IMPROVING STUDENTS’ READING COMPREHENSION USING VIP (VOCABULARY INVESTOR PACKAGE) MEDIA AT SMKN 1 BATU

Indah Dwi Wahyuni  
SMKN 1 Batu  
indahdwiwahyuni@yahoo.com  
Indonesia

Erythrina Crista Wijayanti  
Universitas Negeri Malang  
cerythrina@gmail.com  
Indonesia

Article Info

ABSTRACT

One of main concerns of the most English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is how to assist the students to develop English language proficiency. In this regard, reading is considered as a crucial part of the EFL learning process. The major goal of teaching reading is students are able to recognize the words and convey the meaning of them. Vocabulary seems to gain far more attention as the students had difficulties of interpreting the words that interferes their reading comprehension. Given such limitation of the students’ competence, their motivation may become low. Having seen this phenomenon, the teacher should maximize opportunities for students to improve their reading comprehension as well as their motivation. To this end, this research investigates the implementation of VIP (Vocabulary Investor Package) Media to enhance students’ reading comprehension. The research conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) by employing 2 cycles to 28 students of twelve grade at SMKN 1 Batu. Accordingly, the procedures included planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The results show that (1) the highest score in cycle 2 was higher than the highest score in cycle 1; (2) the lowest score in cycle 1 increased compared to cycle 1; (3) the average score was better than in cycle 1; (4) the percentage of students who achieved the minimum criterion (KKM) in cycle 2 was improved rather than in cycle 1; and (5) the percentage of students who did not reached KKM was decreased compared to cycle 1. Therefore, the use of VIP (Vocabulary Investor Package) Media successfully improves students’ reading comprehension. For the effective implementation, this suggests that applying VIP media to the other skills is highly required.

Corresponding Author:  
Indah Dwi Wahyuni  
SMKN 1 Batu  
indahdwiwahyuni@yahoo.com  
Indonesia

Erythrina Crista Wijayanti  
Universitas Negeri Malang  
cerythrina@gmail.com  
Indonesia

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1. Research Background

The progress of a nation is interconnected with the quality of education applied in the nation. The more advanced the education of a nation, the more prosperous its nation. In this era, information technology and communication are rapidly evolving and advancing. Everyone in a country can easily connect with other people from different countries. Besides technological media, the use of foreign language is considered as important as well. Accordingly, English is the most widely used around the world for communication purposes.

Learning English is essential to improve the quality of life. It allows us to broaden our world and to have the ability to relate people from every country. Therefore, learning English is necessarily implemented at schools by considering English subject is included in national examination. However, English subject is challenging lesson to be mastered, especially for EFL students. The problem occurred when the researcher taught twelve grade students (XII BB 2) and found that students had difficulties in reading comprehension because of their lack of vocabulary. This finding can be concluded that since English in Indonesia is a foreign language, most students get difficulty in reading English texts.

Reading comprehension depends on the students’ cognitive process. They must visually process the words and make representation to form an understanding on particular meaning of sentence (Kendeou et al, 2014). In this regard, reading comprehension requires interpretation and thinking. The students should learn to interpret word meaning of the context by comprehending words as parts of phrases, clauses, or sentences. When reading the text, the students need to associate their linguistic ability from literal comprehension to the applied reading comprehension. This reading activity promotes the students to decode the individual word into perfect definition of reading material. If the students are able figure out the expected meaning of a word, then they will be able to identify the word. Hence, to comprehend the text, vocabulary knowledge is highly affect their comprehension.

Unfamiliar vocabulary in the passage hinders students from understanding the meaning of the text. The students will have difficulty to comprehend the text if they do not improve their vocabulary knowledge including breadth-depth vocabulary. Breadth-depth vocabulary knowledge relate to the quantity of number that the students know and how well they know certain word. The higher vocabulary breadth/size level will lead to better reading comprehension performance and vice versa (Kameli and Baki, 2013). Thus, if their vocabulary knowledge is not strong, they will have problem to express their idea or to convey message. As experimental study conducted by Chou (2011) reveals the participants of EFL students in the vocabulary knowledge group scored significantly higher than the control group and the background knowledge group. This finding implies that having vocabulary knowledge could increase the performance of a reading comprehension.

Discussing the importance of vocabulary, teaching vocabulary aims at enabling the students to understand particular concepts of unfamiliar words and gain number of words in order to use those words successfully for communication purpose. Another opinion is expressed by Cahyono and Widiati (2008) that it is necessary to focus on what teachers have conducted to assist their students on improving lexical competence. The strategy and planning carried out by the teacher will contribute to students’ achievement in learning process. The strategy and planning are concerned on how the teacher tries to achieve the goal of learning. Thus, the use media can be one of the solutions that make learning more enjoyable. Given such media in the learning process, the students are more active and the learning outcomes can be achieved. Consequently, teaching aid takes account into success to support the teaching and learning process. This is affirmed by DePorter (2007:14) that joyful learning will result in an effective learning experience. For this reason, it is appropriate to use the teaching aids in order to improve learning outcomes and create learning process becoming more active, innovative, effective, interesting, and fun.

Moreover, students would be unsuccessful if they acquired cognitive and metacognitive abilities yet lacked the motivation to become engaged. On one hand, motivation is considered to be one of the conditions to facilitate students to be more successful in learning a language (Saville, 2006). By having not enough motivation, it will reduce the students’ desire to learn language. This is important as Chen, Maarof, & Yunus (2016) and Miller & Faircloth (2009) explain students need motivation to engage in reading. Without interest and motivation, students will have difficulty to become engage with reading, to reach goal, and to persist in comprehending the text. More specifically, motivation will determine the students whether they will engage or disengaged in the learning process, for instance boosting their motivation by giving them a reward. Reward is one of ways to increase motivation and learning outcomes.

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Awards are given if the students succeed in exceeding the standard criteria (Slavin, 2005:10). Awards can be given individually or in groups in form of stationary, snacks, book even praise. This is in line with Wardoyo (2013:53) that awards or prizes or recognition will be able to motivate students to continue in improving their achievement in learning activities.

Considering the gap between the importance of vocabulary knowledge and students’ motivation in reading comprehension, an appropriate technique, inserting the use of instructional media should be applied. Trying to solve the reading comprehension problems, the researcher considers using VIP (Vocabulary Investor Package) media as learning media which motivates the students to comprehend the text.

The technique using VIP media is considered suitable with the teaching of reading comprehension as it provides particular content material. The students are trained to understand vocabulary by using set of vocabulary lists on colorful buffalo paper taken from English text. It gives the students opportunity to recognize and comprehend the vocabulary before discussing the English text. The task of completing the list of vocabulary task using VIP media motivates students to learn the meaning of words indirectly and motivates them to gain much reward as possible at the same time. There is agreement in English language teaching literature about the effect of vocabulary assistance before reading (Alessi & Dwyer, 2008; Khamesipour, 2015). In other words, pre-teaching of vocabulary facilitates students’ vocabulary acquisition and greatly helps them in reading comprehension.

Concerning on a positive contribution of VIP media use and reward in teaching English, the researcher is going to conduct a Classroom Action Research in using VIP media to improve the ability of the students of XII BB 2 at SMKN 1 Batu in reading comprehension and their motivation to understand English texts. According to this objective, the research problem can be formulated as How can students’ reading comprehension be improved through the use of VIP media for XII BB 2 at SMKN 1 Batu?

2. Method

The research design examined Classroom Action Research (CAR). This research design was used for solving classroom problem that needs improvement. The subjects were 28 students of XII BB 2 in second semester 2017-2018 school year in SMK Negeri 1 Kota Batu at Jalan Bromo No. 11, Batu. This research was conducted in 2 cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The cycle is adopted by Kemnis & McTaggart (Burns, 2010:9). The diagram can be shown below

**Cycle 1**

The meeting held on January 1, 2018 for one meeting (4x45minutes). The implementation of learning is described as follows:

**Planning**

In this stage, the researcher prepared things dealing with teaching technique, research instruments including: (1) lesson plan focusing on basic competence 3.5, namely understanding business letters with two indicators. The indicators were students were able to understand vocabulary related to contents of
business letter, and students were able to answer questions referring to contents of business letter; (2) VIP media; (3) VIP media answer sheet; (4) VIP media answer key; (5) Test items; (6) Test answer sheet; (7) Observation sheet; (8) play money; (9) Envelope; and (10) Gifts (stationary and snacks).

Implementing

The implementation of the action was in line with the activities of lesson plan. In this stage, the researcher carried out 3 activities, namely pre-activity, whilst activity, and post-activity. The first activity was pre-activity. In this activity, the researcher asked students about the types of business letter they knew.

The second activity was whilst activity. The researcher acted as a Vocabulary Investor who donated money to students who had high motivation and achieved certain results in learning English. The following were the steps to be followed: (a) students sit based on serial number of the attendance list; (b) the researcher distributed envelopes and answer sheets to each student; (c) the researcher explained the procedure of using VIP media; (d) each student prepared a notebook and dictionary; (e) the researcher distributed VIP answer sheets; (f) students chose VIP media in a random order and worked on it; (g) students should find difficult words and looked up the meaning in the dictionary and wrote them in their notebooks; (h) After completing set of VIP material, students matched the answer with the answer key to the researcher; (i) students exchanged the scores obtained with play money prepared by the researcher as a Vocabulary Investor. One correct answer can be exchanged for Rp. 1,000; (j) steps (f) to (j) were repeated until the all VIP materials were completely finished by the students or until running out of time; (k) students worked on reading comprehension test; (l) the researcher and students checked and discussed the answer of the given test; (m) students with a minimum score of 70 (KKM) were given an additional money of Rp. 10,000; and (n) students spent and exchanged their play money with snacks prepared by the researcher.

The third stage is post-activity. In this stage, the students worked on reading comprehension test of business letter in form of 20 multiple choice items.

Observing

In this step, the researcher observed all effects of the implementation of VIP media in to improve students’ ability in reading comprehension. The researcher collected two kinds of data, namely numerical data and verbal data. The numerical data were obtained from the students’ reading comprehension score and the students’ attitude in responding the VIP media use applied in class were collected through observation.

The Criteria of Success

The criteria of success of this research were emphasized on two criteria, namely the students’ responses on the Implementation of VIP Media and the product of the students’ reading comprehension. The criteria of success are described in Table 1.

| The criteria of success | Data source | Instrument for data collection |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| The process:            | The students’ statement about their attitude towards the implementation of the VIP Media | Observation |
| the students are motivated and give positive responses during the implementation of VIP media in reading comprehension | | |
| The product:            | The result of the students’ reading comprehension product | Reading Comprehension Test |
| The average score of all students is passing the minimum criterion (KKM), which is 70. | | |

In order to assess students’ reading comprehension, the researcher used a scoring rubric. The total of reading comprehension test was 20 items. Each correct item is 4. Therefore, the maximum of total converted score got from the exercises is 80. The formula for obtaining individual score is as follows:

$$\text{The students’ score} = \frac{\text{Total score} \times 100}{80}$$

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Research Instruments

The research instruments in this research were observation guide, reading comprehension test, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor the preparation of learning tool, learning process, and students’ performance and participation during the teaching and learning process using VIP media in reading comprehension. Meanwhile, the test was administered in order to determine the students’ achievement. The test used in this research is in form of 20 items of multiple choices. The scoring rubric of the test is based on scoring guide. Furthermore, documentation was done by taking photos during the learning process.

Reflecting

The reflection part dealt with the activity to analyze the implementation of the action during the cycle which was obtained through observation and reading comprehension exercises. The result of the data was compared to the criteria of success. Based on the result, the students’ achievement did not meet the minimum criteria (KKM) of 70.

Considering the result in cycle 1, the researcher faced several problems. The first problem was time allocation. The researcher thought that insufficient time was crucial. As a consequence, additional meetings are needed for materials, change the sequence of activities, or give different treatments in the learning process. The second problem was the seating arrangement including the students’ desk, researcher’s desk, and VIP media display table. The students’ movement was interfered because of focusing on one point. In this case, the researcher needed to arrange the room to give an ease for students’ mobility.

Cycle 2

The meeting consisted of one meeting (4x45 minutes) and held on January 20, 2018. The implementation of learning is described as follows:

Planning

The planning in cycle 2 was almost the same as cycle 1. However, the researcher added one learning step which was conducting pre-test before the students used VIP media. The purpose was the students would have a picture of the material to be studied and achieved increasing learning outcomes at the end of the cycle. In addition, the researcher arranged the place of VIP material on a different table, so the students’ mobility was better.

Implementing

As in cycle 1, at this stage the researcher carried out three activities similar to cycle 1. The different activity between cycle 1 and cycle 2 was a pre-test given by the researcher in pre-activity. Moreover, in the while activity, the researcher added additional awards for students who achieved a perfect score (100) points would be given extra money of Rp. 10,000 as a reward.

Observing

In this stage, the researcher collected two kinds of data, namely numerical data and verbal data. The numerical data were obtained from the students’ reading comprehension score and the students’ attitude in responding the VIP media use applied in class were collected through observation.

Reflecting

The researcher reviewed the learning process and learning outcomes achieved by the students in cycle 2. The result of the data was compared with the indicators of the criteria of success. Because the indicators had been achieved, the researcher did not continue the action for the next cycle.

3. Results

The results of the research include the students’ responses to the implementation of VIP media in reading comprehension, and students’ final product. The findings in the first cycle did not meet the criteria of success, so the researcher decided to continue to the second cycle.
The Students’ responses on the Implementation of VIP Media

In relation to the students’ attitude, most of the students gave positive points in response to the effects they felt after experiencing reading comprehension through the use of VIP media. During the learning process in cycle 1 and cycle 2, the students looked enthusiastic and active in learning activities seen from their expression and comments they expressed. At the end of meeting, the students excited because of the award given by the researcher and they expected that the researcher will apply similar learning methods in other meetings. Furthermore, due to students’ responses in cycle 2, The students were more prepared with the material seen from the students positioned their sitting according to the attendance sequence number without being instructed by the researcher. Besides that, they were ready with dictionaries and writing tools without wasting much time. Considering their preparations, they can work more effectively and efficiently compared to cycle 1.

The Students’ Reading Comprehension Achievement

The result of cycle 1 showed that 6 students out of 28 students reached the KKM score. Meanwhile, 22 students did not meet the KKM score. The highest score achieved by the students was 80 and the lowest score was 30 with an average score of 59. Regarding to the results, it can concluded that the achievement of the students in reading comprehension on business letter material was 21%. Thus, the result did not meet the criteria of success set by the researcher, and therefore, second cycle was needed to improve students’ achievement. Regarding to the data in cycle 2, the researcher got a significant result in learning outcomes. Considering the minimum criteria (KKM) of 70, the results in cycle 2 showed 17 out of 28 students achieved KKM score, and 11 students did not achieve the KKM score. The highest score achieved by the students was 85 and the lowest score was 40 with an average score of 68. Based on the results, it can be inferred that students’ achievement in reading comprehension on business letter material in cycle 2 was 61%. The comparison of students’ achievement between cycle 1 and cycle 2 can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. The Students’ Achievement in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

| No. | Description                                      | Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| 1.  | The highest score                                | 80      | 85      |
| 2.  | The lowest score                                 | 30      | 40      |
| 3.  | The average score                                | 59      | 68      |
| 4.  | Percentage of students who achieved minimum criterion (KKM) | 21%      | 61%      |
| 5.  | Percentage of students’ who did not achieve minimum criterion (KKM) | 79%      | 39%      |

According to the table above, there was an increasing 5 points in the highest score, while the lowest score increased to 10 points. Moreover, students who achieved KKM in cycle 2 was improved (61%) compared to cycle 1 (21%). Furthermore, students who did not reach KKM in cycle 2 (39%) was lower than in cycle 1 (79%). Hence, it can be implied that the significant improvement was caused by the pre-test given by the researcher and the action could be terminated.

4. Discussion

The finding of this research showed that the use of VIP media can improve the students’ ability in reading comprehension. The students’ improvement was gained through the form of pre-test and the use of set of vocabulary in VIP media during the learning process. The progress in the students’ achievement was influenced through learning vocabulary before reading English.

Reflecting on the findings, this research could prove that VIP media is helpful for students in reading comprehension. The result of the research demonstrates that this media can be an effective instructional medium not only because it is unique, but also it is appropriate to have deep vocabulary knowledge to assist their reading comprehension. This is supported by Wessels (2011) and Hairrell et al (2011) who asserted that providing vocabulary knowledge before reading phase can access background knowledge and connect unknown vocabulary to known knowledge. As a result, it will encourage the students to use their linguistic knowledge to establish and strengthen their understanding of the target vocabulary. After they have activated their existing knowledge, they begin making connections to known words and images in the memory. Thus, they are more actively constructing meaning in context. Moreover, the use of VIP media which was unique made the students enthusiastic and gave full attention to the teaching and learning
process. It also made the students engaged in learning. This affected their motivation and their learning of reading comprehension as well. If the classroom is enjoyable, the students will learn effectively and can increase their motivation to learn.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of VIP (Vocabulary Investor Package) which was applied can improve students’ ability in reading comprehension. This medium was an effective to assist students’ reading comprehension in aiding the students to understand particular vocabulary before understanding a whole text and trigger their motivation to learn.

The procedures of conducting the present study to improve reading comprehension of the students of XII BB 2 were generally divided into some activities. The first was pre-test that was administered in order to make the students having vivid picture of the material that they are going to be discussed. After that, the students should find difficult words and looked up the meaning in the dictionary and wrote them in their notebooks. After completing set of vocabularies on VIP media, they matched the answer with the answer key to the researcher as Investor. One correct answer can be exchanged for Rp.1,000 and they can exchange their play money with snacks prepared by the researcher. Finally, they worked on reading comprehension test.

Reflecting to the results concerning on understanding business letter with VIP (Vocabulary Investor Package) media was proven to improve students’ learning outcomes. The following descriptions were: (1) the highest score in cycle 2 was higher than the highest score in cycle 1; (2) the lowest score in cycle 1 increased compared to cycle 1; (3) the average score was better than in cycle 1; (4) the percentage of students who achieved the minimum criterion (KKM) in cycle 2 was improved rather than in cycle 1; and (5) the percentage of students who did not reached KKM was decreased compared to cycle 1.

According to the research findings, some suggestions are proposed in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process in the future. For the English teachers, the result of the research is one of solutions for the teaching problem related to improve students’ reading comprehension due to the fact that the present study concluded that the use of VIP media is able to increase the students’ achievement. It is also suggested that the teachers can also apply VIP media to the other skills such as listening, speaking or writing. Meanwhile, for school practitioner, the results can be used as a consideration for making school policy. Moreover, for future researchers, the findings can be used as valuable sources to conduct further research concerning on the use of VIP media as learning media to improve students’ ability in reading comprehension on certain theme.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

First author’s
Indah Dwi Wahyuni
SMKN 1 Batu
indahdwiwahyuni@yahoo.com

Co-author
Erythrina Crista Wijayanti
Universitas Negeri Malang
cerythrina@gmail.com

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