The Implementation Of Authentic Assessment In Reading Comprehension Instruction In Primary Schools

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Abstract

Nowadays, assessment is not only seen as an evaluation tool but also as a learning tool. About reading instruction, efforts to improve student's reading skills and habits can be enhanced with the implementation of authentic assessment models. This experimental study was conducted on fifth-grade students in Bandung Regency. The data were collected using both test and non-test instruments. The generated data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the authentic assessment model developed in this study is a process-based model that has proven to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills and developing students' reading habits. Therefore, this authentic assessment model can be used in reading comprehension instruction in primary schools as an alternative to improve reading skills.

Keywords: Authentic Assessment, Reading Skills, Reading Habits.

Abstrak

Saat ini, penilaian tidak hanya dilihat sebagai alat evaluasi tetapi juga sebagai alat pembelajaran. Tentang instruksi membaca, upaya untuk meningkatkan keterampilan dan kebiasaan membaca siswa dapat ditingkatkan dengan penerapan model penilaian otentik. Penelitian eksperimen ini dilakukan pada siswa kelas lima di Kabupaten Bandung. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan instrumen uji dan nonuji. Data yang dihasilkan dianalisis menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Berdasarkan hasil, dapat disimpulkan bahwa model penilaian autentik yang dikembangkan dalam penelitian ini merupakan model berbasis proses yang terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan pemahaman bacaan siswa dan mengembangkan kebiasaan membaca siswa. Oleh karena itu, model penilaian autentik ini dapat digunakan dalam pengajaran pemahaman bacaan di sekolah dasar sebagai alternatif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca.

Kata kunci: Penilaian Otentik, Keterampilan Membaca, Kebiasaan Membaca.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important skills to master to develop multiliteracy is reading comprehension skills. Reading skills are closely related to the ability to absorb information from various sources, thus a person who possesses these skills will understand information correctly so that he/she can expand his/her knowledge. Concannon-Gibney and McCarthy (2012) stressed the importance of reading skills, remarking that students should be equipped with reading skills that enable them to solve problems, communicate, and think, preparing them for the 21st century.

Given the importance of reading skills, the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia in schools plays an important role in improving students' reading comprehension skills. Therefore, a radical paradigm shift is needed to improve reading comprehension instruction in schools. This effort should be made by teachers for it is one of their main roles to provide instruction that is by students' learning development, pedagogical concepts, learning materials, and students' learning outcomes assessment (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005). In line with this, Greenleaf, et al. (2010) argued that it is necessary to think about reading instruction strategies that integrate literacy development across subject matter domains. These efforts are not without reason because research and surveys carried out by international institutions always place Indonesia in the lowest position in reading comprehension skills, even compared to other ASEAN countries.

However, efforts to improve reading comprehension skills that should be made by teachers have not been made optimally. This can be seen from the fact that teachers are still using the old patterns, which have proven to be unable to improve students' reading skills. Based on this problem, this study focuses on efforts to improve the quality of the process and outcomes of reading comprehension instruction by developing an authentic assessment model. This focus is in line with what Wormeli (2006) stated, that to improve the quality of the learning process, an authentic assessment model that can assess students' ability correctly/accurately and also can serve as a foundation of learning process development should be implemented. Corrigan, et al. (2013) added that an assessment that is closely related to (classroom) instruction is a fundamental issue in education; the development and implementation of curricula; the learning process in class; and education research.

Efforts to improve reading skills through the implementation of assessment models have been made by experts. However, only a few researchers have implemented authentic assessment models that are intended to develop reading habits and skills at the same time. Therefore, this study is aimed at developing an authentic assessment model in reading comprehension instruction and at implementing the model in an attempt to improve primary school students' reading comprehension skills and develop their reading habits.

In general, reading skills are students' ability to comprehend the contents of a text. According to Nuttal (1996); Bergeron and Wolff (2002); Miller (2008); and Browne (2007), there are at least three basic indicators of reading skills, namely: (1) students can enjoy what they read, (2) Students can read silently with a flexible reading speed. (3) and students gain a good understanding of what they read. The reading habit, on the other hand, is students' practice when they are reading in terms of the thinking process. Thus, the term 'reading habit' in this study refers to reading habits seen from the aspect of the thinking process. These habits include the practice of reading with a purpose, reading by optimizing the interaction between readers and reading materials, organizing the contents of a text to comprehend the contents, interpreting the contents, and reading creatively. The originality of this study lies in this different aspect of reading habits.

In efforts to improve primary school students' reading skills and habits, assessments play an important role. This is one of the objectives of assessments, which is for students to be able to gain self-control in their learning activities. An assessment model that has this kind of function is authentic assessment. Authentic assessment, in general, is an

assessment that is developed to supplement conventional assessment models which are still being used today. Therefore, experts regard authentic assessment as an extensification of conventional assessments.

Hart (Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner, 2008) explained that authentic assessment is an assessment that involves students in authentic tasks, that are beneficial, important, and meaningful, that further can be thought of as performance assessment. Wormeli (2006) pointed out that authentic assessment refers to two aspects. First, authentic assessment is related to how students can apply their learning outcomes to their everyday lives. Second, authentic assessment is an assessment that can accurately pinpoint how students learn and what motivates them to learn. Based on this aspect, authentic assessment is an assessment carried out with an emphasis on the functions of assessment in social and educational dimensions. This kind of assessment is the assessment that serves as guidance on the learning process based on differentiated learning, so classroom instruction can have correctly sequenced procedures that meet students' needs.

Efforts to implement assessment models to develop students' reading skills have been made by some researchers. One of the studies was conducted by Cheng and Warrant (2005). This study, however, only focuses on one form of authentic assessment in reading instruction, assessment by fellow students in the form of peer assessment. Based on their study, Cheng and Warren (2005) noted that there are still some weaknesses in peer assessment and one of the weakest points is that students have rather negative attitudes toward their friends' language skills, but they do not assess the skills of their fellow students differently from other assessment criteria.

A study aimed at developing an authentic assessment in reading instruction, partially, was also carried out by Aderson and McIntyre (2006). This study was conducted mainly to develop a self-assessment model. Based on their study, Alderson and McIntyre (2006) concluded that most of the students felt the learning benefits through the use of the self-assessment model. However, on the other hand, the students also expressed dissatisfaction, there were some reasons why they reacted negatively towards themselves.

A more comprehensive study that developed an authentic assessment of reading instruction was conducted by Prestidge and Glaser (2000). The authentic assessment model that was developed includes (1) an assessment in outcome dimensions comprising of comprehension assessment, writing assessment, reading technical skill assessment, and while-reading skill assessment; (2) a self-assessment by students consisting of group performance assessment, self-assessment, and reflective assessment; and (3) an assessment in outcome dimension in a form of students' integrated understanding. To conclude their study, Prestidge and Glaser (2000) stated that an authentic assessment allows teachers to note subtle changes that cannot be proven by traditional assessment instruments. These tools also allow teachers to evaluate students individually because they work in groups to create an individual project.

O'Malley, J.M. and Pierce, L.V. (2006) carried out a study on the development of an authentic assessment in reading instruction with an emphasis on the intensity of reading. The forms of assessment developed were (1) an assessment involving students, consisting of self-assessment and peer assessment, and (2) an assessment through scoring rubrics, consisting of retelling rubrics, reading lists, literary response, discussion group, reading notes, and reading portfolios. The development of this model has been able to improve students' reading skills.

Regarding authentic assessment in reading instruction, the findings of Stanford and Siders' (2001) study were used as guidance for this study, especially in developing an authentic assessment model in reading instruction. These findings were then combined with steps to developing an authentic assessment as outlined in Mueller (2012) so that the development of an authentic assessment in this study has its distinguishing features compared to the two studies used as the guidance.

Compared to the studies conducted by Klingner (2004); Cheng and Warren (2005); and Alderson and McIntyre (2006), this study has different aspects. Although the three studies also aim to develop an authentic model in reading instruction, they put more emphasis on student-centered assessment, while the assessment in this study is more process-oriented.

Based on the forms of authentic assessments that have been developed above, the authentic assessment models offered by O'Malley and Pierce (2006) and Prestidge and Glaser (2000) focus on the aspects of reading intensity and student-centered assessment. On the other hand, the assessment model developed by Nurgiyantoro and Pujiyati-Suyata (2009) emphasizes outcome assessment. Unlike the three forms offered by these previous studies, the authentic reading assessment in this study assesses the reading process and reading outcomes.

METHODS

This study employed a quasi-experimental method, the matching pretest-posttest design (Frankel, Wallen, and Hyun, 2012). This method is used to determine the appropriateness of the hypothesized authentic assessment model to be implemented in reading comprehension instruction in primary schools.

The study was conducted in Bandung Regency and recruited fifth-grade primary school students in Bandung Regency academic year 2012/2013 during one academic year period. The primary school students were chosen according to the geographical characteristics of the schools. There were six primary schools chosen from three different geographical locations, namely urban, rural, and border areas. The choice of sampling scheme, based on geographical characteristics, was intended to obtain study results that can describe the overall effectiveness of the experimental model.

The instruments used in this study include, among others, process response, used to assess reading habits, and product/outcome response, used to assess students' reading comprehension skills. The data were collected through tests, observations, and interviews. The generated data were analyzed using a quantitative method, using a two-tailed test and ANOVA (Minium and King, 1993).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study has succeeded in developing an authentic assessment model for reading comprehension instruction. The assessment developed in this study is a combination of authentic tasks and reading activities performed by the students to develop good reading habits and improve comprehension. The assessment is tailored to meet every developmental needs from pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages. The outcomes of every activity performed by the students in each reading step are assessed so that the assessment that is developed accords with the concept of formative assessment.

After succeeding in developing the authentic assessment model in reading comprehension instruction, the model is then implemented in the reading comprehension instruction. The implementation goes through three phases, namely the limited testing phase, the expanded testing phase, and validation testing phase.

Table 1. The Results of Anova on Reading Habis in the Limited Experiment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BetweenGroups	2375.625	2	1187.813	20.943	.000
WithinGroups	3232.813	57	56.716		
Total	5608.438	59			

Table 2. The Results of Anova on Reading Comprehension Skills in the Limited Experiment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BetweenGroups	1765.833	2	882.917	17.666	.000
WithinGroups	2848.750	57	49.978		
Total	4614.583	59			

(Source: the results of statistical tests conducted in 2013)

The results of the ANOVA, presented in both tables, indicate F=17,666 with a significance level of 0,00 which is less than the critical value (α) set in this study, 0,05. Based on these results, it is known that the implementation of the authentic assessment model in reading instruction in the limited test has significantly contributed to improvement in the student's reading habits and skills in reading comprehension.

Based on the extensive experiment which was conducted in two schools, the authentic assessment model developed in this study has proven to be effective in developing the students' reading habits because significant improvement is shown in the students' reading habits. Furthermore, the students' reading skills also improved significantly. The results of the Anova on the extensive test are presented in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. The Results of Anova on Reading Habits in the Extensive Experiment

First School					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BetweenGroups	3477.493	2	1738.746	20.292	.000
WithinGroups	6940.569	81	85.686		
Total	10418.062	83			

Second School					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BetweenGroups	4713.542	2	2356.771	26.244	.000
WithinGroups	8082.157	90	89.802		
Total	12795.699	92			

(Source: the results of statistical tests conducted in 2013)

Table 4. The Results of Anova on Reading Comprehension Skills in the Extensive Experiment

First School					
	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
BetweenGroups	2680.357	2	1340.179	21.071	.000
WithinGroups	5151.786	81	63.602		
Total	7832.143	83			
Second School					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BetweenGroups	3503.763	2	751.882	23.762	.000
WithinGroups	6635.484	90	73.728		
Total	10139.247	92			

(Source: the results of statistical tests conducted in 2013)

The results of the ANOVA from both tables indicate a significance level of 0,05. This indicates that the implementation of the authentic assessment model in reading instruction in the extensive experiment has contributed to a significant improvement in the student's reading habits and skills in both schools.

Based on the results of the validation experiment carried out in three experimental classrooms, it is known that the implementation of the authentic assessment model has proven to be effective in developing the student's reading habits and skills. On the other hand, it is also known that the conventional assessment model has also contributed to improvement in the student's reading habits and skills. To prove the effectiveness, A T-test was carried out and the results are as follows:

Table 5. The Results of the T-Test on Reading Habits and Skills between the Experimental Class and Control Class

		Reading Habits	
		Equalvariancesas sumed	*Equal variances not assumed*
t-test for Equality of Means	*T*	5.802	5.814
	Df	198	197.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	MeanDifference	8.18452	8.18452
	Std. ErrorDifference	1.41071	1.40766
		Reading Skills	
		Equalvariancesas sumed	*Equal variances not assumed*
t-test for Equality of Means	*T*	5.144	5.140
	Df	198	196.730
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	MeanDifference	6.64966	6.64966
	Std. ErrorDifference	1.29277	1.29382

(Source: the results of statistical tests conducted in 2013)

Based on the data presented in Table 5 above, the authentic assessment model that is developed is considered to have a higher level of effectiveness in the development of reading habits and skills compared to those commonly used in schools (conventional models). This proves that an authentic assessment model is effective in developing primary school students' reading habits and skills. The results of the validation experiment also indicate that compared to the authentic assessment model implemented in the experimental school which has indicated a significant difference in both reading habits and skills in every meeting, the model used in the control school only shows a significant difference in reading habits after three meetings. This confirms that the authentic assessment model is an effective way to improve primary school students' reading skills and develop their reading habits.

The Authentic Assessment Model in Reading Comprehension Instruction

Based on the results of the study, it is known that the implementation of the authentic assessment model has significantly developed primary school students' reading habits and improved their reading comprehension skills. The reading habits emphasized in this study are the reading habits in mental and cognitive dimensions. The reading skills improved by the implementation of the authentic assessment model include students' ability to understand the contents of texts using various multimodal comprehension representation media

The success of the authentic assessment in developing the student's reading habits and comprehension skills is because authentic assessment is made up of a set of authentic activities that students should perform throughout their learning process. These activities are activities which are based on certain reading strategies. Therefore, through the use of authentic assessment, the students will unconsciously develop habits of applying appropriate strategies to their reading. This will lead to the development of flexible reading habits, that is varied reading habits according to the reading purpose. Therefore, it seems reasonable that the authentic assessment model in the end will be able to develop good reading habits among the students. These results complement what Alderson and McIntyre (2006) have found in their study that most students felt the learning benefits through the use of self-assessment.

Based on the final form of the model, the authentic assessment model developed in this study has some differences from the authentic assessment models that have been developed in previous studies. There are at least four major differences between the model developed in this study and the models that have been developed so far. First, the authentic assessment model developed in this study is tailored according to the methods or reading comprehension instruction being used. With the use of this appropriate model, the instruction becomes more conducive and can directly improve the students' competency. In line with this, Joyce, et al (2009) argued that the use of learning models is believed to be able to help achieve learning goals.

Second, the authentic assessment model developed in this study focuses on process assessment, thus this model is designed based on the students' real activities. With these clear stages of activities, teachers can identify difficulties experienced by students in their learning because authentic assessment models can have formative functions during the learning process. In line with this, Popham (2011) stated that formative assessment is an assessment done during the learning process based on the

outcomes of students' real activities throughout the learning process so that this assessment will be able to give feedback on the student's progress.

Third, the authentic assessment model developed in this study does not only provide general activities in learning but also several activities oriented towards the development of good reading habits among the students. The reading habits in this study are not physical/ visual reading habits but they are more cognitive. The reading habits here refer to the students' habits of developing knowledge based on the materials they read, which include grasping ideas thoroughly, processing ideas accurately and cooperatively, as well as habits of expressing ideas creatively and responsibly. Based on this fact, the authentic assessment model developed in this study is not only a physical/visual model but more of a mental/cognitive model.

Fourth, the authentic assessment developed here is equipped with process worksheets that guide students to work toward the objective of the model being developed. Based on this condition, although teachers do not have a sound understanding of the reading instruction model, teachers, and students will unconsciously incorporate authentic learning activities into the right learning model. The use of process worksheets can directly improve reading skills or gradually, in line with the principles of sequential learning outlined by Axfor, Hardes, & Wise (2009), that through sequential learning, students will gain more complex skills, strategies, and knowledge.

The authentic assessment in reading instruction which was successfully developed is also aimed at helping the students to gain a deep understanding of what they read. This is in line with the form of authentic assessment that also puts an emphasis on cognitive, which can enhance knowledge acquisition. Further, it is believed that information and knowledge that the students gain can stick longer because they are obtained through authentic activities performed by the students which are incorporated in various multimodal representation media.

The Contribution of the Authentic Assessment Model to the Development of Reading Habits

The implementation of the authentic assessment model in this study has proven to be effective in improving the students' habits during the reading process. These habits are mental habits, that is the habits of processing information thoroughly and appropriately in every reading stage. Therefore, the reading habits developed through this study include the habits in pre-reading stage, while-reading stage, and post-reading stage.

The first reading habits developed in this study are those in the pre-reading stage. In this stage, the habits help students to read with a purpose. This means that students set a purpose for their reading before their reading activities. Reading with a purpose has proven to be able to improve students' reading skills, thus compared to purposeless reading, reading with a purpose can contribute to students' success at reading. Ahuja and Ahuja (2007) argued that a reading purpose plays a very important role in reading success. Furthermore, Iyer (2007) argued that one of the biggest mistakes made by readers is reading without setting a clear purpose.

The second reading habits developed through the implementation of the authentic assessment model are those in the while-reading stage. These habits are related to the students' cognitive habits during reading activities. Thus, the authentic

assessment provides activities that require the students to think to comprehend what they read. Based on this more complex reading process, this study supplements the authentic assessment instruments developed by Prestidge and Glaser (2000). This study has succeeded in developing the students' reading habits by accustoming the students to perform various activities when they are reading. It is these activities that are expected to be the basic model for the students to enhance their understanding of discourse and retain the knowledge in their long-term memory.

The authentic assessment developed in this study also allows the students to choose the strategies deemed appropriate to understand what they read. Through these strategies, the students are expected to be able to think independently of the strategies that are suitable for them to build a good understanding. In line with this, Alderson and McIntyre (2006) concluded that authentic assessment can stimulate students to independently find the learning activities deemed necessary for the development of their learning skills.

The third reading habits developed in this study are related to the post-reading stage. The habits being developed in schools so far are the habits that focus only on comprehension assessment by answering questions. Through this study, students are taught to demonstrate their understanding more creatively and independently. Unlike the studies conducted by Murray, et al. (2011); Alonso, et al. (2009); Smagorinsky (2009); and Provost, et al. (2009) that aimed to develop assessment instruments for measuring reading skills, this study emphasized creative and independent ways to demonstrate understanding. The media used by the students to demonstrate their understanding are multimodal, like poems, comics, posters, and other media. Through these media, students are not only able to enhance their understanding of the reading contents, but they are also able to produce creative works, which in turn will boost their creativity.

The results of the extensive test and validation experiment show that the development of good reading habits can be directed to both high-ability students and low-ability students. The difference is that with high-ability students, the instillation of habits will be more difficult because high-ability students tend to think that with few efforts they can comprehend what they read. With low-ability students, the instillation tends to be easier since low-ability students may think that by developing good reading habits, they can improve their reading comprehension. The role of teachers is to remind the students about the importance of developing good reading habits for their learning achievement so that the students can accept the concepts of authentic assessment.

In its application, the authentic assessment developed in this study is not always easy to implement effectively for all students. Thus, teachers as the implementer of teaching methods, are expected to explain to students the importance of the activities that they should perform during the reading class. Then, teachers should also put more emphasis on the activities that the students should master to perform optimally. By this fact, the development of authentic assessment in the future should be planned collaboratively by researchers, teachers, and students. Furthermore, good reading habits do not develop instantly but they should be practiced repeatedly and continuously. Therefore, the reading habits developed through the implementation of the authentic assessment model in this study cannot be learned in one session, but it will take at least three sessions to develop the habits.

The Contribution of the Authentic Assessment Model to the Development of Reading Skills

The authentic assessment developed in this study is also proven to have significantly improved the students' reading comprehension skills. The fact that improvement is evident in every school indicates that the authentic assessment model does not only work with high-ability students but also with low-ability students. The authentic assessment model developed in this study is equipped with thinking activities. Thus, students are habituated to processing discourse with an appropriate strategy. With the strategy they use, the students can read thoroughly and contextually so that they have a better understanding of what they read. Different from the study conducted by Greenleaf, et.al (2010) which developed a reading apprenticeship model that relies on stimuli to develop students' reading comprehension skills, this study relies on the authentic activities performed by the students when they are reading and on students' creativity in demonstrating their understanding through multimodal representation media.

Reading instruction through optimal implementation of authentic assessment involves designing a reading instruction model based on students' activities. In line with this, LaLopa (2005) stated that the development of authentic assessment allows students to gain a deeper understanding. Therefore, it seems reasonable that the authentic assessment model in reading instruction developed in this study can develop students' reading skills. Based on this fact, this study complements what Bryant, et al. (2009) found, that direct interaction between students and texts in the pre-reading stage, while-reading stage, and post-reading stage will develop student's knowledge of what they read.

Improvement in the students' reading skills also results from the use of the process worksheets in the reading instruction. The use of these process worksheets can involve the students in understanding texts at every level of understanding. The use of the process worksheets to develop different complexities of reading comprehension is different from the findings of the study conducted by Alonzon, et al. which puts more emphasis on the summative assessment model based on different levels of comprehension, which consists of literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension.

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the authentic assessment developed in this study has also proven to improve the quality of reading instruction in schools. This is because developing an authentic assessment is the same as developing creative, innovative, and productive instruction. Through the implementation of the authentic assessment, the teachers admit that the reading instruction becomes more interesting and creative, thus the students feel challenged to be able to read better. This supports the assumption that assessment can be used to guide the learning process and also to develop student's academic skills.

CONCLUSION

The authentic assessment developed in this study is the model based on the reading process. The model developed is formative, that is it is developed for every reading stage from the pre-reading stage, while-reading stage, to post-reading stage. In the pre-reading stage, the assessment was aimed at guiding and assessing purposive reading. In the while-reading stage, the assessment was intended for the students to do mental activities in comprehending the reading contents. In the post-reading stage, the assessment was intended to guide students to represent their understanding of various multimodal media and to assess the comprehension gained during the reading process.

Based on the results of the study, it is known that the authentic assessment model is proven to have significantly contributed to the students' positive reading habits during their reading. The reading habits here refer to the students' habits of developing their knowledge based on the reading materials they read, comprising the habit of grasping ideas carefully, processing ideas accurately and cooperatively, and the habits of expressing ideas creatively and responsibly. The improvement is evident in all schools, meaning that the authentic assessment model does not only work with skilled students but also with less skilled students. Considering this fact, an authentic assessment model is crucial to improving students' reading habits while reading.

The authentic assessment is also proven to have enhanced the student's understanding of what they read. This understanding is represented through various multimodal media. The use of multimodal media is not only able to be used as a medium to represent understanding but also to develop the student's creativity. About the scope of this study, the improvement is evident in all schools. Therefore, the authentic assessment model developed in this study can be used in all schools to develop primary school students' reading competency.

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