Developing Secret Code Card for Students' Writing Ability

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Abstract

Indonesian students' ability in writing English is actually less than expectations. Commonly some lacks in writing English are English vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, this study focuses on developing Secret Code Cards to increasing students' ability in writing descriptive text. Type of this study is Research and Development (R&D). Some steps in this kind of study are self-evaluation, expert review and one-to-one, small group, and field test. The subjects of the research were the eighth graders of junior high school in Metro. From the steps conducted by the researcher there are some revisions of the product from the first prototype. The revisions are addition of bright colour and instruction, clearer instruction, more understandable words, and also to make the product in bigger shape. In the field test the students responded well and got interested in using the product. It means that the product can be used effectively in helping the students and make them interested in writing descriptive text. Based on the finding, the researcher concludes that Secret Code Card is an effective English learning media in writing descriptive text for the eighth graders. The researcher also concludes that students will become more interested in learning English by using playful learning media like Secret Code Card in the class.

1. Research Background

Indonesian students' ability in writing English is actually less than expectations. The error of their writing is commonly in grammatically, diction, even in vocabulary. The researcher found there are some students who do not master writing comprehension as well as expected. Most of the students' problems in their writing comprehension are on their lack of grammar and vocabulary. To prove the fact, the researcher took observation on two schools, SMP Negeri 9 Metro and SMP Kartikatama Metro. The researcher chose a class in each school which consists of twenty nine students in SMP Negeri 9 Metro and thirty two students in SMP Kartikatama Metro as the participants of the observation. Most of the students are having problem in writing comprehension, especially in writing descriptive text. The students have special lack of vocabulary and grammar in writing English. Besides, they also do not have anxiety in English because they consider that English is very difficult and boring to be learnt.

Therefore researcher is interested in developing Secret Code Cards because from the researcher's point of view this media will be useful in decreasing the students' lack of ability in writing descriptive text. Secret Code Card is an English learning media which will help the students' difficulties in learning how to write descriptive text. By using this media the students will not only can make a simple descriptive text but this media also can be used as a refreshing game. This media requires the students to think creatively by determine what they will describe or what they find in this media before use this media to make a simple descriptive text. This research is also conducted to know how far is the development of Secret Code Card for students writing comprehension in descriptive text.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Descriptive Text

There are many sources which are explained about Descriptive Text. One of them are from Thresia [1] descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the students to describe an object, person, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the students' ability to create a written account of a particular experience. The goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader. According to Rao [2] descriptive has structure as below: (1) Identification; identifying the phenomenon to be described. (2) Description; describing the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristics. Descriptive text has language features as below: (1) Using attributive and identifying process, (2) Using adjective and

classifiers in nominal group, and (3) Using simple present tense. In terms of significant lexicon, grammatical features, the text focuses on specific participants, contains attribute and identifying process, comprises epithets and classifiers in nominal groups as well as uses simple present tense [3].

Blanchard and Root [4] defined descriptive text as painting pictures with words. By reading a descriptive text, readers feel that they see the description just like they see pictures. Thus, in writing a descriptive text the writers should know well what they want to describe. They describe their ideas and thought vividly based on what they see, hear, taste, smell, or touch. In addition, Zhu [5] and Kubota [6] states that description is discourse that help us visualize. It focuses upon the appearance or the nature of an object.

2.2 Concept of Learning Media

Jarvis [7] explain generally media classification, they are: audio learning, audio-visual, visual, and tactile/ kinaesthetic. Particularly media will appropriate use it on exactly condition. Election of media relate interpretation of decision which complex, influence by several factor, therefore it can't be rash to determine develop use media something. Learning media has several functions as to easy in learning process. Determining to learning media must choose, filter, and accordance with purpose which won't to reach. Function of learning media is something visualize which can't see or it difficult to see with the result that clear visible and it can cause definition or increase someone perception, Hinkel [8].

2.3 Concept of Cooperative Learning

Slavin [9] cooperative learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. It has been defined as a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others [10]

According to Brown [11] cooperative learning is learning in small groups where interaction is structured according to careful worked-out principles. The method, which was developed in USA, arose among other things out of concern that the traditional school was creating far too many losers, destroying the spontaneous joy of learning in many young people and failing to develop one of the most important things one will need in later life, i.e. the ability to cooperate with others. Cooperative learning can be used at all age levels, from kindergarten to university. It is much more than just a bag of tricks to make teaching run more smoothly, it is a different way of conceiving teaching [12].

2.4 Concept of Secret Code Cards

The researcher was inspired by the method that used by Fathoni [13] which was published on his blog. But Fathoni named the method or game as Spy Code. According to Fathoni [13] this method or game was for increasing the students' ability in English pronunciation in every level of English learners. The clue is numbers that represents the letter, 1 = A , 2 = B , 3 = C , 4 = d ... 24 = X , 25 = Y , 26 = Z.

The game will be started when the teacher writes a code on the board and every group has to convert the code, then write those codes that have been solved on a piece of paper and hand it to the teacher. The fastest group in solving the code and the most right group in the pronouncing the solved code will get additional grade from the teacher. After that the teacher gives the second code, the third and so on. The group which has collected the most grades is the winner.

Examples:
16-18-5-19-9-4-5-14-20 = President
20-8-21-18-19-4-1-25 = Thursday
1-18-18-9-22-5-19 = Arrives
5-13-2-1-19-19-25 = Embassy
4-15-3-21-13-5-14-20-19 = Documents

But in the usage of Secret Code Card, the researcher has to make the codes which will be solved by the students. In the learning process, the teacher has to divide the students at most 10 groups. Then the teacher will explain how to use the cards. Besides the code, the researcher also adds some adjectives in code, descriptive text structure, simple present tense formula, and some clue on it in order to help the students in making descriptive text. The researcher has to make the codes on a card and laminates it before use it, so the product will be long last and can be used more than once.

By using Secret Code Cards as media of learning and teaching descriptive text in Junior High School students, it will be have some advantages as follow:

a. Learning and teaching descriptive text will be fun for teachers and also students;

b. By using Secret Code Cards as media, the students required to solve the code so they will be more creative; and

c. The students will not have same topic with their friends to be made as descriptive text.

Besides having advantages, using Secret Code Cards as media in writing descriptive text also have disadvantages as follow:

a. Need a lot of time to distribute the cards to the students; and

b. Rather difficult to understand to the students, but if they have known the instruction it will be easy.

3. Research Method

3.1. Design of the Research

The type of research that is conducted by the researcher is developmental research. The research does not mean to generate a theory or verify one. It attempts the developing Secret Code Card for writing descriptive text at the eighth grade on the second semester. In this researcher, the researcher use formative research as the research design.

In doing Research and Development, the researcher has to follow some steps according to the source. Here the researcher uses Tessmer's step in doing Research and Development. The steps are: (1) Self-evaluation; (2) Expert Review and One-to-One; (3) Small Group; and (4) Field Test. On the first step, Self-evaluation, the researchers has to develop the product by them. The development can be addition or change to the former product. The second step is expert review and one-to-one. In this step the researcher brings the product to the experts to be validated and then picks one person to test the product. Here the data will be taken by the instruments (questionnaire). The third step is Small Group. Small group is a step where the researcher tests the product in a group which is consists of three until five people. Then the last is the Field Test. This is where the researcher applies the product on the real classroom in a learning process.

3.2. Research Procedure

Considering the research design above, there are four steps in formative research, they are: self-evaluation, expert review and one-to-one, small group and the last is field test.

a. Self-evaluation; The researcher wants to develop Secret Code Card for writing descriptive text. It is also intended for students of junior high school. This research produces some prototypes, like first prototype (the result of self-evaluation), second prototype (revision and expert review and one-to-one) and the third prototype is the last prototype (revision in small group), and each of prototypes is focusing on: language, readability, and implement ability.

b. Expert Review and One-to-one; The result of the first prototype development based on self-evaluation then it is given to the expert (expert review) and two groups (one-to-one) for observing, commenting, and suggesting.
Expert Review; In the expert review, Secret Code Card prototype has been designed to get critic and evaluated by the experts. The researcher picks two experts in English construction studies, Mr. Dedi Turmudi, MA. TESOL as the expert of writing descriptive text and Mr. Bambang Eko Siagianto, M.Pd as the expert of media. The experts are going to review language, readability, and implement-ability. Suggestions from the expert will be used to revise the product.

One-to-one; From this process the researcher will utilize two students as the testier and ask to observe and give the comment about the Secret Code Card. The result of the suggestions and comments will be used to revise the product. The result of expert review and one-to-one are important things to renew the first prototype. And it will produce the second prototype.

c. Small Group; After applying the revision from the previous step, the researcher takes five respondents as non-subject research. They will complete and give comment for the product which has revised based on expert review and one-to-one (second prototype) by answering the questionnaire. The result of this stage will be revised and produce the third prototype of the product. The purpose of the small group is to determine whether the product has been suitable or not. All of respondents are taken by simple random technique. After that, the researcher will revise the product as the third prototype.

d. Field Test; To get the standard product the researcher will conduct a field test. The researcher just focus on the improvement and the effectiveness of the product and will analyze the data by using readability and readability questionnaire. In this research, the researcher will take the sample with cluster random sampling. It is not like others technique, the researcher are free to choose how many respondents to get the data. The result of this strange will become final product.

The word subject or population (universe) in statistics refers to a group of individuals with distinctive characteristics of concern in a study or observation. The subjects of this research are the students of the second semester of the eighth grade at SMP Negeri 9 Metro and SMP Katikatama Metro. The data is collected by collecting the data from the questionnaires to the experts, and the students about the media of writing descriptive text whether it is suitable to the learning process or not.

Research instrument is tools used to measure the natural and social phenomena are observed, Creswell (2012). This research uses questionnaire which will be given to the teacher as the first stage research instrument after the implementation of the product.

In this research the researcher uses some instruments, such as:

a. Interview questions list for the teacher about the students' ability in writing descriptive text;

b. Questionnaire for the students about the learning media Secret Code Card;

c. Validation sheet for the experts about the learning media Secret Code Card.

3.3. Instrument's Readability

These instruments are used to collect data of respondents' understanding toward the Secret Code Card. Creswell [14] has designed some indicators to measure readability like:

a. Font size

It is related with the size of the alphabets or words. The readers cannot catch what the questionnaire means if the size of the alphabets is too small or the space among words is too tight.

b. Word choice

This means that the researcher chooses the easy-understand words, so the readers will be easy to understand what the questionnaire contains.

c. Content and Message

The researcher has designed the questionnaire to the experts, teacher, and students. Therefore, the content and message must be contained in the questionnaire.

d. Layout

The illustration of the product is related with the attractiveness of the product. The content of this indicators are pictures, writing forms, colors, and the messages of the product.

3.4. Instrument's Implementability

The instruments are used to collect data in the research process. It has to be fulfilled by the experts, teachers, also the respondents. There are some indicators in implementability, they are: Instruction clarity, Relation to the material, Attractive to be used in learning the material and Opinion from the readers.

3.5. Data Analysis Technique

After getting the data from the field, the researcher will find the weakness and the excesses of the learning media. Then, the researcher also will count the frequency of questionnaire to see the data.

Based on the criteria of scoring from the questionnaire above to know the readability on Secret Code Card refers to Sugiyono [15] below:

Table 1. Criteria of the questionnaire

Score	Criteria
0% - 20%	Very low
21% - 40%	Low
41% - 60%	Sufficient
61% - 80%	High
81% - 100%	Very High

Source: Adapted from Cecconi, Formative Evaluation Report (2007, p35)

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result of Product Designing

Product design of Secret Code Card has reviewed by expert and also has passed One-to-One step. The reviewers of the learning media consist of two English lecturers who are the expert of their studies. The first expert is Mr. Bambang Eko Siagiyanto, S.Pd., M.Pd. as the media expert and the second expert is Mr. Dedi Turmudi, MA TESOL as the writing expert. Generally the experts suggested the researcher to develop the media more by adding instruction to help the students do the Secret Code Card as a learning media in writing descriptive text. By adding instruction on the card, the experts hope the students can use the media without waiting the teacher or the researcher explains what the students have to do by using the learning media. Beside that the experts also added that the researcher has to develop the media by applying some bright colors on the card so the students will be more interested in using the learning media. And in One-to-One step the researcher conducted the research in two schools, SMP Negeri 9 Metro and SMP Kartikatama Metro. The researcher utilized two students from each of the schools to try Secret Code Card as an English learning media. The students from SMP Negeri 9 Metro have no problem except the vocabulary, they got difficulty in translating the code and the adjectives that they got. But the two others from SMP Kartikatama Metro got no problem in using the learning media also in translating the codes and the adjectives. Generally the students suggested the researcher to apply some bright colors like the experts suggested and also to make the size of the media bigger so the students can use the media easier.

4.2 Result of First Product

The researcher used a validity sheet to know the validity of Secret Code Card as an English learning media in writing descriptive text for the eighth graders of Junior High School. The researcher found each indicator of the product is valid.

After the respondents of both schools filled the questionnaire, the researcher would calculate the result. Most of the indicators are got high scores, but questions about the shape and the instruction of the product got lower scores. So the researcher has to revise the product according to the result. The score of the shape of the product is 60%, 60% for word choice, and 60% for the instruction. It means that the aspects need to be revised.

The result of the readability questionnaire per indicator is 73% and 67% for the font size, 60% and 73% for the word choice, 67% and 67% for the content and message, and 70% and 64% for the layout. The highest score is 73% for the font size from SMP Negeri 9 Metro and the lowest score is 60% for the word choice which is also from SMP Negeri 9 Metro. It means that the students show their responses to the product well. Based on the data above the prototype must be repaired especially on the font size and the word choice. The data can be seen on the appendix 17. On the other side, the result of the implementability is good enough, but some students get obstacle on their limit in vocabulary.

According to the result of the testing product of Secret Code Card as English learning media for writing descriptive text there are some indicators that need to be

revised. Because the indicators that got low scores are product shape, word choice and also the instruction, the researcher would revise those aspects. The researcher revised the product by making the shape of the card to be bigger, revising the word choices, and also making the instrument to be easier to understand by the students.

4.3 Result of the Second Product Testing

The result of readability questionnaire per indicator is 78% and 78% for the font size, 77% and 81% for the word choice, 76% and 82% for the content and message, also 81% and 78% for the layout. The average of the result is 79%, so Secret Code Card does not need to be revised and can be used by the students.

The result of the implementability questionnaire said that the entire respondents can accept and also be interested in the learning media. They can learn English easily, especially in writing descriptive text and also can explore their ability in writing skill by using the learning material.

Based on the result of the second product testing of Secret Code Card as a learning media in writing descriptive text, the researcher revised the product which concern in all aspect in indicator that have low score although the score of other indicators are high. The researcher revised the product by laminating the product so the product can be long lasting.

The implementation of the learning media got no trouble in the implementation by the students. They gave good responses, so the researcher does not have to revise the implementability of the product.

The refinement of the product includes layout and the instruction. The layout of the product which had been revised is the font size and the size of the learning media. And the researcher also added the instruction that may help the students in using Secret Code Card as an English learning media in writing descriptive text without explanation from the researcher.

4.4 Discussion of the Final Product

This English learning media is made to make Junior High School students interested in writing English especially in writing descriptive text. By using the learning media the researcher hopes it can help the students who got some difficulties in writing descriptive text such as lack of vocabularies because the researcher adds the theme and some adjectives in order to help the students that do not know the vocabularies that they have to use in writing descriptive text.

Based on the research in SMP Negeri 9 Metro and SMP Kartikatama Metro, Secret Code Card as an English learning media in writing descriptive text has made as perfect as proper according to the eighth graders' necessary in writing descriptive text. It is make the students interested in learning English especially writing descriptive text. The learning media is attractive and easy to apply so it will make the students interested in writing descriptive text in English.

5. Finding

The students show their interest in the learning media, although the product has got many revisions in some steps in this research. After getting some revision, the students are excited to use the learning media and they can understand also make a simple descriptive text easily. Based on the explanation, the result of the research is developing Secret Code Card as an English learning media in writing descriptive text success and it can be applied in eighth grade of Junior High School.

6. Conclusion

By the research that has done in Junior High School Metro, the researcher concluded some conclusion as follows:

Secret Code Card can be developed as an English writing comprehension learning media in writing descriptive text for the eighth graders of Junior High School; and

Secret Code Card can be useful learning media in helping the development of the students' writing comprehension in writing descriptive text for the eighth graders of Junior High School.

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