

USING LOCAL CULTURE AS TEACHING MATERIALS FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not there were significant improvements in descriptive reading comprehension achievement after the students were taught by using local culture materials and between the students who were taught by using local culture materials and those who were not. This study was a quasi-experimental research method that applied non-equivalent control group research design. The population of this study was the tenth-grade students of a private senior high school in Palembang in the academic year 2017-2018 and the number of sample was 70 students, who were selected by using a convenience sampling technique. A reading comprehension test was used to collect the data which were analyzed statistically by using paired and independent sample t-tests. The results of this study revealed that there was a significant improvement in descriptive reading comprehension achievement and the aspects of reading comprehension after the students were taught by using local culture materials. There was also a significant difference in descriptive reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using local culture materials and those who were not. Therefore, it can be concluded that local culture can be used as teaching materials for helping students to improve their reading comprehension.

Keywords: *local culture materials, descriptive text, reading comprehension, ten graders*

In Indonesia, English is compulsory subject for secondary school students. The students learn the four language skills of English namely, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It is

not easy to master all the skills. Harmer (2001) states that reading helps provide the opportunities to study such things as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way

sentences, paragraph, and text are constructed. It means that reading skill can build other language skills. The importance of reading is stated by Komiyama (2009) who says, "Reading is an important skill for English language learners in today's world; it supports the development of overall proficiency and provides access to crucial information at work and in school" (p.32). In addition, Cunningham and Stanovich (2001, p. 147) assert "People who read a lot will enhance their verbal intelligence; that is reading makes them smarter".

Nuttal (as cited in Antoni, 2010, p. 40) says that one of very important of reading purposes is to get meaning from a text. Valentine, Rosmalina, and Hayati, (2015) also claim that, in reading the readers are not only simply seeing the word and translating them but also comprehending what is seen and deciphered on the text. It can be said that the idea of reading is comprehending the text because there is no reading without comprehension. Consequently, as Duran (2013) mentions, reading and comprehension are associated to each other like cause and effect relation. It means reading and comprehension truly have connections because the goal of reading is to gain overall understanding of what is described in the text. To do so, the students need to read the whole text.

As mentioned earlier, English reading skill is important that it can support the learning of the other language skills. However, the fact shows that reading literacy of Indonesian students is considered low. Data from Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) (2016) on the adult English proficiency among 72 countries shows that Indonesia is in

the 32nd rank. It is categorized as moderate proficiency with the score only 52.91. This data can suggest that Indonesian students' English proficiency is still low.

The unsatisfactory English proficiency can be caused by the difficulties faced by Indonesian students in learning English as a foreign language. English is not used in all aspects of daily life especially in reading. For example, in schools, the language used in form of reading like textbooks which are learned by the students is not written in English except their English textbook. So, it might be the reason why the students get problem in understanding the English text.

Reading skill is undoubtedly one of the important factors which should be considered seriously in learning English. According to the Indonesian National School Based-Curriculum 2006, the senior high school students' learn English on the informational level. In this level, the students are required to be able to get any information in English. The students should also have the ability to understand and create various short functional texts, such as procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, report, news items, and analytical exposition. In this study, the focus was on descriptive text.

According to Sari (2014), descriptive text is one kind of text that should be learned in the first semester of the tenth-grade students in Curriculum 2013. However, the students still get problems in learning descriptive text. To get more information about the problems, the writer did an informal interview with the English teacher of the private senior schools where the writer

conducted the study. According to her, the problems in teaching descriptive text are: First, the students still get confused how to distinguish text types and its features. Second, the students get difficulty to comprehend the texts because they are lack of vocabulary. Third, the students get bored to read because the topic is not familiar. Moreover, the writer also gave a written survey to the students X IPA1 and X IPA 2 randomly. Based on the survey, most of the students were confused to choose the object that they need to describe and they did not have any information on it. Second, they did not have strategies how to describe the thing. Last but not least, they lacked of vocabulary and did not know which tenses are going to be used. Based on these problems, it is crucial to have the strategies and interesting and familiar materials to improve the students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement.

To overcome the problems above, the writer focused her study on teaching descriptive text by using local culture materials. Choundhry (2014) says that culture refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and food. Meanwhile, Baker (2003) states Culture is relevant to information with regard to the target or foreign culture, including music, dance, human beings' way of life, festivals, geography, history, and vice versa. In addition, local belongs to or connected with the particular place or area that people are talking about or with the place that people live (Oxford dictionary, 2010, p. 873). Therefore, local culture refers to the human beings' way of life, festival, historical place, history, art, music, dance, and food which come from particular area. For example, in Palembang, there are Monumen Perjuangan Rakyat

(MONPERA) and Siguntang Hill as a historical place, Pempek or Fishcake as the traditional food, and Songket and Jumputan as traditional fabric from Palembang.

Cahyono (2013) argues that the reason why there some authors emphasize the use of local culture in teaching of EFL in Indonesian is in order to preserve the EFL learner's cultural identity. In addition, Dalimunte and Tipka as cited in Cahyono (2013) mention that teaching English through local culture gives a number advantages such as activating the students' background knowledge, making the students interested and motivated them to talk about their own culture and providing relevant materials for the needs of many students.

The use of local culture materials in teaching descriptive text is really beneficial. As explained in previous paragraph, local culture is about the human beings' way of life, festival, historical place, history, art, music, dance, and food which come from particular area. Hence, it is likely helped the students to learn descriptive text. Besides the reading text can attract the students' interest because it is familiar to them, it also will improve their English ability to learn descriptive text. Based on the finding of Estuarso, Basthomi, and Widiati (2016) who did a research on students' reading materials needs at SMP N 5 Ngawen (Yogyakarta), 61% of the students admitted that they needed reading materials about their local culture as learning source materials, 73 like reading English about their own culture in English, and 85 about places familiar to their experience. They also found the most popular topics that the students' needed to

learn was about tourism or place of interests referring to descriptive text. Therefore, it can be said that the use of local culture materials is the best way for teaching descriptive text.

However, bringing local culture materials into the classroom teaching are still in problems since the existence of local culture which contains local culture materials still limited. It is proved by study done by Syahri and Susanti (2016) who did an analysis study about local and target culture integration in English textbook for senior high school in Palembang. In this study, nine books series with different publisher were analyzed. The result shows that five of books have higher percentage of Local Culture which presented through reading passage, meanwhile, under pictures analysis, six of them promote more salient in Target Culture. It can be said that the local culture materials is less existence then target culture.

The less existence of local culture materials in English textbook has become the reason for additionally a study focusing on developing teaching materials with local-culture based. For example, Ningtiyas (2016) who was a Magister student at Pasca Sarjana UNSRI focused her study on developing Palembang local culture-based instructional descriptive reading material. Her study showed that the texts created were highly valid in terms content and construct. It was also highly practical and effective for the students of level four reading level as measured by Flesch Grade Level Readability Formula.

Because the focus of this study was improving descriptive text reading comprehension achievement by using local culture from Palembang, the writer decided to use the materials

developed by Ningtiyas (2016) as the teaching materials. Hence, the writer conducted the research entitled "Improving Descriptive Reading Comprehension Achievement of the Tenth Graders by Using Local Culture Materials. However, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, local culture materials have many aspects such as historical place, human being's way of life, festival, music, dance, art, and food and in this study the writer focused on teaching local culture materials through art that is Palembang traditional fabric created by Ningtiyas, Diem, and Vianty (2016).

The objectives of the study are stated in questions as follows: (1) is there any significant improvement in descriptive reading comprehension achievement of the tenth grade students between before and after they are taught by using local culture materials? (2) is there any significant improvement in each aspect of reading comprehension achievement of the tenth grade students before and after they were taught by using local culture materials? (3) is there any significant difference in descriptive reading comprehension achievement of the tenth-grade students who are taught by using local culture materials and those who were not?

METHODOLOGY

This study used quasi-experimental research method that applied non-equivalent control group research design. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 283), groups are considered non-equivalent as groups are not randomized. There were two groups in this study, the experimental group and the control group that were given a pre-test and a

post-test. Before having the post-test, the experimental group was given the treatment by using Local Culture Materials for 14 meetings, while the control group was not given any treatment. The population of this study was 70 students from two classes X IPA 1 and X IPA 2 of a private senior high school in Palembang in academic year of 2017/2018.

In selecting the sample, convenience sampling technique was applied because the population and sample of this study were only available from two classes. The two classes were taught by the same English teacher. In determining the experimental and control groups, the writer chose the group which had low English score by asking their English teacher. Then, the experimental group was taken from X IPA 2 since they had lower score, while X IPA 1 became the control group.

To collect the data, a reading comprehension test was given to the sample. The test was given in pretest and posttest. Before the reading text was given to the students, the students' reading level was checked by using an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) which was developed by Jennings (2001). The results of the test indicated that the students were in Level 4. Next, the readability levels of the text were checked by using online Automatic Readability Checker in Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Formula.

In this study, a ready-made reading comprehension test developed by Ningtiyas, Diem and Vianty (2016) was used to collect the data. The internal validity was measured by trying the reading test out to a non

sample student of another private senior high school. To check the validity of the test, Pearson Product moment in Corrected-Item Total Correlation was applied. The value of each item was compared to r-table (0.316) at the significant level 0.05. The test item was considered valid if the value in Corrected-Item Total Correlation was 0.316 or higher than that. The reliability of the test was measured statistically in this study, the reliability coefficient of the reading comprehension test was 0.814 which was higher than 0.70 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, p. 149).

To analyze the score of the reading tests, paired sample t-test was applied to find out whether or not there was a significant improvement in pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group. The independent sample t-test was applied to see the significance difference in the results of post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group.

FINDINGS

Students' Reading Comprehension Scores

To interpret the results of students' reading score, the Minimum Completeness Criterion or Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) was applied. The KKM scoring of the school was 75. Therefore, the score of students reading comprehension test from both experimental and control groups were categorized into two: 75-100 (\geq Minimum Completeness Criterion), and $74.9-0 \leq$ (Minimum Completeness Criterion).

Table 1
Students' reading comprehension scores (N=70)

Score Range	Category	Experimental Group					
		Pretest			Posttest		
		N	%	Mean	N	%	Mean
75-100	≥ Minimum Completeness Criterion	4	11	80	23	66	84.7
74.9-0	≤ Minimum Completeness Criterion	31	89	55.9	12	34	70
Total		35	100	59.0	35	100	79.7
		Control Group					
75-100	≥ Minimum Completeness Criterion	N	%	Mean	N	%	Mean
74.9-0	≤ Minimum Completeness Criterion	3	9	85.6	9	26	89.8
Total		35	100	60.5	35	100	66.5

As presented in Table 1, the results of pretest showed that were 4 students (11%) in the experiment group whose score passed the KKM, while in the control group there were 3 students who passed the KKM. Those suggest that both groups were almost equal in terms of reading achievement that measure in the pretest. However, in the posttest, the number of students who passed the KKM from both of the groups increased. In the experimental group, there were 23 students (66%) whose score passed the KKM, while in the control group there were 9 students (26%) passing the KKM. In addition, in the pretest the students whose score did not pass the KKM from both of the

groups were also almost the same. There were 31 students (89%) in experimental group and 32 students (91%) in control group did not pass the KKM. However, in the posttest the students whose score did not pass the KKM from both of groups were decreased.

Normality and Homogeneity Tests

One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the data. The results of normality test are presented in Table 2. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the data. The results of normality test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Result of normality test

Group	Pretest		Sig-p	Post-test		
	Mean	St. Dev		Mean	St. Dev	Sig-p
Experimental Group	59.00	11.961	.061	79.74	8.194	.200
Control Group	60.51	13.048	.149	66.49	18.123	.197

The data have a normal distribution if the p-value is more then 0.05. The data

above show that the significance (2-tailed) of pretest and posttest in the experimental group were 0.61 and 0.200. The significance of pretest and posttest in control group were 0.149 and 0.197. Since all the significance values were higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data had a normal distribution.

Homogeneity test was done to know whether the sample groups of the population equal variance. To test the homogeneity of the data, Levene's test was used. The data sets are homogeneous if the significant value (2-tailed) is higher than 0.05. The results of homogeneity test can be seen in the Table 3.

Table 3
Result of homogeneity test

Group	Level Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest and posttest in Experimental Group	3.030	1	68	.086
Pretest and posttest in Control Group	1.996	1	68	.162
Pretest in Experimental and Control Groups	1.259	1	68	.266
Posttest in Experimental and Control Groups	1.361	1	68	.247

The results of homogeneity test shown in Table 3 show that the significant value of pretest and posttest in the experimental group was 0.086 and the significant value of pretest and posttest in the control group was 0.162. It means that the data in pretest and posttest both in control and in the experimental group were homogenous as the significant value (0.086 and 0.162) were higher than 0.05. In this study, the sample had the same

number of students; There were 35 students in each group.

Results of Paired-Sample t-test

Paired sample t-test was used to analyze the result of pretest and posttest in the experimental group. It was done to answer the first research question. The result of paired sample t-test is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Results of paired-sample t-test
(reading comprehension and its aspects)

Variable	Experimental Group			Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean		Mean difference	
	Pretest	Posttest		
Reading (total)	59.00	79.74	20.74	.000
Main Idea	9.20	13.80	4.6	.000
Inference	9.23	12.60	3.37	.000
Detail	10.49	14.54	4.05	.000
Vocabulary	11.23	15.20	3.97	.000
Sequence	9.09	11.23	2.14	.000
Cause and Effect	9.40	12.11	2.71	.001

Based on the paired sample t-test of the experimental group, the mean score of the post-test (79.74) was higher than the mean score of the pre-test (59.00) with the mean difference 20.743. Since the significance (2-tailed) was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

To see the significant improvement in each aspect of reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group, paired sample t-test was also applied. The writer considered that it was important to see not only the improvement of the students' reading achievement in general but also the improvement of each aspect of reading. Based on Table 4, it was found that the mean scores of the posttest for each aspect were higher than the mean score of pretest. Since p-value (sig. (2 tailed)) in all aspects of the experimental group was lower than 0.05. Moreover, it can be stated that there was a significant improvement in all aspects of reading between pretest and posttest of experimental group after being taught by using local culture materials. The highest improvement was in the main idea aspect. On the other hand, sequence aspect got the lowest improvement.

Results of Independent t-test

Independent sample t-test was used to compare the students' score between experimental group and control group. It was used to see whether or not there was a significant difference in descriptive reading comprehension achievement between

the students who were taught by using local culture materials and those who were not. The results of independent sample t-test is presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Result of independent t-test

Pretest		Mean Diff	Std. Dev	Sig.
Experimental	59.00	1.5	11.96	.614
Control	60.51		13.04	
Posttest		Mean Diff	Std. Dev	Sig.
Experimental	79.74	13.2	8.194	.000
Control	66.49		18.12	

Based on the results of independent sample t-test above, the mean difference of pretest between the experimental group and control group was 1.514. The p-value was higher than 0.05 ($0.506 > 0.05$). It means that there was no significant difference in the pretest of both groups. In contrast, the mean difference of posttest between the experimental group and control group was 13.257, with p-value was lower than 0.05.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to see the contribution of each aspect of descriptive reading comprehension to the students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement. Although finding the contribution of each aspects of narrative writing achievement was not the focus of this study, it was considered important to know which aspect that gave contribution to students' narrative writing achievement score. The result of regression analysis is presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Result of regression analysis

Aspects of Reading	R	R²	R²d	Sig
Main Idea	.525 ^a	.275	.275	.001
Vocabulary	.648 ^b	.421	.145	.008
Inference	.764 ^c	.583	.162	.002
Detail Question	.857 ^d	.734	.151	.000
Sequence	.912 ^e	.831	.097	.000
Cause & Effect	.998 ^f	.997	.166	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), main idea

b. Predictors: (Constant), main idea, inference

c. Predictors: (Constant), main idea, inference, detail question

d. Predictors: (Constant), main idea, inference, detail question, vocabulary

e. Predictors: (Constant), main idea, inference, detail question, vocabulary, sequence

f. Predictors: (Constant), main idea, inference, detail question, vocabulary, sequence, cause and effect

Based on the result of regression analysis on Table 6 above, each aspect of descriptive reading comprehension gave significant contribution to the students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement score. The highest contribution was main idea whereas sequence was the lowest.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the study, some interpretations were drawn. First, statistically the students in the experimental group showed progress in their reading achievement after the treatment. The result showed that there was a significant improvement in descriptive reading comprehension achievement after the students were taught by using local culture materials. The data analysis showed that the mean score of posttest of experimental group increased, and the *p*-value of paired sample t-test was less than 0.05. It is argued that the enhancement happened due to the exposure of local culture materials during the treatment.

This claim is also supported by the results of pretest in which the experimental and control group were in similar level of starting point. It can be seen from the results of the score distribution discussed in Table 1 which was found that there were 4 students (11%) in experimental group and 3 students (9%) in control group whose score passed the KKM. It means both of the two groups had problems in learning descriptive text. As mentioned in the background of this study, one of the problem that faced by the students in learning descriptive text was the students' unfamiliarity with the topic or the reading text. This problem made the students get bored to read the text and failed to comprehend the text. However, after the experimental group were being taught by using local culture materials, it revealed that there were significant improvement on students' reading comprehension achievement with mean difference 20.7.

The finding of this study also revealed that there was significant

improvement in each aspect of students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group. It can be proven by the result of paired sample discussed in Table 4. The result showed that there was improvement in each aspect of reading comprehension score after the students were taught by using local culture materials with the p-value in all aspects of the experimental group was lower than 0.05. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the enhancement happened due to the exposure of local culture materials during the treatment.

In the treatment, the students in the experimental group were given the pictures of Palembang traditional fabric. Then the writer stimulated the students' prior knowledge about the picture and asked them some questions through it which made them easier to describe the picture. For example, the writer gave the students a picture about Songket, then asked them some questions; Were you familiar with this picture? Where did this come from? Where did you usually see the people wear it? What occasion does people usually wear it? After that, the students were given reading text and asked to answer the reading comprehension questions. Through the stimulation that the writer given in pre-activities, the writer assumed that the students had already background knowledge and were being interested in learning the topic which was being discussed since most of the students were able to answer the questions. Therefore, it is argued that the use of local culture materials especially Palembang traditional fabric and supported by a picture in teaching and learning process not only attracted the students' interest but also made the students easier to comprehend the text.

It happened due to the reading materials were familiar with the students. As Ningtiyas (2016) states that the content of reading material, which is high interest is deal with familiar topics or situations brings the students fluency and comprehension.

Another finding showed that there was a significant difference in descriptive reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using local culture materials (experimental group) and those who were not (control group). It can be proved by the results of the statistical analysis of independent sample t-test discussed in Table 5. It is claimed that the experimental group showed much better enhancement than the control group. The mean difference of posttest between the two groups were 13.3, with the p-value that was lower than 0.05.

The reading comprehension achievement in control group was not significantly improved. It could happen due to the fact that control group did not have the same treatment as experimental group. The experimental group as already mentioned earlier, was given a treatment by using local culture material. Reading comprehension, according Lenz (2005) is the process constructing meaning from text. The readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relation to the text. Buthcer and Kintsch, 2003; Schallert and Martin, 2003 as cited in Pardo (2004) say that the more background knowledge a reader has that connects with the text that being read, the more likely the reader will be able to make

sense of what being read. Hence, the use of local culture materials especially Palembang traditional fabric materials could help the students to comprehend the text since they had already have background knowledge about the topic. Further, the mean score also showed that the experimental group gained more enhancement than the control. Therefore, it could be stated that local culture materials which was used in this study could help the students to improve their descriptive reading comprehension achievement. The result of this study is in line with the findings by Pitaloka (2015) with the title *Developing Interactive multimedia with local-content-based Narrative text for the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Lilin*, she found that there was an improvement in students' scores on reading comprehension achievement after using local content based narrative text.

To see the contribution of each aspect of descriptive reading comprehension achievement towards the students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement on the experimental group, stepwise regression analysis was used. Based on the result of regression analysis, each reading aspect gave significant contribution to reading comprehension achievement since all the significant value was lower than 0.05. the aspect of reading that gave the highest contribution was main idea whereas sequence was the lowest. The writer assumed that main idea gave the highest contribution in descriptive reading comprehension achievement due to the students allready have background knowledge that can grasp the main idea of the text. According to Ur (1996) and Anderson (2003),

background knowledge is one of the elements that should be considered to teach effecient quality of reading. Futhermore, Anderson (2003) adds that after knowing main idea of a passage, students will make predictions and search information in the text to confirm or reject the predictions; this activity can help the students to understand the passage even if all of individual words are not understood. Then, the writer admitted that the sequence aspect got the lowest contribution due to the writer did not explain more about the sequence of the reading text since the witer herself did not have much information about the sequence event of palembang traditional fabric materials.

In summary, it could be assumed that local culture materials can alternate descriptive reading comprehension achievement improvement of the students at SMA Islam Az-Zahra 1 Palembang since local culture materials that was Palembang traditional fabric materials attracted the students' interest and helped them easier to comprehend the reading text.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the use of local culture especially Palembang traditional fabric materials could be applied in teaching descriptive reading comprehension for the tenth grade students of senior high school level. Local culture materials could also help the students to improve their descriptive reading comprehension achievement. It could be seen from the students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement between before and after they were given the

treatment by using local culture materials. Therefore, there was a significant improvement in students' descriptive reading comprehension achievement between before and after they were taught by using local culture materials and there was also a significant difference in descriptive reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using local culture materials and those who were not. In this study, the used of local culture materials can attract the students' interest and motivation to read descriptive text since the reading materials were familiar with them.

In short, it could be assumed that local culture materials can alternate descriptive reading comprehension achievement improvement of one of private senior high schools in Palembang since local culture materials can attract the students' interest and help them to comprehend the reading text easier.

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