appearance of English equivalent	Percentage
1	List of new vocabularies	52.8%
2	Illustrations of new vocabularies	30.6%
3	There is no list of new vocabularies	16.7%

Table 17. The criteria for an interesting text

No	The criteria for an interesting text	Percentage
1	Texts with relevance to students surrounding environment	44.4 %
2	Texts with moral value	41.7%
3	Texts with attractive title	16.7%
4	Texts with simple words and sentences	16.7%
5	Texts with attractive images	13.9%.

Characteristics of Environment-Based Supplementary Reading Materials for Junior High School Students

1. *First Draft*

This supplementary reading has been developed into three units. Each unit consists of a green dictionary, comic, main text, and exercises. As indicated by the results of the need analysis, the students tend to read the vocabulary list of the reading first. The vocabulary meanings have been illustrated.

In the next stage, the students face the comic. The development of the comic was also based on the need analysis results, which revealed that the students want to see images during the reading to assist their understanding. The content of the comic for each unit is similar to that of the following main text. Thus, the comic gives a prior illustration of the content of the text to come. The comic uses direct, and shorter, sentences than those that appear in the main text.

The texts that have been developed by the researcher in the supplementary reading material consist of narrative, descriptive, and recount texts. As mentioned earlier, the majority of students consider the narrative and descriptive texts as the most important ones to learn, while recount is considered to be the most difficult. The length of the texts in each unit ranges from 250-325 words, based on many students stating that they prefer to read texts with more than 250 words. The length and complexity of the sentences used in the texts have been adjusted by the researcher to suit the English proficiency level of the students, which is intermediate.

In each text, the researcher has also written about generic structures. The topics are related to humans and the environment, which are then further related to the topics of education and health. A preference for these topics was indicated by the need analysis results.

In unit I, the researcher has developed a recount text. This text tells of the experience of a group of students who conducted community service after a flood disaster. These students held a crafts bazaar in which the crafts had been made from recycled waste at their school. In the middle part of the text, the students of the story visit a refugee camp and share their knowledge of how to turn waste into something valuable. The lesson intended by the researcher is that it is better to not just give money in the event of a disaster but to also provide knowledge and skills that may prevent, or minimize the impact of, future flood disasters. This is the provoking part of the story. The students donate money that they made by selling recycled waste to people

who had underestimated the value of waste and allowed garbage to accumulate in their area, which was a contributing factor to the flood itself.

In unit II, the researcher has developed a descriptive text. The text describes an environmental activity conducted by a school organization known as Klub Hijau (Green Club). The description is the researcher's effort to illustrate how an adiwiyata school (school which focuses on environmental issues), or any other school, can provide great opportunities to participate in activities that develop a sense of concern for the environment. The activities run by Klub Hijau include managing a greenhouse with herbal and edible plants, making compost from leaf matter at school, and selling their produce in a school store. The money they make from selling the produce goes toward taking care of the greenhouse, buying hand soap, and conducting community service. In addition, competitions are run by the club to minimize the amount of garbage being produced by the school. Such competitions include posters about cleanliness, class gardens, and garbage recycling. Klub Hijau also has a team who monitors other students to identify any environmentally destructive attitudes.

The genre of unit III's text is narrative. In this text, the researcher aims to convey the ideal relationship between humans and the environment. The text begins by describing how the life of people in a poor kingdom changed to a life of prosperity when they used their skills to make use of the natural resources in the area. It then goes on to show how if humans lose control, become greedy, and behave destructively toward the environment, disaster will result. In this story, the consequence of the people's behavior is illustrated in the form of a giant. The researcher chose a giant because it is a figure that is familiar to kids, including Indonesian kids, who often hear of giants in stories.

The last step of each unit contains exercises as confirmation of understanding. Each exercise given to the students requires them to recall information and ideas from the story using aspects of the 5W+1H. The students are expected to sum up the content of the text and identify other implied points that might not have been noticed while reading. Following this, they are also given several questions about the environmental values and characters appearing in the text. Students are expected to be able to reflect on the story and internalize the environmental values so that they can think more critically when it comes to problems concerning the environment.

2. *Expert Evaluation*

Upon completion of the first draft, the researcher sought assistance from a lecturer of English Education and an English teacher of a Junior High School to evaluate the supplementary reading material in terms of content,

language, layout, and imagery. The evaluation was conducted using a Likert-scale questionnaire which consisted of 20 questions and one open-ended question to allow the experts to write any additional notes with input or revisions.

The content aspect of the questionnaire covered the environmental values, appropriateness of text type and the generic structures, relevance with the students' lives, and suitability between the difficulty and the English proficiency level of the students. The language aspect covered the use of grammar, the suitability of diction with the content of the text, and spelling. Questions regarding layout discussed the inclusion of a green dictionary, a preliminary comic with simpler language than the text, titles for every text, and discussion of the text itself. The imagery aspect covered the appropriateness and interest of fonts, vocabulary illustrations, comic illustrations, and the layout of the text.

The experts gave input on the content and language use. One of the experts suggested not to include the generic structures in the text but to present them in the later exercises. This encourages the students to understand the function and application of the generic structure from each text inductively.

3. *Final Draft*

The results of the expert evaluation were then utilized in the revision of the first draft. Based on the experts' input, no generic structure of text type was written beside the text. The students' understanding of the function of the text instead became part of the exercises. In additional revision, questions related to the students' opinions of the figures in the story and their similar personal experiences or environment were added to the exercises. In unit I, the number of questions was revised from 7 to 11. In unit II, there were minor mistakes in diction and spelling within the text. Also, four questions were added to this section, creating a total of 11. In unit III, there was a minor revision of the text structure and a change in question number to 11.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

These supplementary reading materials composed of three steps of reading, namely pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading for each text. In the pre-reading step, the students asked for a list of new vocabulary with the meaning in the form of images to help them understand the core text. This is because the students understand their lack of vocabulary mastery, so they find it difficult to comprehend the reading materials. This obstacle is in line with the results of research conducted by Yorio (1972, p. 109-113) claiming that the main obstacle faced by EFL students in reading is the lack of vocabulary

mastery. To help understand a text, as many as 90% of students preferred using bilingual dictionaries to monolingual dictionaries. The importance of mastering vocabulary to help understand the contents of a text more easily is revealed by Mousavian and Siahpoosh (2018) in their research among 60 Iranian EFL students. As many as 20 students were given pre-teaching vocabulary; 20 were given the pre-questioning strategy, and 20 others in the control group were provided with the conventional method before taking the reading test. The results show that the students who were provided with pre-teaching vocabulary reached the highest scores of pre- and post-test.

The correlation between mastery of vocabulary and reading comprehension has been reported in a study by Zhang and Anual (2008). In the study, 37 students studying English in Singapore were given a vocabulary mastery test. The results of the study showed that there is a correlation between levels of vocabulary mastery and students' reading comprehension. The results of a study by Sidek and Rahim (2015) among EFL students in Malaysia also indicated that vocabulary mastery is one of the important factors that influences students' understanding of a text. Sen and Kuleli (2015) also found similar results that there is a correlation between levels of vocabulary mastery of EFL students in Turkey with their ability to understand a text.

In the list of new vocabulary, the students wanted the equivalent meaning to be given through image symbols. The images were expected to increase the students' motivation and to help them understand the synonym of the new words. The results of a study by Carpenter and Oslon (2012) showed that images can support students' understanding of foreign language words. However, both of them note such support "as long as participants are not too overconfident in the power of a picture to help them learn a new word." Another study was conducted by Donal (2012) among EFL students in Indonesia to find out the impact of using images on English language learning. The results showed that the use of images can improve vocabulary mastery and students' motivation in learning the language.

After understanding the synonym of the new words that would appear in the texts, the students would first read comics. The comics contained the same story as the main texts, but they used shorter sentences and had pictures that would facilitate the students to understand the contents and the storylines. Similar research was conducted by Ju, Hung, and Chi (2015) aiming to determine the effect of the use of comics among 28 EFL second grade students in Taiwan. The results showed that comics can be used to improve vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and students' motivation in learning English. The positive impact of comics on increasing vocabulary mastery and

reading motivation is also reported by Cimermanova (2015) carried out among four EFL students of 10-20 years old.

In the while-reading step, the students chose to use the strategy of recording important information to help them understand the contents of the texts. Tsai (2009) reported that this strategy was effective to help 100 EFL students in Taiwan understand a text. The results of a study by Bahrami and Nosratzadeh (2017) about the strategy of recording important information in while-reading activity by 40 EFL students in Iran also showed the same thing.

In the last step, the post-reading, the students preferred answering questions related to the texts. Nuttall (1996) in (Wahjudi, 2010:86) suggested that in the post-reading step, students were guided to evaluate the contents of a text using their respective perspectives. The questions developed in this study were of three parts. First, the questions were to remind the students of the contents of the texts. Second, they were used to explore students' personal views of characters and the values of environmental awareness in the text. Third, they were intended to facilitate the students to understand the parts and functions of the paragraphs of each text. In general, these questions have a function to recall information that the students have obtained from the texts and develop new knowledge based on previous information (Wahjudi, 2010:87).

It is not easy to instill the value of environmental awareness. Nevertheless, considering the great benefits of it, teachers are expected to try to integrate it in any learning, including English language learning. One of the efforts that can be implemented is by providing additional environment-based reading materials as an extensive reading activity both inside and outside the classroom. Thus, students are expected to become independent learners.

These additional environment-based reading materials have been developed according to the needs of EFL students at the junior high school level. The activities needed in the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading steps are accommodated in the materials. The activities developed are also based on a number of theories and studies on the results of previous studies.

Research on imparting the value of environmental awareness in the English language learning is of a broad scope. This research focuses on developing additional materials to support reading skills. Future research with a focus on developing environmental awareness in other language skills can be carried out. It is hoped that students will be able to develop all their language skills along with their concern for the environment.

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