Developing *"ARMI"* Medium to Encourage Students in Writing Simple Sentences of Simple Past Tense

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Abstract

Learning to write simple sentences needs more than having the idea(s) and understanding language components. Writing skill is difficult for English foreign language learners because of lack of communication in English such as the society does not speak or write in English. Moreover when it comes to write in simple past tense, there are two factors which the students find it difficult, those are, the difficulties in the forms and in the usage. Thus, a suitable instructional media is made to overcome the students' problems in writing simple past tense. This study aims to describe the development of an instructional media involving game called "ARMI Medium" to encourage students in writing simple sentences of simple past tense. It uses the modified cycle of R & D design adopted from Dick, Carey, and Carey (2015) to describe the development of this medium. The result shows that the medium successfully attracts the students' interest in writing simple sentences in which the students in a group can produce good simple sentences in the end of this activity.

Keywords: writing, media, game, ARMI medium, simple past tense

Abstrak

Belajar untuk menulis kalimat sederhana membutuhakan lebih dari memiliki ide-ide dan memahami komponen-komponen bahasa. Kemampuan menulis itu sulit untuk pelajar bahasa inggris sebagai bahasa asing dikarenakan kurangnya komunikasi dalam bahasa inggris, misalnya, masyarakat yang tidak berbicara atau menulis dalam bahasa inggris. Lebih-lebih jika itu berkaitan dengan menulis dalam simple past tense, ada dua faktor yang membuat siswa merasa kesulitan, yaitu kesulitan dalam bentuk dan kegunaannya. Oleh karena itu, media yang cocok dibuat untuk mengatasi masalah siswa dalam menulis simple past tense. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pengembangan sebuah media yang melibatkan permainan didalamnya bernama "media ARMI" untuk mendorong siswa dalam menulis kalimat simple past tense yang sederhana. Studi ini menggunakan desain R & D yang dimodifikasi dari Dick, Carey, and Carey (2015) untuk mendeskripsikan pengembangan media ini. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa media ini sukses menarik minat siswa dalam menulis kalimat sederhana yang mana siswa dalam kelompok bisa menghasilkan kalimat sederhana yang baik di akhir kegiatan.

Kata Kunci: menulis, media, permainan, media ARMI, simple past tense

INTRODUCTION

For EFL students, writing is one of the most important skills to master in the classroom (Bagheri & Pourgharib, 2013). As Megawati & Anugerahwati (2012) states that people should consider writing as the central thing to learn well in the classroom because through writing, people can deliver the idea(s) or information for communication purpose in a public place. Unfortunately, lack of communication in English supports the idea of EFL students that writing is the difficult skill in English classroom (Allamis, 2010;

Nezakatgoo, 2011; Özdemir & Aydin, 2015) even write sentences. In developing the idea(s) for writing activity, students should involve both the knowledge relating to the idea(s) and language components, such as, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation (Taqi, Akbar, Nouh, & Dashti, 2015) from receptive skill activities (listening and reading).

In 2013 Curriculum, four types of writing texts have to be mastered by junior high school students in Indonesia. One of them is transactional text. Based on the syllabus of 2013 Curriculum, mostly the transactional texts learnt in the eighth graders are related

to the language structure or grammar, such as simple past tense in the third and fourth basic competency number 10 (KD 3.10-4.10). Based on the syllabus of 2013 Curriculum, in learning simple past tense, students should be able to analyze the social function, the structure, and language features of the text. Unfortunately, lack of students' understanding on the material is normally happened during learning process because their learning styles are affected by environment (Istirokhah, 2010). As noted by Bucholz & Sheffler (2009), classroom environment is an influential factor for increasing or decreasing students' capability and making students enjoy and have fun as an individual who belongs to the group. In fact, many things can influence the learning process not only physical elements but also emotional environment (Hannah, 2013). Physical environment is needed to make learning process works well, such as, applying the media and choosing the learning sources (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009; Hannah, 2013). Besides, emotional environment is closely related to teachers' roles in controlling and organizing the class.

There are two factors that make learning simple past tense difficult, those are, the forms and the usage (Anwar, 2014). First is the difficulty in the forms. There are two kinds of verb used, regular and irregular verb. It commonly makes the students difficult to distinguish how to change the verb of infinitive into the past form (Fadzilyna, 2013). As noted by Anwar (2014) that mostly the students have difficulties more in irregular verb than the regular verb because the changes are unpredictable since the irregular verb has no specific rules. Sometimes the verb is not change anymore *(cut-cut-cut)*, any change in the verb 2 *(come-came-come)*, any change in the verb 2 and verb 3 *(meet-met-met)*, etc. Therefore, the students sometimes make error in irregular verb by adding *–ed* in the end of the verb. Second is the difficulty in the usage. The difficulty of learning language happened because Indonesian learners face the problem and errors in learning foreign language since they just transfer the native language to target language in similar way (Suhirman, 2016). Even, the verbs used to tell the actions or plans in Indonesian language cannot be affected by the time (Rafi'atun, 2007) whether happening in the past, present, or future, Indonesian always uses verb base to tell it, while in English, the verb used will be different. It makes students feel difficult when they use the simple past tense (Anwar, 2014).

Therefore, the role of media is strongly needed in learning process (Rao, 2014) since learning process is involving several factors become one important unit including the environment, professional teacher, and teaching aids or media (Nasab, Esmaeili, & Sarem, 2015). Bringing a suitable media in the classroom will encourage the students to be active in participating (Rusmiati & Rosdiana, 2017). As stated by Wilson's (2001 as cited in Rusmiati & Rosdiana, 2017), using media in teaching is useful to arouse students' interest, increase their motivation, and bring psychological influence. The most media used in the classroom is visual aids such as pictures, flashcard, and others.

One of beneficial strategy to encourage students in learning process is by involving games within the media implementation. There are many definitions of games, but games can be only called as games if they have rules, specific goal, and element of fun (Hadfield, 1999 as cited in Amrullah, 2015; Ibrahim, 2016). The important point to use games in learning process is that the games can arouse the students' interest and participation because it can reduce students' anxiety and boredom (Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2010; Amrullah, 2015). Also, the games always have the element of competition and cooperation which make the player wants to do more (Amrullah, 2015; Romadhon & Lestari, 2017).

To overcome the problem in teaching writing, the media called ARMI Medium was designed to encourage students in writing simple sentences of simple past tense. The media stood for arrange-match-write in which showed the steps in finishing the media. This media also offered some rules to make the students eager to finish it quick. The media was basically inspired from some well-known games, those were, puzzle game and matching picture game. In playing this media, a set of ARMI Medium consisting of a set of puzzle pattern, flashcards, task papers, marker, and manual instruction book were made. In this article, the development of ARMI Medium was described.

METHOD

In this study, educational research and development design proposed by Dick, Carey, and Carey (2015) with qualitative approach was chosen for designing this media. There are 10 steps of R & D cycle from Dick, Carey, and Carey version (2015). However, in developing this ARMI Medium, the steps were modified by omitting and merging some steps into one. Also, some terms were changed. Therefore, the modified steps of R & D used were (1) conducting curriculum analysis and analyzing learners and contexts, (2) writing the goals of the product, (3) developing prototype of the product, (4) designing and conducting field trial I of the product, (5) revising the product, (6) designing and conducting field trial II of the product, and (7) final revision of the product.

In developing this media, the two experts came from two different backgrounds, one from media expert and other from material expert, were invited to give comment,

judgment, critic, and suggestion to make the product better as a standard media in the classroom. In this study, the material expert who validated the material was the English lecturer in State University of Surabaya and the media expert who validated the design and game's layout was the lecturer of educational technology in State University of Surabaya. Besides, two activities including the field trial I and II were designed and conducted in 8th graders to complete this development. In field trial I, each group consisting of six students were invited as the user of this media, while in field trial II, each group consisted of four students as the user.

In collecting the data, the instruments used were questionnaire and observation checklist. The first instrument was questionnaire which aimed to validate the media including the material and design of the games. The questionnaire given to the material expert was to validate the material appropriateness and game applicability, such as the relevance with the chapter taught, the chosen vocabularies, and others. On the other hand, the questionnaire given to the media expert was to validate the design and game's layout, such as the design of the media, the chosen images, the font, and color used in the media, and so on. The other instrument was the observation checklist which aimed to collect the data needed for media application during learning process. All of the data collected from questionnaire and observation checklist were analyzed to conduct a revision for the better media. The media and material experts' comment and suggestions were implemented to revise the developed media better. Besides, the data obtained from the observation during field trial I and II were used for revising the instruction or rules; so, the media would be applicable to encourage the eighth graders students in writing simple sentences of simple past tense.

In analyzing the data, the qualitative approach was used. Both the questionnaire and the observation checklist were analyzed in form of words. The data obtained from the questionnaire distributed to the material and media experts were analyzed to revise the content and design of the product. Meanwhile, the data gathered from the observation checklist would be analyzed in six steps (Creswell, 2009). The steps were (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (2) reading or looking the data, (3) starting specific analysis with coding process, (4) generating the description through coding process, (5) advancing how the description and themes would be represented qualitatively, and (6) making an interpretation from the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
(1) Conducting Curriculum Analysis and Analyzing Learners and Contexts

The first step that the researcher did was to determine the designed product through two ways, those are, based on the curriculum analysis and based on the need analysis of learners and contexts. Reviewing for the syllabus was required to look for the structure of the text, social function, and language features as the consideration in the use of material for the medium. Based on the analysis of curriculum, the researcher decided to focus on the daily activities done in the past. Thus, the use of daily vocabularies was chosen to inspire the students in creating the sentences.

The other activity did was doing preliminary observation to look for the need analysis of learners and contexts. Based on the observation, it was found that students had a problem in mastering the vocabulary especially when they had to master the base verb and past verb. It could be seen that the students here still confused in spelling the vocabularies in written form, moreover when it came to past form. Also, some students still did overgeneralization by adding to-be before the past verb.

(2) Writing The Goals of the Product

After determining the goal and analyzing the need, writing specific goals was important to make the goal clearer. From the preliminary observation, it was found that the students' problem was dealing with the writing activity especially in mastering vocabularies of past verb or doing overgeneralization. Thus, from this developed media, it was expected that the developed medium would encourage students to do writing in fun way. However, reviewing the syllabus was needed dealing with the material used in the medium. The aim was to encourage students in writing simple sentences and help them doing writing. Thus, the goals of the product were formulated as follow; (1) the students are able to differentiate between base verb and past verb, (2) the students are able to decide the suitable picture representing the verb, and (3) the students are able to write down some sentences based on the vocabularies chosen. Besides, to make the media suitable for the students, the questionnaire was made for experts to judge both the material and the media in this developed medium.

(3) Developing Prototype of the Product

After the goals were formulated, the ARMI Medium was designed to encourage the students in writing simple sentences of simple past tense. This medium was played in a group consisting of four till five students to get the best result. The components of the ARMI Medium were (1) packaging of the media which was in form of the

book, (2) a set of puzzle with the pattern of rocket which had 20 vocabularies of base verb and past verb in A5 paper, (3) paper tasks in which the students wrote down all of the vocabularies get from the puzzle, (4) flashcards which should be matched with the certain vocabularies in the task papers, and (5) a manual instruction book. The preliminary form could be seen at the picture below.
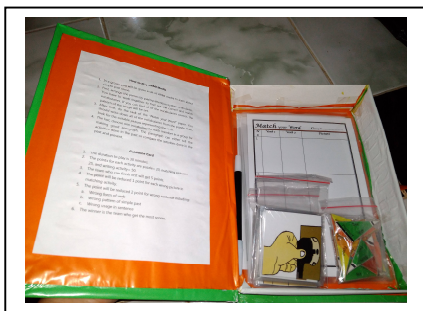
Picture 1: Preliminary Form of the ARMI Medium

The concepts of this medium were inspired from the well-known games, such as, puzzle games and matching picture games. The puzzle was chosen since it was one of popular games. It could make the player addicted because the more the pieces, the more challenging the games. Those reasons inspired the researcher to adapt the puzzle as the learning media. In puzzle games, the player must pay attention in arranging the pieces becoming one, while in this medium, the students must pay attention to the vocabularies of base verb and the past verb in order to arrange the pieces of puzzle into one pattern. Then from the flashcard, the researcher just adopted it in the learning process because 83% of what we learn was through the sense of sight (Cuban, 2001 as cited in Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, & Iqbal, 2015). The pictures would guide the students to decide the suitable vocabularies. In this activity, the students would write down all of the vocabularies got from puzzle activity in the task papers, then the students should decide the suitable picture representing the verbs. The last activity was the students had to choose one verb to create one sentence for each member. While the point of game could be seen in the rules (related to the points given for each activity) and time limitation (the activity should be done in thirty minutes).

After doing the development of the product, the medium got validated and judged by the material and media experts using questionnaire. The result of questionnaire distributed to the material expert showed that the review from material expert was to validate and judge the material and content of the medium. The data gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the material expert showed that the medium had fulfilled the standard of a good media to teach writing in the

classroom. Besides, the chosen vocabularies were suitable with the syllabus of 2013 Curriculum, that is, about daily activities. Thus, the chosen material was appropriate with the students' level. Also, he stated that the medium was interesting and could be able to encourage the students to learn well in the classroom. However, the instruction to guide the students should be revised in order not to misunderstand the concept of the medium. Besides, he suggested that the picture should be added with the context in order to inspire the students in writing simple sentences.

Besides, the review from the media expert was to validate and judge the appearance and design of the product. Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the media expert, she said that the whole concept of the medium was good and engaging. Although the medium was new product in learning process, the basic concept was familiar since it used the combination of puzzle and matching game using flashcards. Thus, the medium was fulfilled the standard of a good media for teaching process. In some points, it still lacked of its design which needed some modification to make the product suitable with the learning need, such as, the box or packaging, the puzzle, and the flashcards. Also, she suggested to add manual instruction book in order that the students understand the medium better. For the box or packaging, the concept of the packaging was like a book, but the expert thought that the packaging was not good at all since it could break easily and it was not effective and saleable. Besides, the content of the cover should be modified. She suggested that the content was added some points, those were, the meaning of ARMI, the user of medium, and the logo of university. Then, some adjustments were given to the puzzle and flashcards. The expert said that the puzzle should be enlarged to ease the groups in arranging the pieces of puzzle. The other adjustment came from the flashcards. There were three points that should be adjusted to reach the purpose of flashcards effectively, (1) changing the picture size smaller, (2) adding proper color for the picture ball in *"catch"* word, and (3) provide the suitable picture to perform the action of *"hang"*. The other suggestion was to add a manual instruction book. At first, the instruction was put behind the cover of book.

(4) Designing and Conducting Field Trial I of the Product

The field trial I of the product was conducted in the eighth graders at one of the junior high school in Bojonegoro. The data used for trial was collected using observation checklist. The participants of this trial were class VIII-D. The field trial I was started by explaining about simple past tense and giving some examples about

it. Then, it continued with the explanation of rules and instructions of the ARMI medium. The class was divided into three groups in which each group had six members. Then, each group was given a set of the ARMI medium. During playing the media, the teacher went around the class to check if any student who still confused about the instruction. The game was over when the group could finish all of the tasks including writing a paragraph. The last activity was recalling all of materials included in ARMI medium.

The result of observation checklist from field trial I showed that all of the students attracted toward the medium when it distributed to them. All of the groups focused to win and finish them first which indicated that the chosen color and font were suitable and did not distract their attention. Also, the chosen material was appropriate which could be seen that just approximately five students asked the teacher about certain word which did not found in the dictionary, such as, *"bite"* and *"plug"*. Although the students had chosen certain vocabulary and written a sentence, the groups could not provide a good paragraph in the end. The data showed that the instruction and some rules of game should be changed and modified. Thus, some revisions should be made to suit the students. Also, the rule of the game such as the time limitation should be considered.

(5) Revising the Product

After getting the data from the comment and suggestion of media and material experts and the field trial I, the developed media was revised. From the result of questionnaire distributed to the material expert, the medium had fulfilled the standard of a good media. On the other hand, still there were some points suggested to be changed in this developed media, those were, to simplify the instruction and to put the picture in the context. Thus, the first point of instruction was simplified and shortened to make it clear in order not to make the students confused. It could be seen below that the second sentence of the first point for the puzzle activity was deleted all. Then, the second point for the matching activity was modified. The third point for writing activity was also adjusted and simplified in order that the goal of the media could be reached and worked well. The second suggestion was about the picture in the flashcards. In the revised picture, the tree was given some apple fruits to show that the boy was climbing apple tree.

Based on the questionnaire distributed to the media expert, the modification and adjustment were suggested to make the medium applicable in the classroom. The modification was made for the box or packaging including the manual instruction book, while the adjustments were made for the puzzle and the flashcards.

There were four points that suggested by the expert, (1) changing the box or packaging, (2) enlarging the size of puzzle, (3) making the flashcards smaller than first product, and (4) adding manual instruction book. For the packaging, at first, the concept of the packaging was like a book, but the expert thought that the packaging was not good at all since it could break easily especially the inside part. Also, it was not effective and saleable especially the packaging could not be closed properly. Thus, after getting validation, the box or packaging was changed to the suggested box. Also, the content of the cover was modified. At first, the cover just had the name of the medium and creator. After validated, the content was added some points suggested, such as, the meaning of ARMI, the user of medium, and the logo of university. Then, some adjustments were given to the puzzle and flashcards. The expert said that the puzzle should be enlarged from A5 paper size to A4 paper size to ease the students in arranging the pieces of puzzle. The other adjustment came from the flashcards. There were three points that should be adjusted from the flashcards, (1) changing the picture size smaller from 6x5 cm to 5x4 cm, (2) adding proper color for the picture ball in *"catch"* word from colorless to black and white colors, and (3) provide the suitable picture to perform the action of *"hang"* instead of hanging clothes. The other suggestion was to add a manual instruction book. At first, the instruction was put behind the cover of book. After validated, the instruction was put in the manual instruction book and added some explanation about the medium, such as, rules and instruction.

From the result of field trial I, it could be concluded that the students was attracted and interested in the features of the media. Nevertheless, the modification and adjustment were needed. There were three points needed to get revised; (1) asking the students to finish the easy one first, (2) explaining the instruction clearly before, and (3) adding specific time limitation for each section. Asking the students to finish the easy one first is one way to reduce the students' questions about the vocabulary since just some certain words that did not found in the dictionary, such as, *"bite"* and *"plug"*. The other revision was to explain the steps clearly before. From the field trial I, it could be seen that the instruction should be delivered clearly before playing the media. Also, giving the clue was a good idea because the students did not know well the materials of the medium. The last revision from the field trial I was to add specific time limitation in each section. It was because the students spent more time over the decided duration. Thus, the 10 minutes for each task was enough whether they had finished or not, the teacher had to stop them.

(6) Designing and Conducting Field Trial II of the Product

The field trial II was designed a bit different with the field trial I including the class and the number of players. The aim was to know if the applied media could encourage the students from the other class too. The chosen class for field trial II was VIII-A which contained 20 students. Then, it was divided into 5 groups consisting of four students. The trial was started by recalling the lesson of simple past tense. All of the students were paying attention and answering the teacher's questions about the past verb. After that, the teacher said that they would have a game to play. The students were excited and eager to play. In this trial, the instruction and rules were explained clearly before starting the game. To ease the students understand the concept, the teacher showed the materials. As a result, the students understood what they should do to finish all the tasks. When playing the game, the class was full of discussion. It could be seen when some of them opened and looked for certain vocabularies in their dictionary, while the others were rewriting the vocabulary, matching with the pictures, etc.

(7) Final Revision of the Product

This was the last step of the product. The final product was the final revision from the result of questionnaire from the experts' validation and the result of observation of field trial I and field trial II. However, there was minor difficulty had in playing the media, such as, the students did not have good interest in reading the manual instruction book since it was designed in full English. Thus, the manual instruction book was designed in English and Bahasa Indonesia to ease them understanding the concept of the medium. Based on the results of questionnaire distributed to the material and media experts and the observation done in the field trial I and III, the final product of ARMI medium was designed in the picture below.
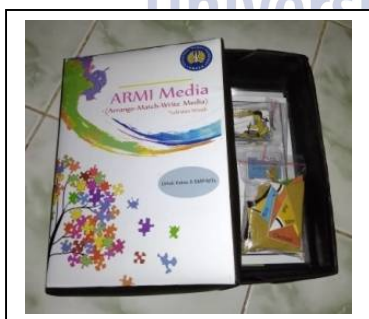
Picture 2: Final Product of the ARMI Medium

Discussion

In developing this media, some criteria are considered. As stated by Clark (1999 as cited in Sukmahidayanti, 2015) that there are three criteria for choosing appropriate media in learning process, those are, students' characteristics, the material, and teaching method. The results of the questionnaire distributed to the material expert and the observation done in the field trials show that the medium has fulfilled the criteria for students' characteristics, such as, the language use is relevant to the students, and the features of the medium can attract students' attention. Besides, before developing the medium, the chosen material about simple past tense is considered whether it fits well with the students' language level and suits the students' level difficulty. Also, by giving clear explanation on how to finish the media based on the instruction, the medium can be implemented well in the classroom as the teaching aid.

Besides, the results of the questionnaire distributed to the media expert and observation done in the field trials show that all of the aspects of the medium are acceptable as the good medium in teaching. Hill, Sumarniningsih, & Lestari (2013) propose 5E's criteria in developing games as the learning media, those are, enjoyable, educational, English promoting, engaging, and easy to use. When playing using this medium, the students are eager to win and busy doing the tasks, it means that the medium is enjoyable and engaging. Since the chosen material is about simple past tense and the aim is for encouraging the student to do writing simple sentences of simple past tense as one of transactional text in English texts, the medium includes as the educational game and English promoting. Although there are some revisions to develop the medium better, basically, the medium is easy to use. It can be seen that the materials are included as the set of the medium. Thus, it eases both the teacher and the students to use it in the classroom.

Moreover, the concept of a game is involved within this medium since the games can arouse the students' interest and participation because it can reduce the students' anxiety and boredom (Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2010; Amrullah, 2015). From the result of observation, it shows that during playing the media, all of the group members are busy in finishing the task in amount of time. Also, the groups always make sure that the members are doing something to help the group finishing the task. Therefore, it indicates that involving game within the media is one of beneficial strategy to encourage students in learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

After completing the modified steps of R & D cycle proposed by Dick, Carey, & Carey (2015), the product namely ARMI medium has been developed successfully as the instructional media. From the results of the questionnaire distributed to the media and material experts, the media had fulfilled the standard of a good media in learning. Besides, the results of the field trial I and field trial II show that the medium is applicable to use in the classroom since it has fulfilled the criteria of the appropriate media and criteria in developing games. Also, the media can create fun atmosphere in the classroom, so, the students enjoy learning while doing the tasks.

After conducting the media development, some suggestions are delivered especially related to the media implementation in the classroom. Although the medium can be implemented well in the classroom, it is suggested that the teacher modify and adjust the medium to be applicable for the classroom use. For example, the teacher should consider the number of the group based on the students' level in order that it will suit the students well. Besides, the teacher must consider the duration since the medium involves the game activity. Also, the teacher must remember that the goal of this medium is writing, so that if the time is left, the students' writing must be collected to the teacher. Since this medium is involved with the manual instruction in it, it is hoped that the teacher ask the group to read the book for several minutes first then continue for playing.

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