The Development of Comic Book as Extensive Reading Material for A Boarding School's Students

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Abstract

Muhammadiyah Boarding School Al Muhajirin currently has an issue of lacking of appropriate extensive reading material for its students. The result of the preliminary research suggests that comic book is the appropriate form of extensive reading material. Therefore, this research is conducted in order to develop a comic book as extensive reading material appropriate for the boarding school's students. There are 32 students of the 8th and 9th grade, junior high school level, who act as the participants in the research. It is a research and development following ADDIE instructional design which consists of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation steps. Qualitative data was collected through interview and the quantitative data was collected via questionnaire. Three aspects of the comic book were assessed by the experts. They are the content, the language used, and the presentation aspects. The mean results of the assessment respectively were 3.67, 3.64, and 3.84. Each of which fulfils the quality statement of "very good". The students were also asked for their opinion about the comic. The average score was 3.33 which is also "very good". It implied that the developed comic book was appropriate for the boarding school's students. It satisfied the students and the experts. Since the comic book could only cover limited area of the context and Islamic teachings which become the requirement of the product appropriateness, more comic books needed to be developed to cover different topics.

Keywords: Comic, Extensive Reading, Reading Material, Boarding School

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Introduction

Indonesia currently encounters serious literacy issue. It ranks 62th of 71 in terms of literacy level according to PISSA (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016) and 60th of 61 according to CCSU (*"World's Most Literate Nations Ranked"*, 2016). In conclusion, most of Indonesian people do not like reading despite its importance and significance in life. This matter is also experienced by the students of Muhammadiyah Boarding (MBS) School Al Muhajirin Patuk where this research is conducted.

From the preliminary research, it is known that the boarding school puts the skill of reading English literature in high regard which in turns influence the policy of English language teaching and learning. According to the English teacher's explanation, the arguments are (1) reading is the most possible ability to be applied daily in the students' context, (2) it is easier to learn and (3) it has more practical advantages than listening, speaking, and writing. Following that path, the boarding school commences extensive reading program to increase the students' reading rate. One of the initial efforts is to have the English teacher promotes reading-based tasks, allowing the students to use library and internet as the primary sources of reading material. It is initially planned to increase the students' dependency on reading and exposure to reading materials.

The preliminary research also revealed that the library in MBS Al Muhajirin Patuk is lack of English Islamic reading material collection. Another problem is the difficulty in finding interesting Islamic reading material for students of their age. It is a problem since the attractiveness of the reading material is crucial especially for reluctant readers. Without interesting reading materials, extensive reading is unlikely engaged by the students. It is emphasized by the most of the students' confession who conveyed the reason of their reluctance to read was because of the unavailability of interesting reading material. Based on their opinion, the interesting reading material is a comic book. Having Islamic themed reading material is essential for Islamic based school yet such a book is rare to be found. It is proven by the result of observation in the nearby book stores and online shops. English Islamic comic book is nowhere to be found. Therefore, the final results of the preliminary research suggest that it is necessity to develop an Islamic comic book for the students.

Extensive reading has many definitions. The effort of the boarding school so far matches with the definition posited by Long and Richard (1971: 216) stating that extensive reading occurs when the students read a lot of books of their interest. They further explain that extensive reading focuses more on meaning than the form of the language. It means that the purpose of the reader is not to intentionally learn the language but use the language to seek for information or entertainment. The language is learnt unintentionally. The next definition comes from Susser and Robb (1990) stating that extensive reading consists of three elements which are reading a lot, aiming to get general information, and pleasure. Similarly, Carrell and Carson (1997) define extensive reading as rapidly reading big amount of texts which focuses on meaning and general understanding.

Despite the lower educators' attention to extensive reading compared to intensive reading, considerable number of studies have provided the evidence of how extensive reading can improve the general language competence (Nation, 1997; Day & Bamford, 2002; Bell, 2001; Powell, 2005). Extensive reading improves vocabulary acquisition and learning (Pazhakh, 2010; Soltani, 2011; Tiryaki & Tutunis, 2012) and even writing ability (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Mermelstein). Besides these advantageous lying as the reasons of its application, the boarding school also has technical advantages opening bigger opportunity to extensive reading. It is the fact that the students and some of the teachers live in the school or dormitory allowing more flexible program such as extensive reading to be implemented.

Sequential art is the comic's simple definition postulated by Eisner (1985). McCloud (1993), trying to give more sophisticated definition which is sets of pictures arranged to convey information and send aesthetic impression to the readers. People in the past perceived comic with negative attitude regarding it as less educating for some reasons such as pornography and violation depiction (Rahmanadji, 2012; Muktiono, 2003). It explains why its usage as learning media is still underdeveloped in Indonesia. However, educators around the globe today undeniably begin to pay more attention to it as some studies were found presenting how the use of comics have been used in many educational fields and

context (McVicker, 2007; Megawati & Anugerahwati, 2012; MERÇ, 2013; Cimermanova, 2014; Källvant, 2015).

As a reading material, comics possesses ample of benefits especially for reluctant readers. It even helps slow learners improve their learning interest (Arini, et al., 2017; Young, 2016). Comic combines pictures and text to present the story which makes it a multimodal literature. It lies on the assumption that meaning can be sent to the perceiver through various mediums or modes including words (Kress, 2005). Hence, pictures play at least two important roles which are the attractive element and message conveyor assisting the presented words as context. This way, the words can be easier to understand since the meaning is shaped by the pictures. As an English reading material, Pictures may help the readers to meaning guessing so that the learners will be less reliant to use dictionary. Comic book is also a good media to transfer ideology. Some comics such as the Amazing Spiderman, Watchmen and Captain America or Donal Duck are identified containing strong ideological content (Scott, 2007; Dorfman & Mattelart, 1971). It makes it a good media for any Islamic based school. Another benefit is that comic reduce the energy consumption of reading activity. The effective use of pictures may reduce cognitive load since images are perceived instantly in a glance (Mayer & Moreno, 2003). Combining it with its attractive nature, comic book helps the readers to sustain their reading activity.

At last, Muhammadiyah Boarding School Al Muhajirin as an Islamic based school demands the inclusion of Islamic teachings in the extensive reading media. Postmethod pedagogy is applied to address the demand (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). It is constituted of three perimeters. The first is the perimeter of particularity which is related to the identity of the learners and the institution as well as the shared sociocultural values. The second is the perimeter of practicality which is related to the teachers' effort to make their knowledge works in their educational field. Unlike conventional pedagogical paradigm, it values the teachers' opinion as a field theory. The last is the perimeter of possibility which has something to do with how learning can trigger personal and social transformation. It values the peculiarity of the context and it opposes generalization.

Method

This is a research and development following ADDIE instructional design model. It consists of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation phase (Branch, 2009). The raw data are collected from 32 students of the 8th and 9th grade, 1 English teacher, and the boarding school's leader. The 7th grade students are excluded since they do not share identical characteristics that make them considered as equal with their superior grades. There are at least 2 reasons: (1) some of the 7th grade students have not yet received basic English when they were in elementary school and (2) the 8th grade students have followed a full semester of vocabulary learning extracurricular as well as the 9th grade students who have followed 2 full semesters of the extracurricular. They resulted in wide gap of reading performance between the 7th grade students and the 8th and 9th grade students.

This research embraces postmethod pedagogy which demands contextual information about the boarding school identity and its socio-cultural information. Therefore, the interviews were conducted by inviting the boarding school's leader and the English teacher. The leader was meant to be asked about the current state of the boarding school such as the ideology, vision, mission, current issues faced by it, and other socio cultural information which may influence educational practices in the boarding school. Meanwhile, the English teacher, in addition to answering similar questions asked to the leader, also provided information about his experience in teaching reading and the general characteristics of the students. Some similar questions were asked in order to make sure that the leader and the teacher share the same perspective on why and how English language teaching, especially extensive reading, should be conducted in the boarding school context. Questionnaire was also employed to gather information from the students regarding their need and wants. The tables below were the design of the questionnaire.

Table 1. The organization of the first need analysis questionnaire

Item number	Purpose	Sources
1, 2, 3, 4	To know the students' reading motivation	Nation, 2005; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989
5	To know the students' preference for reading material	Nation, 2005; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989
6, 9	To know the students' interest in reading English reading material	Nation, 2005
7, 8	To know the students' perception of reading English reading material	Nation, 2005
10, 11	To know the students' preference on reading English reading material	Nation, 2005

The first questionnaire was distributed in preliminary research. It was used to gather information about the students' preference and behaviour in reading.

Table 2. The table of the organization of the second need analysis questionnaire

Item number	Purpose	Sources
1	To know the students' purpose of learning English	Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Richards (2001)
2	To know the students' level of interest toward English	Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Richards (2001)
3	To know the students' difficulties in learning English	Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Richards (2001)
4	To know what the students' want to learn	Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Richards (2001)
5, 6	To know the social issues in the students' context	Kumaravadivelu, 2008
7	To know the students' future plans	Kumaravadivelu, 2008
8, 9	To know the students' level of interest toward comic book as English reading material	Nation, 2005
10	To know the students' preference for drawing style	McCloud, 1993
11	To know the students' preference for comic book's genres	McCloud, 1993
12	To know the students' preference for the comic book character	McCloud, 1993
13	To know the students' preference for font types	McCloud, 1993
14	To know the students' preference for panel setting	McCloud, 1993
15	To know the students' preference for the glossary positioning	

The second questionnaire was deployed in the first phase of ADDIE model steps in order to identify the needs and the wants of the students. The results of this questionnaire defined how the comic book should be made. The developed comic book was validated by some experts and the teacher via questionnaire before it was produced and distributed to the students. The students had a week to read comic book under the teacher's supervision. The conditions were (1) the students read on their own pace within a week, (2) they needed to read all chapters but they were allowed not to finish each chapter and recorded what made them stop reading it if they did, (3) they needed to submit the comic book to the teacher after finishing, and (4) the teacher gave the questionnaire to the students each time they finish reading. Both questionnaires using Likert scale items. The raw data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using central tendency test. Below is the table of the score conversion chart.

Table 3. The score conversion chart

No	Range	Category
1	$3.25 < x \leq 4$	Very Good
2	$2.5 < x \leq 3.25$	Good
3	$1.75 < x \leq 2.5$	Poor
4	$1 < x \leq 1.75$	Very Poor

Findings and Discussion

The research followed 5 main phases namely analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Branch, 2009). In the analysis phase, information about the students' needs and demands were gathered through the aforementioned questionnaire and interviews to the English teacher and the leader of the boarding school. The results of the interviews gave two main requirements for the comic book which were (1) the comic book's content should be based on Islamic teachings, (2) it was suggested that the form of the comic was printed version to reduce the students' dependency on smartphone (3) dream and patient became the main topics of the comic book. Those topics were determined based on the leader's and the teacher's experience of managing education in the boarding school and knowledge of Islamic teachings. Besides, the students were also given the opportunity to decide the requirements of the comic book. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the students-given requirements were: (1) emphasizing vocabulary learning and using basic grammar, (2) addressing the issues of dating, smoking, bullying, and violence, (3) using mystery and teenage story genres, (4) using *chibi* style drawing art characterized by oversized head and small body figures, (5) using Comic Sans font, (6) providing glossary or mini dictionary on every page, and (7) consisting of 20 to 50 pages.

Those requirements were then processed in the design phase. The goal of the comic development was to promote Islamic teachings related to dream or life purpose, patient, dating, smoking, bullying, and violence. The comic book consisted of 6 chapters with 7 pages each. Every pages provided glossary which translate uncommon vocabularies used in the dialogs. The glossary was provided in order to reduce cognitive load experienced by the students when they had to read from separated dictionary and a self-reflection page was added in every end of the chapter as the consequence of the involved Islamic teachings which emphasize on self-reflection based personal development. The information was derived from the interview with the teacher. There were 6 stories representing each topic. After the content of the stories were validated by the teacher, the prototypes were sent to the experts to be evaluated.

In development phase, the prototype of the comic book was validated by the experts. There were three aspects of assessment. They are the content, language, and presentation. The experts involved were English language expert affiliated with Muhammadiyah Islamic organization, children English literature expert, and art expert. The mean score of the content assessment was 3.67 which meant very good, the mean score of the language assessment was 3.64 which meant very good, and the mean score of the presentation assessment was 3.84 which also meant very good. However, there were some minor revision about the dictions. The results confirmed that the comic book could appropriately promoted Islamic teachings to address the selected 6 issues while keeping the ideology of Muhammadiyah boarding school Al Muhajirin and context in the comic book's story. The 3 tables below show the detailed results of the experts' judgment.

Table 4. Content assessment results

No	Points of assessment	Experts			Avg.	Status
		1	2	3		
1	The material relevance with one or more points in Core Competence / Basic Competence in junior high level	4	4	3	3.67	Good
2	The effectiveness of the material to help the students to understand the social function of the expressions	3	3	4	3.33	Good
3	The dialogs' relevance with the students' daily life	4	4	4	4.00	Very Good
4	The power of the material to motivate the students to read English text	4	4	4	4.00	Very Good
5	The accuracy of the material to direct the students to use the correct English language	4	3	4	3.67	Good
6	The effectiveness of the material to help the students to think systematically	4	4	3	3.67	Good
7	The relevance between the students' life context with the story context	3	4	4	3.67	Good
8	The relevance between the social issues in the story with the real students' social issues	3	3	4	3.33	Good

9	The effectivity of the material to inspire the students to solve their problems	4	3	3	3.33	Good
10	The completeness of the narrative elements	3	4	3	3.33	Good
11	The usefulness of the material to promote Islamic teaching	4	4	4	4	Very Good
12	The alignment of the material with the boarding school's orientation	4	4	4	4	Very Good
	Mean				3.67	Very Good
	Median				3.67	
	Mode				3.67	

Table 5. Language assessment results

No	Points of Assessment	Experts			Avg.	Status
		1	**2**	**3**		
1	The vocabulary variations	4	3	3	3.33	Good
2	The commonness of vocabularies	4	4	4	4.00	Very Good
3	The appropriateness of dictions	4	3	4	3.67	Good
4	The correctness of spellings	3	3	3	3.00	Good
5	The simplicity of the language	4	4	4	4.00	Very Good
6	The correctness of the grammar	4	3	3	3.33	Good
7	The easiness of the language to be understood by junior high school students	3	4	4	3.67	Good
8	The language clearance in the dialogs	3	4	4	3.67	Good
9	The effectiveness of the dialogs to convey the flow of the story in order	3	4	3	3.33	Good
10	The efficiency of the use of the language	4	3	4	3.67	Good
11	The effectiveness of the language to convey Islamic teachings	4	4	4	4	Very Good
12	The use of unambiguous language	4	4	4	4	Very Good
	Mean				3.64	Very Good
	Median				3.67	
	Mode				4	

Table 6. Presentation assessment result

No	Points of Assessment	Experts			Avg.	Status
		1	**2**	**3**		
1	The attractiveness of the images	4	4	4	4	Very Good
2	The appropriateness of the image size	4	4	4	4	Very Good
3	The appropriateness of the font type	4	3	4	3.67	Good
4	The appropriateness of the font size	4	4	3	3.67	Good
5	The balance between images and text proportion	4	4	3	3.67	Good
6	The effectiveness of every panel to depict the story orderly	3	4	4	3.67	Good
7	The concordance between images and text in the panels	4	4	4	4	Very Good
8	The effectiveness of the glossary to help the readers understand the story	4	4	4	4	Very Good
9	The effectiveness of the comic presentation to be used as independent learning material	3	4	4	3.67	Good
10	The appropriateness of the comic presentation with Islamic rules on *tashwir* (drawing) issue	4	4	4	4	Very Good
	Average				3.84	Very Good
	Median				3.83	
	Mode				4	

After the comic book prototype was properly revised, it was multiplied to be distributed to the students

for implementation. It followed the implementation plan mentioned in the previous subpart. The students cooperated well and gave sufficient feedbacks. The mean score of the students' questionnaire was 3.33. It meant very good.

Table 7. The results of students' questionnaire

NO	Points of Assessment	Avg	Quality
1	Reading English comic is more interesting than reading regular English text or article	3.27	Very Good
2	The story of the comic depicts the teenagers' social issues	3.00	Good
3	The story of the comic gives inspirations to solve the teenager's social issues	3.43	Very Good
4	The story of the comic gives Islamic teachings	3.70	Very Good
5	The story of the character in the comic is good	3.17	Good
6	The course of the story is clear	3.10	Good
7	The comic uses easy language	3.10	Good
8	The comic uses clear and compact language	3.17	Good
9	The comic helps me to learn new vocabularies	3.87	Very Good
10	The picture is good	3.50	Very Good
11	The font size is comfortable to read	3.50	Very Good
12	The font type is comfortable to read	3.23	Good
13	The glossary in every page helps me understand the story	3.57	Very Good
14	I want to learn English with comic in the classroom	3.20	Good
15	I want to read English comic again in free time	3.17	Good
	Mean	3.33	Very Good
	Median	3.23	
	Mode	3.17	

The last was the evaluation stage. This stage was the intersection of all other steps meaning that every step would have to go through evaluation phase at least once. However, this phase stood by itself in the end. After all data were acquired through several ways of product assessment, the final evaluation could be done. Generally, there was no big issue to be evaluated. However, there were some important things to note. Making Islamic based comic book meant integrating at least two main elements which were Islamic pictures and Islamic story. Each of which was distinct matter. In turned out that Islam had the rules in making pictures and story. Besides, making an interesting story for the students was not an easy feat which random people could arbitrarily do as well as the graphic design. A considerable difficulty was found when the Islamic based story and the graphic design were handled by different persons such as converting narration into graphic and conversation within relatively small range of page limit, high cost, and time consuming. Hence, employing or cooperating with one person who had experience and expertise in making Islamic comic books came as the better solution to guarantee the quality of the comic book and the efficiency of its production. The difficulty of making English Islamic comic book could also be assumed as a reason why its existence is rare.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, several conclusions can be drawn as follows.

1. In general, the developed comic book is appropriate for the boarding school's students. The results from the experts' judgment and the students' questionnaire are "very good".

2. Based on the results of the data analysis, the students give positive response about the comic which indicates high level of acceptance towards the comic. Unlike intensive reading material, the comic as a single extensive reading material assessment is not about its effectiveness in improving the students' reading ability but the level of acceptance of the students towards the comic book and, in this particular research's case, the ability of the comic book to wrap the boarding school's ideology and context. The effectiveness of reading material in extensive reading can be measured using the abundance of identical reading materials since extensive reading emphasize on the amount of reading and pleasure.

3. The result of the experts' judgment towards the comic indicates that the comic characterizes a good English extensive reading material to convey the boarding school's ideology based on the context.

Suggestion

Based on the discussion and conclusion above, there are at least 3 suggestions.

1. The comic can only cover limited fragments of Islamic teachings which become the educational foundation of the boarding school. It is suggested to develop comic books that cover different aspects of Islamic teachings.

2. Regarding the quantity, the availability of similar Islamic based comic book as English extensive reading material is currently rare despite the students' high level of acceptance towards it. It can be assumed that the boarding school and probably other Islamic based schools is in high demand of Islamic comic book as English extensive reading material. Therefore, it is suggested that more Islamic based comic books as English extensive reading material are required to be developed.

3. In terms of effectivity and efficiency of the development process, it is better to cooperate with a single person who has experience and expertise in making Islamic story and comic book.

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