

# THE USE OF HEROIC HISTORY R.A. KARTINI AS READING MATERIAL IN ASSESSING THE STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION

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## **Abstract.**

*The improvement of student reading skill involves some efforts in choosing the authentic material. The use of a heroic story, R.A. Kartini gives moral impacts for students' character building and language skills improvement. The reading assessment provides some activities which explores the content of the reading text. The activities are identifying the good reader behaviors that have been taught and assessed, collecting evidence that is related to the good reader behaviors, analyzing the evidence on the good reader behaviors, and making an instructional decision to improve the reading skill. The advantages of using reading assessment activities to assessed the student reading comprehension are students participate in giving opinion, able to attach meaning to words or sentences, make summary prediction, describe the problem, give relevant solutions, retell the story in chronological order, and use prior knowledge in implementing the moral value. The analysis shows that students have the good reader behaviors as it is proven from their checklist score. The reading assessment gives result that portfolio is a recommended activity to improve the student reading comprehension.*

*keywords: character, good reader behavior, problem, reading material, solution*

## **Introduction**

One of heroic story from Java is R.A. Kartini who is the pioneer of women emancipation. Her story is remarkably remembered once in a year on April, 21<sup>st</sup>. Based on her book, "*Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang.*" R.A. Kartini is a figure who thinks ahead, doesn't care about people reproach and does the best for her and nation. She is the pioneer and her name is honored. It is also written in her book, "*R.A. Kartini could predict what was needed in the future. In order for the children to get lessons, she sent a teacher come from Holland, solely for their children*" (Pane, 2009). Indonesian people need education in order to get a brighter future for themselves, the people surroundings, and nation welfare. People in her era had a dream at least able to read and write. By mastering these abilities, women and men could express their aspirations because they fought for freedom from colonialism during the war. Her ambition and vision should

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be reflected in school, university, and any aspects of life. Her mission in education should be applied by all of citizen in daily teaching and learning in the classroom. Young generation in university is expected to gain greater target of education. They are not only mastering one language but also the second language acquisition. English as the International Language has to be mastered by people in order to communicate with another people around the world. Student must perform oral and written English fluently. Even though this vision might beyond what R.A. Kartini, the ability of using English relates of her prediction for future learning in Indonesia.

Reading is not only educational stage of comprehension but also an enjoyment activity as it produces a positive result for the enjoyers who refer to the learners of second language (Meunier & Granger, 2008). Reading activity without enjoyment may result a boredom and lack of enthusiasm in continuing the paragraphs. The essential of reading as enjoyment is not merely about a preference, hobby, or enthusiasm, but it is related to the topic chosen, relevant content and positive impacts for the readers. The key of successful reading comprehension is directly from both the lecturer and the students. The cooperation from the lecturer in realizing the need of the learner creates different atmosphere in teaching process. Furthermore, Students who open the mind and realize the advantages of comprehending a story, reach the goal of English mastery. The term 'mastery' is not only the activity of reading some paragraphs but also the actions of comprehending the content, taking the moral value and implementing it in real context of life (Taylor, B & Pearson, D, 2002).

Engaging moral value in English teaching means involving cognitive and affective competences which provide the students with some potential assessments in conducting the English practices. Cognitive learning refers to the understanding of task, performance which includes both factual and skill in basic knowledge. The outcome of learning basic knowledge is called Affective which refers to the student reaction toward the learning process included motivation, satisfaction, and feeling (Bloom, 1956). In order to make the students become competitive in learning English, the materials should be selected and maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills. The cognitive material which is engaged in reading passage such as grammar practice, vocabulary assessment, group discussion, giving opinion, writing performances. Furthermore, affective assessment in the form of problem- based learning in which the student writes and gives solution of a certain case. The answer both written and oral reflects their understanding and feeling toward the material. Briefly, Student learning outcomes should deal with applicable outcomes for each of competence and must be suitable to the teaching learning in the classroom (Hall & Johnson, 1994).

Some activities are needed to stimulus the brain for the development of reading comprehension, skills in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence coherence. The text types should include the

activities that gain the maximum benefit of learning in both cognitive and affective aspects (Fidge, 1999). The chosen topic contains the further purposes for the student development through the related activities. The heroic history as the chosen topic is recommended to be an authentic material for improving the reading skills. The stimulus gives benefits for the students to be able to relate the meaningful passages and language skills. The activities reach the effective learning which a material can give impact on various aspects. This means that the student accomplishes the subject material well and the learning target is considered very practical. Understanding reading passages isn't big burden and unaccomplished task to do.

A good teacher who gives reading material starts to encourage the member of class by delivering the basic understanding of reading. Reading is the movement of our brain which works together with eyes and the text to see and create a meaningful message (Johnson, 2008). A meaningful reading activity also collaborates with the ability of creating a new finding or definition in the brain. When the finding is set, the understanding is directly created. As it is a second language to be mastered, Students in University level must practice all the English skills, starting from reading the text, writing the meaningful answers, discussing the moral value of reading passage, doing the exercise on language use and vocabulary. Furthermore, reading is not a single process. All skills work together to improve each other. Reading and listening contributes for mastery of knowledge, speaking and writing are the result of productive progression, and the last is critical thinking which work as memory storage of the language production.

A successful assessment is also determined by the lecture and how far the material be offered to the students. The two aspects mentioned is derived from an outstanding instructor who responsible for the class management, student reading achievement, and the qualified outcome measured in the assessment (Bhatt, 2002). A collaborative learning is the cooperation between the performers. Students are as the listener of lecturer's explanation and the doer of a theory, an instructor is the role model and facilitator. Good performer in reading comprehension classroom is the one who understands the position and sincerely does the role. As contrast, the unexpected result may happen whenever the instructor doesn't know the technique to assess.

The way of identifying good reader behaviors and areas of weakness needs some efforts to make the student comprehend what they read. The goal of assessment is to make them able to read many forms of reading passages. The effective techniques to assess the reading comprehension for minimizing the weakness and strengthen the good reader behaviors (Caldwell, 2008).

- (1). Identify the good reader behaviors that have been taught and assessed.

(2). Collect evidence that is related to the good reader behaviors.

The second step of assessing the student ability of understanding the passage needs relevant evidence taken from the activities of reading. The function of this evidence will be as an evaluation of the increase reading fluency, and comprehension. The important role for the lecturer in doing this step is managing the class that observing and the students' activities and at the same time also teaching. The progress made by students will be recorded using the checklist as the evidence. The checklist consists of three categories, namely *character*, *problem*, and *solution*. *Character* means good reader can give opinion related to the character of R.A. Kartini or able to give meaningful comment related to the topic. *Problem* refers to the retelling the story, describing the elements of story structure.

(3). Analyze the evidence on the good reader behaviors

The checklist which consists of character, problem and solution, describes the result of student responds toward the reading passage. Analyzing the evidence is needed for assessing each student in the reading performance. The lecturer must interpret the checklist to collect the evidence because every person has different comprehension, so the rubric is made to analyze two elements. The first is describing the detail qualification of a good reader and the second is quality of student comprehension.

(4). Make an instructional decision about the good reader behaviors.

The right decision making is very essential for the improvement of reading activity and the good reader behaviors. Activity is meant to make a variation in teaching reading and the design of assignment. The decision making affects good reader behaviors since it will maintain the skill of reading and the ability of defining character, problem, and solution on the passage. In other words, a decision also influences the selection material and activity. In other cases, the decision about which selection to read may make more sense to begin with the standard or outcome and to choose a selection or activity that matches it.

## **Methods**

### **The sample**

Teaching reading for University students is challenging because the reading material used is more advanced. This analysis uses the history of R.A. Kartini as the reading material. There are 20 students of law faculty who are assessed in order to know the ability of reading comprehension. Basic English material as the subject of the study has 2 credits in which students have the reading material for two meetings and they have discussed about the heroic history of R.A. Kartini and try to identify, give opinion, and make summary of the character, problem, and solution. The students do the task according to the reading instruction and the results are analyzed using reading assessment.

Twenty worksheets have been distributed to the students. The reading material entitled “R.A. Kartini” is used to support the activity. The reading activities consist of character, problem, and solution. The learning process in the class is evaluated using checklist as the evidence. The individual assessment shows each student reading improvement in observing character, problem, and solution of the reading passage. Furthermore, the rubric, checklist, and graphic show the result of reading assessment.

## Results

In assessing the student reading comprehension, a college teacher must do some efforts to have an effective teaching learning process. The students of law faculty have a task of reading a heroic history of R.A. Kartini. They are expected to have an improvement in term of understanding the content of the text, and identifying the moral value of a story. The result of using reading assessment is as follow.

- (1). Identify the good reader behaviors that have been taught and assessed

Students are active learner because they have responsibility for accomplishing the task, project, presentation, and homework. These activities actualize the effective learning especially reading comprehension subject. Reading is not only the activity of answering questions from the passage by writing them on student worksheet then submitting on teacher’s desk, but reading is varied. Through identifying character, students can describe the figure or topic that has been discussed. They make a detail description character of R.A. Kartini as a hero. This description is stated and even implied from the passage. The students also relate their prior knowledge in order to get a good description.

**Table 4**  
**The result of identifying character**

No	Group	Activity	Students’ Description
1	Group 1	I matched the character to a problem	R. A. Kartini is a hero who had fought for women freedom from tradition pressure. The fact shows that many women had been raped in per year in Indonesia. This problem awaken the cooperation between government rules, law of order, and the organization of women support to continue the struggle and sacrifice of R.A. Kartini.

		I chose a main character from the story to write about	The woman emancipation takes an important position in all aspects. R. A. Kartini who maintained it, becomes an inspiration for woman nowadays. Women who worked in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have problems of woman protection against the pressure as a maid. Indonesia government has many efforts to protect them.
2	Group 2	I recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style	R. A. Kartini has mission for women to have the freedom to study, the freedom from Javanese tradition, and polygamous marriages. From the sentence above, R.A. Kartini has point of views that she wants to change the paradigm of Javanese people that a woman is in lower position in social context. She wanted to change this paradigm that women deserve to get a better education, give opinion, make decision without a pressure of tradition and women can't be forced in marriage. Nowadays, women have degree, work, get high position of in their career, and participate in social parties. We should give our thankful to R.A. Kartini because of her sacrifice as the hero of women emancipation.
		I connected prior knowledge with the character on the text	There are many women who follow the step of R.A. Kartini, for instance, the teachers in schools who always remember her every Friday by wearing Batik. Once in a year on April, 21 <sup>st</sup> , students in school wear special traditional uniform and make up in order to celebrate the history of R.A. Kartini. In this celebration, they show the talent by dancing, singing, reading poetry, and many competitions. This competition has a purpose to make young

			generation able to participate in positive event.
3	Group 3	I connected prior knowledge with the character on the text	The ideas of R.A. Kartini innovation based on belief, wisdom and beauty. The same hero who has achieved the paradigm of soul freedom based on belief is Mother Teresa who helped many poor people with her kindness and as volunteer to teach uneducated African. Another hero is Lady Diana who has maintained the paradigm of equality rights that woman can have high position in government structure. She had become an example as the first lady. Through her wisdom and beauty, she actively declared world peace and welfare.
		I recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style	R.A. Kartini has motivation to make an innovation for her life and the next generation. She has one mission for educating women so that they will never live in a pressure of wrong principle and belief.
4	Group 4	I chose a main character from the story to write about	R. A. Kartini is a good role model. We describe her as the most beautiful woman in her era. The meaning of beauty is both physically and psychologically. Woman who only prouds of the physical appearance, will have no powerful influence, like R.A. Kartini. Another example is who influences people in a positive way through her thought and feeling. She is not only pretty but also wise.
		I recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style	The way of awakening her nation by realizing that marriage in a very young age won't give women the opportunity to get better education and decide their own destiny. Through her thought and feeling,
		I matched the character to a	The problem that women face in that era was really complicated.

		problem	R.A. Kartini who had a strong desire for a freedom, made many changes in all aspects. President Soekarno at that time really supported her.
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Table 4 shows the student activity and description in interpreting the character of R.A. Kartini and the content of a reading text. In addition, students read the text, discuss the content, and make opinion based on the story. The results of reading activities indicate that group 1 matched the character to a problem and chose a main character from the story to write about. Group 2 recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style and connected prior knowledge with the character on the text. Group 3 connected prior knowledge with the character on the text and recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style. Furthermore, group 4 chose a main character from the story to write about, recognized the author's purpose/point of view/style, and matched the character to a problem.

**Table 5**  
**The result of identifying problem**

No	Group	Activity	Students' Description
1	Group 1	I can retell the story in chronological order	Because of the Javanese tradition and belief, R.A. Kartini was married with Joyodiningrat. He supported her wife in establishing a school for women. She and her husband raised one child, unfortunately she dies when she was still 25. Her struggle is always remembered every year.
		I described the problem	The main problem that Kartini had to face at that time was she couldn't pursue her wishes because of the arranged marriage.
2	Group 2	I can retell the story in chronological order	R.A. Kartini had many dreams for her country. One of them is establishing some schools for women to get education. She could make it happened after her marriage.
		I attach meaning to words	"Struggled on behalf of her people" means R.A. Kartini would do anything for her country especially for women who had suffered from pressure and war
3	Group 3	I described the problem	The main problem of the country at that time that there was no equality in human rights as the result of war,



			poorness, and lack of education.
		I attach meaning to words	“Played a role in the <a href="#">national struggle for independence</a> ” means she had given a valuable principle and the purpose of freedom to the country
4	Group 4	I can retell the story in chronological order	The school of Van De Venter couldn’t be established without the inspiration from R.A. Kartini. Women can get education from this school.
		I attach meaning to words	“Legal equality” means men and women have the same rights to get education, to have professional job, and to state the opinion.

Table 5 shows the results of student activity in identifying a problem from the reading passage. Students in group discussion work together to analyze the problem by attaching meaning to words, describing the problem, and retelling the story in chronological order. The analysis indicates that all groups identify the problem of the nation in that era is lack of education and belief in tradition in which the negative sides weaken the respect on women status. By doing these practices, students are able to do interpreting, analyzing, and describing.

**Table 6**  
**The result of identifying solution**

No	Group	Activity	Students’ Description
1	Group 1	I support opinions	R.A. Kartini is a hero. A hero is not always fighting in a war, but through their thoughts and feelings could make differences and raise the independence.
		I described how the problem was solved	The solution of nation problem was establishing some schools to educate many people, both men and women so that people would know the valuable knowledge, such as reading, writing, and stating the opinion.
		I make inferences and predictions	The effect of women emancipation is the role of women in participating in parties, leading companies, and

			many other areas.
2	Group 2	I support opinions	Schools in modern era participate in showing equal rights for both men and women. Through education, young generation will know the heroic history of Indonesian heroes, moral value, and modern principles which are appropriate for all.
		I described how the problem was solved	Our country has faced many problems, such as economy, welfare, peace, and endurance. These obstacles can be solved by heroes at school, heroes in the office, heroes at home who realize that they also participate in creating welfare and peace for their own country.
		I make inferences and predictions	R.A. Kartini knew that women had many talents. She realized it and tried to maintain for national welfare.
3	Group 3	I summarize and reorganize ideas	It can be concluded that Indonesia couldn't get the freedom from colonizer without the struggle of R.A. Kartini. She really understood the importance of independence and pointed out that nationalism and humanitarianism are needed to develop the country.
		I support opinions	The arranged marriage for young girl in that era who supposed to study at her age, resulted many problems. This was the truth and women had suffered to obey the rule.
		I make inferences and predictions	R.A. Kartini had mission for the emancipation that women could participate in organization and even lead the country.
4	Group 4	I support opinions	The courage of R.A. Kartini gave impression to her people and President Soekarno. She

			could convince him the importance of women roles for Indonesia's independence.
		I make inferences and predictions	Because of President Soekarno statement that April,21 <sup>st</sup> becomes a national day of Kartini which is always celebrated from Sabang to Merauke. The ceremonial event will give impacts for young generation to do the best for the country in term of education and religion.

Table 6 describes solutions that have been made by students by reading the passage and discussing the content. The results shows that comprehension is reached when students able to make summary, predictions, opinions, and problem solving. The description is a production of reading comprehension. Understanding the passage by reading meaningfully, making inferences and predictions are the techniques to set relevant solutions from the history values which are related with contextual Indonesian norms and rules. It can be concluded that the

(2). Collect evidence that is related to the good reader behaviors.

The most significant behavior of a reader is the ability of using prior knowledge and moral value for supporting the comprehension. The knowledge takes a special role in generating new findings, opinion, and analysis. Students who able to perform well in reading skill, they have the behaviors as good readers. The evidence can be seen from the detail activities in identifying character, problem, and solution.

**Table 7**  
**Checklist to collect evidence**

No	Student name	character	problem	solution
1	Group 1	√	√	√
2	Group 2	√	√	√
3	Group 3	√	√	√
4	Group 4	√	√	√

All groups in reading activity read the passage and discuss the technique to identify three aspects. The goal of identifying here is to give some practices for students in finding out the characteristics of R.A. Kartini as an inspiration for moral knowledge. Identifying problem is meant to produce creativity of students in making concept, prediction and practical analysis. Moreover, some solutions must be summarized for enhancing the capability of formulating new findings.

(3). Analyze the evidence on the good reader behaviors.

The purpose of analyzing the evidence from reading process is to know the improvement of students' reading comprehension. The process requires the ability of recognizing the character of certain topic, scanning the content to find out the problem, and attaching meaning of implied information. The analysis can be seen in table below.

**Table 8**  
**The rubric of reading activity**

No	Result of checklist	Description	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
1	Character	I matched the character to a problem	√			√
		I chose a main character from the story to write about	√			√
		I recognize the author's purpose/point of view/style		√	√	√
		I connect prior knowledge with the character on the text		√	√	
2	Problem	I described the problem	√		√	
		I attach meaning to words		√	√	√
		I can retell the story in chronological order	√	√		√
		I recognize text structure				
3	Solution	I described	√	√		

	how the problem was solved				
	I support opinions	√	√	√	√
	I summarize and reorganize ideas			√	
	I make inferences and predictions	√	√	√	√
	<b>Total</b>	7	7	7	7

Table 8 shows the result of students' reading assessment that 4 groups have done the reading activities successfully by identifying the character, problem and solution from the passage. Each student in a group discuss the character of R.A. Kartini which is related with the problem mentioned on the passage and try to make a relevance between a nation problem in that era with present issues. Furthermore, students also show their ability in making inferences, prediction, retelling the story in chronological order, and make a meaningful interpretation from words or sentences stated on the passage.

(4). Make an instructional decision to improve the reading skill

4.1. Choosing the important activities to assess

The goal of reading assessment can be categorized into two aspects. First is the improvement of reading skill that refers to the reading fluency and understanding the content completely. Second is the moral impact from the character that has been discussed for self-learning, community influences, and national endurance.

4.2. Involving students in self-correction and self-assessment.

In order to be involved in the learning process, students should participate in the assessment. The participation that can be included is self-correction which refers to the positive input for another group analysis. Supporting and adding some opinion on related messages, giving examples and role model, comparing the findings, and evaluating the summary and solution are the activities that students can involve during the learning process.

4.3. Making portfolio.

Teaching reading produces the student capability in mastering the knowledge of materials. The results as the evidence of reading activities should be collected as portfolio. The function of portfolio here is to show the results of reading skills that have been by the students in one or two semester. Moreover, the benefit of using portfolio is as documentary of

the selected project to see the various kinds of materials that appropriate for the good reader behaviors. As it includes the moral value for affecting the positive behaviors, a portfolio should represent the knowledge of social information and self-assessment.

## **Discussion**

The reading activities are aimed to assess the student comprehension. In order to get the maximum benefit from reading assessment, focusing the activity on identifying character, problem, and solution are used frequently since the university students have mastered some patterns of grammar and vocabulary isn't a main course of this reading process. It can't be neglected that English skills are a unity process in which reading comprehension is supported by the ability of listening well to lecturer instruction, speaking performances in the discussion, and writing skill to answer using sentences patterns and vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the results of analysis show that the activity on learning grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, and constructing sentences are given less than the activity on character or moral development. By identifying character, problem, and solution of the topic, students will gradually develop their character. The inspiration figure stated on the reading becomes an inspiration for the students to implement the moral value which are described on their identifying activity. The percentage of learning reading takes more attention in the application because the purpose of reading is getting information to be implemented in social context life. This is the reason of reading creates the good reader behaviors and the activity of focusing on learning on language skill gets less percentage.

It is mentioned on the analysis of result that four groups in the class have made description on character, solution and problem. It also shows that students do seven activities related to the reading comprehension which can be categorized that they are good reader behaviors because they can relate the prior knowledge, make inferences, prediction, identify problem, character, and detail solutions. The activity in this assessment is successfully gives impacts on student skill and behaviors. Graphic 2 supports the idea that reading activity should include the study of social and moral value and the selected material must be relevant and understandable for students. In addition, the use of heroic history R.A. Kartini is relevant for students and enriches the knowledge in all aspects. It also proves that the authentic material for reading assessment can be from the history of Indonesian heroes.

## **Conclusion**

The target of reading assessment is creating the good reader behaviors. This is what the lecturer has expected from the students that they study the passage and get the moral values for improving the behaviors as human being and language skill for knowledge development.

As a result, the use of heroic history in this analysis produces the students who become the good reader behaviors. The reading assessment promotes the activities of identifying character, problem and solution to improve the student reading comprehension. The effects of reading assessment on student skill are to enhance the character building which refers to the implementation of moral value implied on the passage, to train the ability of mastering language use, vocabulary and mechanics, and grade the comprehension which determines the good reader behaviors. Meaningful learning on studying the behaviors of a figure, R.A. Kartini creates the understanding of attaching meaning on words or sentences, predictions, summary, giving opinion, and retelling the story in chronological order.

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