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Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe (Reading Box) in German Language Learning

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Abstract

Reading activities in learning German as a foreign language are not simply done during the teaching and learning process. In European standard curriculum (GER = Germanische Europäische Referenzrahmen), reading constitutes one of the language test items. Reading in German as a foreign language is suggested to improve students' competence in German. Beyond that, reading also leads to the improvement of knowledge related to German culture. In order to level up and optimize the interest of high school students to learn German language, one of the strategies that can be carried out is *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* or reading box. This box provides some texts for the students. These texts are stacked based on difficulty levels, starting from the easy towards the intermediate, and complex ones. In this activity, the students have equal access to all the texts available in the box. Furthermore, students can be asked to retell the text through "Darstellungsformen" (retelling technique) by using mind map, charts, or sketch (Skizze). This activity is designed to achieve the improvement of teacher's competence for the sake of the teachers themselves and for the students' learning development.

Keywords: Reading activity, German as a foreign language, Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe

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1. Introduction

One of the skills in language learning, which is a process of finding information through written expressions and logical thinking, is reading. As an activity occurred when using language, reading is a skill which involves learners to process a reading text with a certain strategy. This strategy will reflect the important role of a teacher to build students' comprehension of a reading text.

The importance of reading strategy is implicitly written in Indonesian National Curriculum 2006. It explains that the objective of teaching reading as one of the skills in language learning is to develop students' ability to read and acquire comprehensive message from a reading text (BSNP, 2016). This narrative actually refers to the process that students engage when finding out information in a reading text.

Reading activity in German as a foreign language learning is not only conducted during the teaching and learning process. In European Standard Curriculum (GER =

Germanische Europäische Referenzrahmen), reading becomes one of the items in language proficiency test. Because of many difficulties experienced by learners, stakeholders implement an extensive reading strategy for the learners of German language.

Readers, most importantly learners, face many problems in reading a German text. These problems can be divided into two, lexical and grammatical problem. Lexical challenge happens because frequently. In German, there is a similarity in the graphic and phonetic structure of the words although they have different meaning. The example of this problem can be seen in the words "lassen" and "lasen". Grammatical problem can be caused by the difficulty of differentiating adjective and adverb. For example, compare these two sentences "Er gibt sicher eine Antwort"– *Er gibt eine sichere Antwort*. As written on the first sentence, the word "sicher" (eine) and a noun (Antwort) indicates the students' difficulty to differentiate adjective and adverb. Beside these two problems, there are still many more difficulties that learners face in understanding a German text.

Reading activity in a foreign language, specifically in German language, is an activity that can improve someone's language proficiency. Furthermore, as someone is exposed to reading texts in German language, they can get insight about social institution in Germany. In ([2]: 63) also added that the more students read, they will be able to improve their reading comprehension and get better language acquisition, especially in grammatical competence.

To overcome the difficulties in comprehending a reading text, teachers can implement strategies as proposed and suggested by many researchers and experts. One of the strategies to motivate students to read texts in German language is done using *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe*. *Lesekiste* which means reading box. Teachers will provide reading texts for students in the reading box with various level of difficulty from the easiest until the most difficult one (Übergangsstufe). The complexity of the texts, as well as the topics, have been adjusted to the other materials and sources used in the class. Based on the 2013 Curriculum, the topics used for grade X students are *Kennenlernen* or personal identity and Schule or school environment; for grade XI are *Familie* or family and *Alltagsleben* or daily life; while for grade XII are *Freizeitbeschäftigung* or hobby and leisure time and Reise or tourism.

Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe is good not only because the level of difficulties given in the assigned texts but also because the strategies that teacher implements during the teaching and learning process is integrated to the other lessons. Teachers can assign students to have an extensive reading activity which allows students to be independent and to improve their reading motivation and language competence. The role of a teacher in the class is as a facilitator who guides and controls students based on the lesson given in the class. Such learning process is believed to be a powerful tool to help students to have more control upon their own learning style. As students are

supported to do so, they will be aware and able to identify the strategies they have adopted or potential to adopt ([3] in James & Garrett, 1991: 198).

To improve the teaching skills and to provoke active participation in the class and stimulate students' critical thinking, an extensive reading program was implemented in Senior High School Laboratorium, Universitas Negeri Malang. By implementing extensive reading strategy using, *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe*, teachers can create more communicative and cognitive apporach to facilitate students' needs. Related to this, the researcher came up with a research question,"how *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* (reading box) and text translation can be implemented in German language learning?"

The development of reading strategy through the implementation of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* can automatically introduce and train students to be independent learners. *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* makes teaching and learning process as well as the learning outcomes become more effective, efficient, and attractive for students. Additionally, extensive reading activities allow students to develop their reading skill, add their vocabulary size, and improve their reading motivation and confidence in reading a text.

Reading skill is one of the four skills that language learners must master besides writing, listening, and speaking. Understanding a reading text is a process which involves learners' background knowledge and language capacity. This process requires several stages, such as guessing, questioning, making a summary, deciding the meaning of a word based on the context, and having a reflection ([4]: 44).

In *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* year 2006, it is mentioned that the objective of German language learning is to give basic competence in reading, listening, speaking and writing for simple communication purpose. The basic competences that A1 learners need to have are: 1) being able to recognize, understand, and use basic sentences for daily communication, 2) being able to make personal introduction, introduce someone to other people, and ask questions about other people, 3) being able to communicate using simple language.

For the upmost result, this extensive reading needs to be complemented with relevant supporting materials. The materials suitable for this purpose are *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe*, which is a collection of short stories that students can read based on their proficiency level. The short stories chosen for *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* should be interesting for the students and not very challenging in terms of length and difficulty level.

To encourage self-evaluation, the materials for *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* was assigned to the students altogether with the comprehension questions and key answer. Besides, the students was also given an introductory material prior the main reading to associate students' background knowledge and ideas related to the text being studied.

2. Method

Based on the results of a need analysis in which the data were collected using field observation, the researcher decided to develop an extensive reading strategy using *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* for the students of SMA Laboratorium Universitas Negeri Malang. This research was aimed at facilitating teachers to implement *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* as an extensive reading strategy in order to improve students' reading motivation and habituate them to reading.

The need of having a reading strategy has been identified during the regular meeting of German Language Teacher Association in Malang *(Ikatan Guru Bahasa Jerman Indonesia cabang Malang)* and an event held by The MGMP of German Language study. The identification of the subject and its theme has also been conducted. Based on the result of the identification, it is concluded that the implementation of extensive reading strategy and its evaluation are deemed important.

The realization of technique in problem solving was done first by arranging a scheduled meeting with organized plans covering the materials used and the modelling. As the researcher had the schedule planned, the researcher could decide the materials and the modelling that need to be demonstrated. In order to give introduction to German language teachers involved in the research, the researcher gave the definition of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* and the strategy to implement it for extensive reading in the first meeting.

The next activity done by the researcher was giving a lecture and conducting a discussion followed by question and answer session before the participants make a review about the strategy being learned. This discussion can give researcher some more insight to develop and fix the teaching and learning process later in the class. The participants in the discussion can give and exchange ideas after observing and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the strategy. After getting some improvement, the teaching stage needs to be adjusted to the student level in the class by considering the language content and teacher need upon different learning stages although using similar strategy.

The implementation of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* (reading box) and text translation in German language learning in SMA Laboratorium Universitas Negeri Malang was designed to be applied in several activities: (1) conducting a scheduled training using well-structurized materials and strategy; (2) conducting a teaching practice by having a lecture and question and answer session simulation; (3) developing the materials of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe*; (4) conducting discussion to gain feedback and improvement; (5) guiding and facilitating teachers to implement extensive reading strategy in the class.

The stages in the implementation of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* (reading box) and text translation in German language teaching can be seen in the following table.

No.	The Scenario of Implementation Stages
1.	Identifying the language proficiency level of the target group.
2.	Identifying the learning problems and finding out an objective to design a learning program.
3.	Identifying the tasks and the component of each task.
4.	Preparing the training materials.
5.	Delivering the materials in the form of a lecture and question and answer session.
6.	Choosing reading texts relevant to the students' proficiency level.
7.	Developing an extensive reading strategy through the learning method applied in the class.
8.	Discussing and evaluating the development and improvement being made.
9.	Monitoring and guiding teachers when implementing the strategy.

TABLE 1: The implementation stages.

3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the problem identification, the materials chosen for the implementation of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* (reading box) and text translation were grouped into several categories. The first category was based on the level of difficulty. *Einfaches Niveau* means easy, *mittleres Niveau* means on moderate, and *fortgeschrittenes Niveau* means difficult. Another category was made based on the learning scenario adopted in the class using extensive reading strategy.

In order to identify the language proficiency level of the teachers, the language proficiency level of the target group based on the European-standard curriculum should be on A2-B1 level. However, since the target readers in this case are senior high school students on the level of A1, the texts chosen was adjusted to that level. The length of a text in German language for the given level is 100 until 120 words.

The learning problems occurred in the class were discussed in a group discussion so teachers can design the learning program supporting the implementation of this strategy. One of the skill focus applied in the classroom is reading skill. In teaching reading, texts are chosen by considering the learning topics that the students currently studying. The challenges faced by students generally come from word structures that have not been taught by the teacher and vocabulary items that they are not familiar with. To accomplish the learning objectives, teachers in SMA Laboratorium UM have prepared modules which compile several texts taken from various resources. These modules have three level of difficulty, A1 for students of grade 10 and 11 while A2 is for grade 12.

After the learning problems were identified, the next step was to prepare a task for the teachers and their components which include deciding the teaching method and choosing texts from the provided source. The main material about extensive reading strategy using *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* was prepared afterwards. Materials

Figure 1: "meine Tiere und ich" text.

were delivered using PowerPoint Presentation in the form of lecture and question and answer.

After accomplishing the stages above, the next stage was choosing the reading texts. The research team prepared 5 (five) reading texts suitable for A1 and A2 level. The participants were to decide whether the texts are suitable for the target group. The texts also include follow-up exercise. The texts chosen were: (1) *Meine Tiere und Ich*; (2) *Um 12 Uhr ist die Sitzung*; (3) *Fredi L.: Ex-Fußballstar*; (4) *Für oder Gegen*; (5) *Wohin zum Essen*. All those five texts were taken from 2 different sources. The figure below shows one of the five texts provided for the students.

These texts were chosen regarding the variety, the length, and the relevant figure supporting the text. The next step was to make a decision on the teaching method which supports extensive reading strategy using *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe*. One of the methods proposed by the teachers was *Stationenlernen* method. This method has been practiced for a long time and adopted by many teachers to make the lesson interesting and fun. This method gives students five imaginary "stations" or stops that they need to stop by while reading five reading texts. The final stage of the implementation of this strategy was student presentation which gave the students a chance to explain their findings after going to all the five stations.

Students were given the privilege to choose one to two texts based on their preference that they can read at home. They were given the instruction to make a summary of the reading text by using mind mapping. Although the students never used this method before, the teacher believed that it would be attractive and helpful for them to retell the text using simple language and supporting figures.

Retelling the reading text using mind mapping was considered attractive by the teacher because the text and the delivering method show a point of interest. The

implementation of simple mind mapping would motivate students to read and present their reading comprehension by using various media competitively. Teachers can identify student characteristics and motivate more students to read the provided texts by doing so.

The implementation of extensive reading strategy using *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* was something new for the teacher that has never been applied previously. The use of mind mapping to retell the text was also a new thing. It enhanced students to present their understanding about the text competitively. In terms of text length, the text chosen was suitable already, but in terms of reading choices, teachers need to facilitate students using more reading variations. Additionally, the topics chosen must be in line with the topics that students learn at the present time in the class. The quality of the text is adequate enough to guide students to answer the comprehension questions. In terms of scoring, teachers can consider students' learning process as well as learning result individually or in group.

Teachers can make partnership with schools having affiliation with MGMP of German Language to make coordination about the teaching and learning process in the class. If this partnership can be conducted successfully, the learning objectives stated in the curriculum can be achieved and students' learning outcome can be improved.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the implementation of *Lesekiste mit Übergangsstufe* (reading box) and text translation in the teaching and learning of German language, it can be concluded that the strategy implemented can improve the comprehension, knowledge, and skill of German language teachers in SMA Laboratorium UM and German language teachers under MGMP affiliation to implement extensive reading strategy using *Lesekiste durch Übergangsstufe* to optimize the teaching and learning of German language in schools. The implementation of this strategy can take an important role in students' learning process in the classroom and outside. As a result, students can further enhance their reading motivation. They can find and try independent study strategies while implementing, repeating and evaluating their learning outcomes. Additionally, this extensive reading strategy can develop students' attitude and personality as well as their reading speed.

German language teachers should meet regularly to discuss the student' needs in improving their language skills and to develop more appropriate teaching and learning strategies. In the classroom, teachers should be able to support and encourage students to do independent learning activities. Teachers play an important role to enhance students' learning independence. This goal can be supported by choosing the right teaching and learning strategy. By doing so, we can create more innovations

to improve teachers' qualifications and other supporting skills, for instance the skill needed in developing learning media.

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