

## **Designing an Authentic Reading Text Module as the Foundation of Students' Background of Knowledge**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This is a research and development (R & D) study in nature. In conducting this research, the researchers focus on using English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in providing the materials. Some activities involved some experts in certain fields, namely English materials expert and each of study program experts. The objectives of this research are: (1) To produce authentic reading text module for students with heterogeneous backgrounds in knowledge and fields of study. 2. To validate authentic reading text module for students with heterogeneous backgrounds in knowledge and fields of study. Based on the findings on the needs, the reading text module covers relevant and authentic materials which enable to enhance the comprehension of the students. It is believed that the module helps the students as the foundation of their background of knowledge. From the result, the average normalized gain shows up 0, 44 meaning that the design for reading module has an average effectiveness and can describe the students' background of knowledge. At last, this reference will be able to help in designing a reading text module for each study program at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal.*

**Keywords:** *R & D, ESP, TEFL, Authentic Material, Reading Text Module*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning English, especially in countries that still consider English to be a foreign language, is very important in today's era. However, Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) tends to have greater barriers when compared to Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). One of the most basic obstacles is the competence possessed by students. Students who are not used to or even tend to feel foreign to English will have competencies that can be categorized as below average (Sari et al., 2021).

On the other hand, today's general public tends to think that English has become a tool or medium of international communication. This is certainly contrary to the facts mentioned above, so it is necessary treatment specifically to make English competence possessed by learners can increase significantly. The low level of English competence possessed by these students is even very ironic, when a fact shows that those who have low English competence are college/university graduates.

These findings must be studied further to obtain an explanation of the causes of the

level of English competency possessed by students, especially university students. Colleges/universities should have a curriculum that includes reinforcement of foreign languages, especially English as an additional subject for students. Robinett et al. (1988) argue that learning English should be based on an English learning approach where the things taught and teaching methods are based on the reasons why the learner wants to learn English or what is commonly referred to as English for Specific Purpose (ESP).

ESP is an approach to teaching and using English for special fields and studies that are in accordance with the needs of the fields of science and professions that use English. These fields of knowledge and professions include English for banking, economics, psychology, law, and so on. This is intended to prepare students to be able to use English both for academic, professional or work environment purposes, as well as program design based on needs analysis (Belcher, 2009).

Markee (1993) further said that there are three main characteristics of ESP; the first is that ESP is goal-oriented English learning. This characteristic focuses on the students' goals in learning English not for reasons of wanting to know the language as a language and the culture contained therein, but students learn English because they have specific goals in a particular academic field. The second characteristic, the substance of ESP itself is learning English which is designed and developed based on the concept of need analysis. The concept of need analysis has the aim of specializing and relating and bringing closer what is needed by students, both in the academic and professional fields. And finally, the third characteristic, ESP is more aimed at adult learners (andragogy) than children or adolescents (pedagogy) because the concept of ESP is basically taught to middle academic and work professional levels.

Regarding the implementation of ESP at the college/university level, it is indeed a necessity that learning English in each department or study program must have different characteristics because the expected result of learning English of each department or study program has different goals. For example, reading material which is taught in the Islamic Banking Study Program should be different from what is taught in the Islamic Family Law Study Program. However, due to limited references regarding material in each department or study program, a follow-up is needed regarding the material in learning English in order to increase the competency of students from heterogeneous knowledge backgrounds by implementing the ESP concept in learning English in college (Meiristiani & Rosdiana, 2017).

Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal has eight study programs which are differentiated one another, namely *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (PAI), *Pendidikan Guru*

*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (PGMI), *Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini* (PIAUD), *Bimbingan Konseling Islam* (BKI), *Ilmu Al Qur'an dan Tafsir* (IAT), *Hukum Keluarga Islam* (HKI), *Ekonomi Syariah* (ES), and *Perbankan Syariah* (PBS). Thus, the objective of this research is to implement the concept of ESP for each of the study program by designing an authentic reading materials module as the foundation of the students' knowledge backgrounds which are basically heterogeneous. By conducting ESP, the authenticity of learning modules that are tailored to the characteristics of each learner (student) both in terms of competency and majors or study programs can help provide a deeper understanding to become the foundation of their background knowledge.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Principles of Teaching and Learning English**

The principle of language teaching is to teach the four skills to his students, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. Furthermore, the four skills in language learning can be divided into two, namely receptive skills and productive skills. Nunan (1999) mentions that receptive skills include listening and reading. While productive skills include speaking and writing. The process of teaching and learning English does not only integrate the learner's skills to use the four macro skills, but also relates to other sub-skills, such as grammar rules, vocabulary, and the like. The sub-skills are usually referred as the micro skills. In addition, Brown (2000) concludes that differences in competency levels tend to make this heterogeneity a drawback to acquiring a foreign language. The best solution to overcome this heterogeneity is to provide learning materials that match the characteristics of the background knowledge of each learner. This is in line with the theory of English for Specific Purpose (Markee, 1993).

### **English Learning Process Objectives**

In general, teaching and learning English aims for a learner to be able to communicate using English properly, both orally and in writing. Furthermore, the general goals in learning English are closely related to the acquisition of learners in learning the four macro skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Specifically, teaching and learning English also aims to learn about sub-skills or also called the micro-skills. Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling are micro skills that are no less important than the four macro skills in language learning.

### **Authentic Material**

Authentic has a fairly broad definition, with several experts trying to define it. The material authenticity has several characteristics. First, authentic learning is learning using material that has not undergone any changes or modifications at all for learning purposes, for

example teaching reading using original articles from newspapers or magazines as the reading materials (Heitler, 2005). Next, Heitler states that the material is authentic if it is up to date and provide learners with real context. Furthermore, in learning reading skill, authentic material is considered good and interesting learning material for use in learning. Authentic learning materials on learning reading skill can be in the form of using realistic terms that suit the needs and fields of knowledge of the learner (Silberstein, 1994).

A research that is relevant to this research was conducted by Setyaningrum (2020) entitled '*Menghadirkan Teks-teks Autentik dalam Kelas BIPA Daring*'. This research was conducted in the context of text authenticity in language learning. According to the researcher, foreign language learning cannot be separated from authenticity. The significance of this authenticity is related to the authenticity of the text which is the background knowledge of students. In this case, students already know the context and may even experience it in real terms. Furthermore, the researcher defines that the text has a complete thinking structure and a complete understanding. Therefore, before presenting it in class, a teacher/lecturer needs to know about text authenticity and context (situation and culture), as well as the types of texts. The researcher concludes that a reader can perceive a complete structure of thinking and the unity of meaning because of the context in the text. So, the authenticity of the text and the context has a very significant importance in learning a foreign language.

The research by Arsyia and Safitri (2019) entitled '*Pengaruh Metode Pembelajaran Authentic Material terhadap Hasil Belajar Bahasa Arab Siswa*' is also relevant to the subject matter in this development research. According to the researchers, learning a foreign language cannot happen separately from the understanding of constructivism learning theory. Theoretically and philosophically, this constructivist learning theory refers to the process of how a learner acquires knowledge; in this case language acquisition. The ability of a learner to acquire new knowledge is highly dependent on how the learner utilizes the knowledge he has already had and relates it to new knowledge. According to this theory, one fundamental principle is that a teacher or lecturer not only provides knowledge to students, but also requires the active role of students in building their own knowledge in their memory. It refers to the background knowledge/the field of knowledge that students really need to construct new knowledge that will be obtained. Therefore, the use of authentic material in foreign language learning can be something fundamental for the background knowledge/field of knowledge of students.

The last relevant article is 'The Use of Authentic Materials on Teaching Reading and

Its Effects on Students' Reading Motivation' (Ryandani et al., 2018). In the article, the researchers cited Richards (2001) regarding the definition of learning materials. Learning material is a key component in most language learning processes. Learning materials support and facilitate the learning process. The researchers conclude that teachers who use authentic learning materials will be able to provide a better learning atmosphere because authentic learning materials have a positive effect on students' reading motivation in terms of comprehension orientation, emotional involvement, high aspirations, and positive effects on other learners cognitively.

## **METHOD**

This research is a Research and Development (R & D) study in nature which means that this study is meant to innovate, improve, develop, or design a product or process. Since this is R & D in education, this research focuses on an educational product or process. R & D in education does not only refer to objects or materials, but also refers to the methods and techniques used in conducting a classroom (Borg, 1989). This research was designed using R & D method to produce products in the form of Authentic Reading Text Modules.

This research was conducted at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia. The subject of this study is Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal students which are the representatives of each study program at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal. They are at the end of the second semester. The reading texts were tested to the students. Then, an expert validator must validate the material design for the reading text module made. The validators also provide their revisions to the product of this research;

Sugiyono (2021) states that the steps in conducting R & D study are as follows: (1) The first step is identifying the problem. The problem occurred when there is a gap between what is expected to happen and what really happens; (2) the second step is data collection. The data collected in this research were obtained from documents, interviews, and assessment sheet; (3) the third step is designing the product. The product design from R & D study can be various. In education, the product design is usually expected to improve the teaching and learning affectivity; (4) the fourth step is validating the product. The validation of the product is an activity to decide whether such product design will rationally be effective or not. It is said to be rational because the process of validation is based on rational thought. The product validation can be done by asking some experts in certain fields to validate the product value; (5) the last step is revising the product. After being validated, the drawback and the weakness of a product are identified. Then, the researcher revises the product design based on the result

of the product validation; and (6) the last step is the product trial which has two purposes, i.e. to determine the success of the product and to gain information for making the product better.

The instruments of this research are (1) Interview guidelines which are used as the reference in doing the interviews; (2) Field notes which are one of important instruments of a research. Field notes consist of anything happening when the trial process of the product held. The field notes will be beneficial to analyse if a revision of a product is necessary or not; and (3) Pre-test and post-test. The tests are given twice, at the beginning and at the end of the research. The purpose of the tests is to determine whether there is significant improvement or not.

The data analysis techniques used in this research are (1) The process of analyzing qualitative descriptive data; (2) The process of analyzing expert assessment sheets; and (3) The process of analyzing quantitative data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This R & D research was done based on the preliminary research at the beginning stage of the research. The preliminary research was done to collect information about the potency and problems in English classrooms at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal. The researchers interviewed English lecturer in each of study program at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal. There are eight study programs with four English lecturers, i.e. *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (PAI), *Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (PGMI), *Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini* (PIAUD), *Bimbingan Konseling Islam* (BKI), *Ilmu Al Qur'an dan Tafsir* (IAT), *Hukum Keluarga Islam* (HKI), *Ekonomi Syariah* (ES), and *Perbankan Syariah* (PBS). The interview result gave information that there is a major problem in English teaching and learning process in each of study program at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal. The problem is highly related to the lack of module which is suitable to teach English based on the study programs.

The data collection to understand the needs in order to overcome the problem is the step done as the follow up of the preliminary research. After understanding the data collected from the interview result, the next step was doing a need analysis. The need analysis was concluded after getting information from literature and field studies. Both studies are important to design the product.

The data from the field notes include some interviews with all of the representatives of each study programs. Most of the problem found in each English class for all of the eight study programs is that the classes do not provide such authentic or even just contextual materials for the students. For example, there is lack of material about sharia banking for

*Perbankan Syariah* (PBS) study program or in *Hukum Keluarga Islam* (HKI) study program, the students do not find any text about marriage (*munakahat*), divorce (*talaq*), or even inheritance (*mawaris*).

The data collected from the preliminary research and the need analysis became a reference in designing the authentic reading text module. The reading text modules were arranged based on syllabus and lesson plan of each study program. However, before designing the authentic reading text module, early model of the module was arranged by the researchers, namely English Module for Sharia Banking, English Module for Sharia Economics, English Module for Islamic Education, English Module for Islamic Family Law, and the like.

Validating the module design as the product was done by a validator. In this case, the validator is an expert in the term of materials development. The validator assessed the module design using certain assessment sheet which included some questionnaires consisting assessment points about the product design such as the appropriateness of the content, the language used, and the layout of the product. The validator validated the product by assessing whether a certain point is appropriate or not. The authentic reading text modules which had been validated were revised based on the inputs given by the validator to have an improvisation of the product in some aspects.

**Table 1. Expert Judgment by the Validator**

Module Design	Input
Text based on certain study program	Too many specific terms in a text
Reading comprehension questions based on the text	The questions are too difficult
Glossary is provided	The glossary portrays too many terms

The revised product had a trial which was held at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal. The authentic reading text module was given to the students of each study program. Not all of the materials in the modules were given, it was just the reading material in Chapter 1. Related to the rest of the materials in the modules, the adjustment was made based on the inputs given by the validator to each module. The revision based on the product trial was done by focusing on the feedbacks given by the validator and also by paying attention to the findings found when the product trial was done on the earlier phase.

Some adjustment after the implementation are as follows:

1. Add a diagnostic question before the text;
2. Limit the scope of the text;

3. The glossary is placed right after the text;
4. Reading comprehension uses open-ended question, instead of multiple choice;
5. Add an assessment to test students' vocabulary mastery.

The final product, i.e. the authentic reading text module for each study program was revised twice. The final product has some changes if it is compared to the early model of the product, namely English for Islamic Education for three study programs (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, *Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, and *Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*), English for Islamic Counseling Guidance (for *Bimbingan Konseling Islam* Study Program), English for Al Qur'an and Interpretation (for *Ilmu Al Qur'an dan Tafsir* Study Program), English for Islamic Family Law (for *Hukum Keluarga Islam* Study Program), English for Sharia Economics (for *Ekonomi Syariah* Study Program), English for Sharia Banking (for *Perbankan Syariah* Study Program).

### Pre-test and Post-test Result Analysis and Interpretation

The tests held for the pre-test and post-test are similar, meaning that there are no significant differences between those two. Instead of having those two tests in proper time of testing, the students took the pre-test and the post-test in a certain interval due to their schedules at campus. The tests were in the form of reading comprehension, using ten multiple choice questions.

The pre-test and post-test result of the average normalized gain  $\langle g \rangle$  is 0,44 which means  $0,30 \leq 0,44 \leq 0,70$ .

**Table 2. Normalized N-Gain Index**

Average Normalized Gain	Classification
$\langle g \rangle \geq 0,70$	High
$0,30 \leq \langle g \rangle \leq 0,70$	Moderate
$\langle g \rangle \leq 0,30$	Low

On the classification table, the average normalized gain of the pre-test and post-test result is at the moderate level meaning that this research has a moderate/average effectiveness. This result shows that the module is quite effective to be implemented in an institution which is heterogeneous in the background knowledge of its learners. This is in line with the theory of English for Specific Purpose stated by Belcher (2009).

### CONCLUSION

The teaching and learning process in a higher level (andragogy) must have certain procedures. One of the procedures related to the teaching and learning process is the material



taught and learnt in a classroom. Therefore, the early stage for having a classroom is preparing the material to be taught and learnt in the classroom which is suitable for the learners. The background knowledge of the learners are significant to determine what should be taught and learnt in that classroom. Moreover, the module designated to be used in a certain classroom should become a foundation of the learners' background of knowledge. The module which is suitable for a certain classroom is not always suitable to be used in other classrooms. The authenticity of the materials in a module is meant to be useful for certain learners not in general.

An English Reading Text Module used differently for each study program is significantly needed for the teaching and learning process of each class. The authenticity of each module gives the learners materials to explore their background of knowledge more. Furthermore, the implementation of the module for each study program at Institut Agama Islam Bakti Negara (IBN) Tegal can be considered done well as the foundation of students' background knowledge.

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