

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This chapter introduces the present study. It presents the background, scope, purpose, research questions, significance, and keywords used.

1.1 Background of the Study

Teaching materials are crucial in most language classes because they generally become the basis for activities and practices in the classroom. They become the language input students receive, provide ideas for teachers on how to plan and teach lessons, and serve as formats that teachers can use (Richard, 2002:251). With regards to these essential roles of materials for both students and teachers, developing them becomes a crucial decision as well.

Brown (1995:139) defines material as any systematic description of the technique and exercises to be used in classroom teaching. The technique and exercises includes the lesson plan, packets of audio visual aids, games, or other types of activities that are used in the classroom. Further it is explained that the key in developing sound materials is to make sure that the materials are well described and organized so that a teacher can use them with no confusion and with a minimum of preparation time. A set of material is viable if a teacher may implement it without any help from the original creator. This is applicable to any kinds of materials including reading comprehension materials.

In preparing the reading texts and exercises for students a definition of reading needs to be selected. This definition becomes the basis for the development process. This present study believes that reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning (Anderson in Nunan, 2003). In other words, it is believed that during reading reader processes, in his mind, new information from the text by integrating them with his background knowledge. This means that conceptual grounding for the selected reading topics is one of the considerations in developing the reading materials.

Reading materials may be presented through one type of medium such as paper or through a combination of several media better known as multimedia. One of the frequently used multimedia in the field of language learning is computer based multimedia which integrates various kinds of media like texts, voice, pictures, animation, and video clips in a single software (Jacobs, 1992 in Munir, 2001). It is believed that such media provide students with richer mental image to support their language learning (Frommer, 1998 in Hadley, 2001:163).

Other advantages of using computer based multimedia are that computers can be programmed to allow users to control both the conditions of viewing and what is viewed (Frommer, 1998 in Hadley, 2001:212) and that it offers interactive learning (Frommer, 1998 in Hadley, 2001:163). The possibility of controlling the conditions of viewing and what is viewed enable a material developer to adapt the information and tasks with the learners' competency level

and address their individual interests. Meanwhile, the interactive learning results in the improvement of sensory stimulation (Hoogeveen, 1995 in Munir 2001).

Computer based multimedia in education can function as courseware. Courseware is defined as software and data used in computer-based training (Encarta Dictionary Tools, 2006). Therefore, EFL Reading courseware is software designed to be used as a media in the teaching and learning of EFL reading. The teaching and learning are designed and packaged in computer-based multimedia software.

Considering the facts above, the present study focuses on developing materials for a prototype of an EFL reading courseware. The development was intended to increase student's reading comprehension through written, visual, and auditory modes. The term 'increase' implies that the teaching of reading here refers to what Anderson (in Nunan 2003) called "teaching learners who already have reading skills in their first language".

The participants of this present study are 8th grade students who have been studying English for one year and their English teacher in one junior high school in Bandung. In their previous year, they have learned narratives, descriptive texts, anecdotes, and recounts. It is expected that the result of the present study may help the students in increasing their comprehension towards descriptive texts.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study is part of a 3-year research program on The Development and Effectiveness of Multimedia in English Language Learning for Junior High Students conducted by Prof. Dr. Nenden Sri Lengkanawati, M.Pd, Dr. Iwa Lukmana, M.A. and Dr. Munir, MIT. In the first year the research dealt with mapping the condition of learning English in junior high schools and developing the prototype of instructional design and storyboard as the springboard to develop the multimedia software. In the second year the research focuses on developing materials for the software. In the last year the research will focus on measuring the effectiveness of the software in the teaching and learning process.

This study is under the second year period. Therefore, it concentrates on courseware materials development. More specifically, the materials are intended to increase 8th grade students' reading skill.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study is to develop materials of an EFL reading courseware for 8th grade students. Within this context, the study attempts to

- (1) describe the processes involved in developing EFL reading comprehension material courseware,
- (2) find out students' and teacher's responses toward the material designed, and
- (3) compare students' reading comprehension before and after using the courseware.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the above-mentioned purposes, the problems of the present study are formulated in the following research questions.

- (1) What are the processes involved in developing materials of EFL reading comprehension courseware?
- (2) How do students and teacher respond to the courseware?
- (3) Does the reading courseware improve students' reading comprehension?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study may be of benefit to students, English teachers, material developers and other researchers. Students may use the courseware individually at school or at home to increase their reading comprehension skill, particularly in terms of descriptive texts. When using the courseware students are trained to study independently, in their own pace. English teachers may use the courseware as supplementary materials in their classes. Material developers interested in integrating multimedia into the teaching and learning process may develop the courseware for other types of texts or other English language skills. Other researchers may use the courseware to conduct further research.

1.6 Research Methodology

There are five main instruments used in this study, i.e. (1) questionnaires for needs analysis and courseware evaluation, (2) interview guidelines, (3)

observational sheets, (4) learning materials in the form of the prototype courseware, and (5) tests, which include pre-test and post-test. Findings from the questionnaires, interviews, and observational sheets are analyzed descriptively. Meanwhile, scores from the pre-test and post-test are analyzed using the matched t-test.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Several key terms are used in explaining, discussing, and reporting the results of this present study. There are four key words used, i.e. EFL reading courseware, multimedia, CD-ROM, interactivity, and descriptive text. Courseware is defined as software and data used in computer based training (Encarta Dictionary Tools, 2006). In this study EFL reading courseware refers to software which is used as supplementary material to increase the students' reading skill through written, visual, and auditory modes.

Multimedia is defined by Vaughan (1994 in Greer and Brown, 2002) as any combination of texts, graphic art, sound, animation, and video delivered by computer or other electronic means. In this study the term multimedia refers to the combination of written, visual, and auditory modes used in presenting the reading program. The term 'interactivity' is used to describe software applications which allow learners to make decisions about the content they work with, the paths they take through this content, and the responses made by the software to their actions. The last term, 'descriptive text' refers to texts whose main goal is giving

information to the readers. In this study the text particularly refers to descriptive reading texts.

1.7 Concluding Remark

This chapter has described the background, scope, purpose, research questions, and significance of the study as well as key terms used in the study. The next chapter will present the review of literature used as the basis for the research methodology presented in chapter III and data analysis discussed in chapter IV.

