

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ON ENGLISH
VOCABULARY ACQUISITION**

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To my beloved parents, husband and siblings

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ABSTRACT

This study researches the effects of Extensive Reading on English Language vocabulary acquisition. The participants' extensive reading approach was studied in relation to the enhancement of vocabulary acquisition and their perception on extensive reading based on the low score in their synonyms exercise. The research methodology employed was quantitative, utilizing pre and post test, questionnaire and in-depth interview as data collection methods. The findings indicated that extensive reading does improve learners' vocabulary acquisition. Thus, the finding implied that extensive reading is a favourable component of vocabulary acquisition. Several perceptions were identified while they are engaging in extensive reading process, reading English helps to gain vocabulary being the main perception besides reading time, liking story book than newspaper, have more confidence level, interesting in reading, promotes language structure and grammar, conducive environment and favourable teacher. English appropriate materials play a major role in the success of extensive reading. The findings show that extensive reading leads to a positive result in vocabulary acquisition. It contributes a successful approach to the pupils and the teacher. Hence, the teachers have to play their role in stressing the importance of reading without disrupting any pupils in target the language constantly for all learning purposes in the language acquisition to attain the reading objectives of the English language learning.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dilakukan bertujuan untuk menyelidik kesan-kesan yang meluas ke atas pembacaan bahasa Inggeris yang luas untuk pemerolehan perbendaharaan kata. Pendekatan pembacaan yang luas oleh para peserta telah dikaji berhubung dengan peningkatan pemerolehan perbendaharaan kata dan persepsi mereka terhadap pembacaan yang luas. Metodologi kajian yang digunakan ialah kualitatif dengan menggunakan ujian pra dan pos, soal selidik sebagai kaedah pengumpulan data. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pembacaan yang luas telah meningkatkan pemerolehan perbendaharaan kata pelajar. Oleh itu, dapatan tersirat bahawa pembacaan yang luas merupakan komponen yang menggalakkan pemerolehan perbendaharaan kata. Beberapa persepsi telah dikenal pasti semasa para peserta melibatkan diri dalam proses pembacaan yang luas. Membaca bahan-bahan English membantu untuk mendapatkan perbendaharaan kata menjadi persepsi utama selain masa membaca, suka membaca buku cerita daripada akhbar, mempunyai tahap keyakinan yang lebih tinggi dalam pembacaan, menarik dalam membaca, menggalakkan struktur bahasa dan tatabahasa, persekitaran yang kondusif dan guru yang menggalakkan ke arah pembacaan. Bahan yang sesuai dalam Bahasa Inggeris memainkan peranan penting dalam kejayaan pembacaan yang luas. Guru-guru perlu memainkan peranan mereka dalam menekankan kepentingan membaca tanpa mengganggu mana-mana murid-murid dalam sasaran bahasa yang sentiasa bertujuan pembelajaran di dalam pemerolehan bahasa untuk mencapai objektif membaca pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini telah mendapat kaedah positif dalam bacaan luas.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ER	-	Extensive Reading
ESL	-	English as Second Language
ELT	-	English Language Teaching
ELRP	-	English Language Reading Programme
CRP	-	Class Reader Programme
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
NILAM	-	‘Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca’

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter provides an introduction to the research work presented in this study. It describes the research background and explains about the extensive reading in this work. In addition, it provides an overview of the approach taken as well as of the results obtained. Finally, it introduces the structure of the study.

1.1 Introduction

Reading is one of the most important components of English language learning and it is an essential tool for lifelong learning for all learners. In order to face the 21st century, education has to prepare these learners to adapt to the social and technological changes that are taking place at an unprecedented rate. Education under these circumstances depends largely on language competency. In this context, reading especially is a resource for continued education, acquisition of new knowledge and skills and to gain information through media, especially newspapers,

story books and educational magazines. According to Smith (1982), “we learn to read by reading”. The more one reads, the better one becomes in reading. Eskey (1986) said “reading process must be developed, and can be developed by means of extensive and continual practice. Initially, extensive reading programme was conducted in Malaysia to help rural schools pupils improve their reading proficiency through reading (Asraf, 2002). This study examined on the effectiveness of extensive reading on English language vocabulary on eleven years old pupils in SK Taman Damai Jaya. This chapter outlines the background of study, problem arising, research objectives and questions of the study, definitions of terms, and the scope of study as well as the significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

In Malaysia, reading has been recognized positively by the local educators as beneficial especially in terms of developing pupils’ language acquisition. One of the earliest reading programmes was the English language Reading Programme (ELRP) which began in 1976. This programme was aimed to promote reading in English, improves students’ reading and encourages language development. (Parkash kaur, 2000). Similarly, there is a variety of reading programmes such as Class Reader Programme (CRP) and ‘*Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca* (NILAM)’. They introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and it believes that reading can enhance target language learning in a context, help to build the confidence of pupils’ language usage and also encourages extensive reading programme. In the year 2000, MoE introduced new curriculum by integrating literature into the English language syllabus for primary school, which mainly focused on reading skills. Extensive reading gives a pleasure, tension free situation; it requires no dictionary and examination. It helps and motivates the pupils in their learning activity.

Initially, the programme involved only selected residential schools in urban areas. These schools were provided with reading labs that were equipped with a large

amount of graded reading materials. By the year 1983, about two hundred public schools were provided with reading labs. At the same time, campaigns on extensive reading and attempts to make Malaysia a literate society began voraciously (Parkash kaur, 2000). The year (1988) was made the reading year with the theme “Reading as a Bridge to Knowledge”. Many reading camps, books exhibition, campaign and talks were held in state libraries, schools and the universities. Even many activities were also carried out throughout the year to instil the reading habit among Malaysians; yet, the issue of English acquisition has always been a concern among Malaysian teachers, academicians, and the officials from the Ministry of Education because student’s lack of vocabulary in English deprives them the opportunities to use the language well. The rural school students’ failure rate in national standardized English examination is twice that of their urban counterparts (Mohd. Asraf, 2004). Many rural school students have difficulty in understanding English and some pupils avoid communicating in English. This is a study on Extensive Reading improves student’s vocabulary acquisition by having plenty of appropriate reading materials for them.

The problem of having poor readers is that the student who have adequate word recognition skills, but who do not understand what they read is a global concern. Research conducted by Sloat, Beswick and Willams (2007) proved that poor vocabulary knowledge is still a major problem as students fail to learn reading during primary level. In Malaysia, the problem remains the same. Reading is a major component of the English curriculum of Sekolah Kebangsaan Taman Damai Jaya. More class time is allotted to it than to the other components such as listening, speaking and writing.

Despite the emphasis that has been given on reading, the problem continues to plague the teachers as more and more students got low scores in the school and national achievement tests in English. One of the variables responsible for this problem is that students have limited access to reading materials (Greaney, 1996). Most of them come from poor families whom cannot afford to buy reading materials. Beside this, students’ motivation to read is low because they feel only extrinsic needs for English such as passing exams, getting a degree and getting a job later. This type

of motivation according to Gardner and Lambert (1992) is less effective because it is not rooted on the personality of the learner.

Another cause of low proficiency in reading is failure to incorporate extensive reading in the curriculum. While intensive reading develops skills and strategies in reading, it by itself, is inadequate (Ellis and McRae, 1991). Public exam, formative and summative tests pressure in Malaysia poses another obstacle to extensive reading implementation, especially when exam measure only discrete skills such as writing, neglecting consideration of students' attitude towards reading. For extensive reading to be effective it must be incorporated in the curriculum and adequate class time should be allotted to it. To regard it as an "optional extra" is to deprive the students of the treasures of knowledge and wisdom which can only be gained through extensive reading of books, magazines and newspapers (Yu, 1993).

According to Yu (1993), if extensive reading is part of the curriculum and class periods are devoted to it, students will take it more seriously. They will no longer regard reading as a passive, boring extra-curricular activity. Furthermore, if it is part of the curriculum, teachers can help the students to acquire the ability to read and work independently by monitoring their progress, advising on books and by giving them encouragement and feedback. Therefore, they should be given time to read to overcome the reading problems. Allotting library hours to read is not enough. Yu stresses that without a reading program in the curriculum, many students reading tends to be haphazard and unrewarding, which result in them giving up reading eventually. On the other hand, a good reading program implemented under the guidance of the teachers in the class will help the students to gradually progress towards individualized and independent reading and learning.

Apart from that, the solutions for above problems are the ESL teacher must be well equipped about Extensive reading and its benefits. The government should play its role by providing training to ESL the teacher. For this, it enables the teacher

to have a better understanding on how extensive reading works and able to perform his or her job well. Moreover, using of dictionary during English lessons should be less to help pupils' to understand better the meaning of the insight vocabularies by the pupils. The teacher should play their role by making it is a reality and this can be done by selecting a text which linking to schemata knowledge. Another solution for this problem is that pupils should clear their mentality that English is for the sole purpose of passing exams, getting a degree, etc. Pupils need to be reminded that English is a universal language and the purpose of using this language goes beyond reasons mentioned above. To overcome limited reading materials, parents and government should play their role. This can be done by providing affordable books to all categories of pupils. Based on the education system of Malaysia, we are very exam orientated. Therefore, extensive reading is difficult to accomplish due to this reason. In order to overcome this problem, we should be more flexible in our education system. So, the pupils will not simply read books to pass exams but to enjoy the language and gain knowledge from their reading. The government should not stress too much on exams and instead make learning enjoyable.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Extensive reading was firstly introduced in Malaysia in 1976. Extensive reading was introduced formally in school to encourage the reading habit among Malaysian students and to increase ESL proficiency. The Education Ministry initiated extensive reading to complement the classroom reading programme. At present, English is the second language in Malaysia, thus it is a compulsory subject in all Malaysian schools. It is taught at all levels from preschool to secondary level. The importance stressed in learning this language is clearly stated in the English language curriculum used in Malaysian schools. The learning outcomes of the curriculum have specified that, learning this language should enable the learners to acquire English language for language acquisition purpose.

Generally, the reading habit among Malaysians is widely reported to be declining day by day. It is getting more and more obvious. This is evident mainly from the quality of their language output. This problem arises when there is a language output activity. Pupils struggle to talk and communicate in English. The lack of vocabulary knowledge adds more to this problem. Reading as a leisure activity is gradually becoming less preferred and the electronic media such as internet and television seem to be more engaging to a wider range of the society especially young Malaysians in these days.

Additionally, Day and Bamford (1998) state that there are some points where extensive reading less focused in English teaching classroom. The ER programme is not common in second language learning because of various factors. Primarily, the students are learning to read a second language material which they do not read or like reading, (Day & Bamford, 1998). The students may not read and do not like reading because they are being exposed to some other learning activities. It looks like a simple view but it is true when come across real life situations. The more students read; the better they become in it. Nevertheless, finding time for extensive reading is a matter of priority. There is no specific time given for reading practise and the lesson that the teacher carries out is exam orientated where it is more focused on writing especially for Year 6 and 5 pupils. Year 6 and 5 pupils are categorized as twelve and eleven years old pupils. Year 6 and 5 pupils are more focused towards their public examination where year 5 pupils are getting ready to their exam before one year while Year 6 pupils are preparing themselves towards the examination on that particular year. Reading activity has been given less attention by the pupils and teacher in order to give importance for writing activity.

Next, the emphasis on the teaching of reading skills especially intensive reading might contribute to the lack of attention given to extensive reading (Day, 1993, p.xi). The English teachers' attitudes towards and practice of extensive reading in Malaysia was lack of attention whenever every English lesson, the ESL teacher

starts off with intensive reading where the teacher asks the pupils to read a text and then the teacher reads the text. Urquhart and Weir (1998) state many teachers see one of their key roles in the reading classroom as expanding vocabulary knowledge and developing learner's ability to continue to increase their vocabulary. For this view, reading feed language learning with other technique fails to promote extensive reading skill. This is a true fact; I as an ESL teacher have talked to other ESL teachers on the matter of extensive reading in my school. Many teachers do not have any knowledge about extensive reading approach and how it is conducted in the classroom. These teachers are good exposed to the NILAM programme are familiar with the ER approach.

In Malaysia, the NILAM programme was implemented in 1999 and it is still being conducted in schools. The aim of NILAM is to provide all pupils with easy access to English reading materials that is usually difficult to find at pupils' home. This is the first step to inculcate reading habit among children as well as to encourage pupils' interest in reading English. NILAM program is an effective program to inculcate and sustain reading habit in young children. Pupils would get new knowledge from their reading besides naturally encouraging vocabulary building in them. Though, there is some problems in conducting NILAM programme. First, the pupils are exposed to all types of target language, mostly difficult texts. When a low vocabulary acquisition pupil reads a difficult text, they might be felt boring to read. So, here the NILAM programme less travelled to low vocabulary acquisition pupils. Another lack of NILAM programme is the less guidance from the teacher. The pupils usually lend a book from library and read it. Lastly, they write in their NILAM Reading Record Book. So, there won't get any guidance from the teacher during their reading process. It becomes one of the problems for the low vocabulary acquisition pupils. Various reading genres and creative activities would also meet the needs, interest and level of the pupils. The creative activities would appeal to the pupils' senses too. This would naturally help pupils to develop their language skills and general knowledge and then to be applied in the classroom and their daily lives. Parents and teachers should join in hands together in supporting this program. All teachers should always motivate pupils' reading culture by offering help and guidance especially to the weaker ones.

Government and corporate bodies could also contribute to this program by donating varieties of books and English newspaper. Parents must always support this effort by making sure that their children are reading at home and if they can, buy them extra reading materials or educational games to assist their learning. Parents should set a good example to the children by always sparing some time reading together because everything; including reading habit starts at home. NILAM program should be continue and become more successful in future.

For ER programme to be successful, every ESL teacher should provide pupils with interesting reading materials. But, in my school, there are teachers who do not provide the pupils with reading materials and these pupils do their own readings. This is because they are giving importance to examination. They are exposed towards writing skills which is the most acquired skill in the examination. So, they used to give an attention towards writing skill rather that extensive reading. As for extensive reading, exposure of reading materials is very important to path the pupils on reading. The materials for reading requires multiple sources like books, text books, magazines, newspapers and these materials should be interesting to the pupils. If pupils are exposed to their selection of reading materials, reading become more beneficial and be pleasurable for these pupils.

According to Bondy (1990) readers of lower ability tend to see reading in terms of “schoolwork”. Reading is categorized “as a serious, difficult process, requiring hard work and disciplined effort” (Elley, 1992). There are pupils of Sek. Keb. Taman Damai Jaya, who have a mixed proficiency in the English language. This is because they either read less or do not read at all at home. Majority of these pupils have a rural background and they are less exposed to the English language. They tend to code switch in other languages while engaging in group work activities. My attempts have met many failures as I have tried to make them be aware of the importance of reading. These pupils find it a big struggle to read as their only aim is to complete their secondary school. When an English activity is conducted in the classroom, the pupils will go for pleasure reading that is the core of the extensive

reading. Pleasure reading is a reading that gives more happiness and encourages pupils' interest in reading. This is because it helps them to comprehend easily and enhance pupils' mastery of vocabulary.

In this study, the researcher has been highlighted on some problems such as emphasis in vocabulary teaching instead of focus on grammar, conducive of ESL classroom, other reading skill, the preparation of reading materials, the reading with teacher and the reliability in extensive reading which lead to unsuccessful extensive reading programme. It is important to understand if extensive reading approach would actually improve pupils' vocabulary acquisition or hinder them to improve their language reading proficiency. An in-depth understanding of this practise would be an eye-opener if the extensive reading is a bane or a boon to the language acquisition.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate on whether extensive reading approach can help pupil's vocabulary acquisition. Here, the teacher's role is to guide and prepare appropriate materials according to their age and language acquisition ability. Basically, most of the students find problems in understanding content of the book because of the word and sentence structure are difficult. Many students have difficulty understanding English words and sentences whereas a few are able to use English in simple conversation (Mohd. Asraf,2002). This caused them to lose interest in reading process. So, here the teacher has supported them in their reading process. Similarly, this study is to get successful outcomes by conducting extensive reading programme to acquire vocabulary acquisition such as:

- a) Extensive reading improves the pupils' vocabulary acquisition.
- b) The pupils' perception on extensive reading.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objective of this research to study the effects of Extensive Reading on vocabulary acquisition and how it has enhanced pupils' vocabulary knowledge as well as boost their motivation to use the language by ER approach. Thus, this study is designed to achieve the following research objectives. As follows:

- a) To identify whether Extensive Reading lead to the pupils' vocabulary acquisition.
- b) To identify the perception of pupils on extensive reading.

1.6 Research Questions

The effects of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition are divided into two different aspects. In order to achieve the objectives, two research questions are formulated. They are:

- a) Does Extensive Reading improve pupils' vocabulary acquisition?
- b) What are the pupils' perceptions on extensive reading?

1.7 Significance of Research

English language, as a second language in the country, has a dominant role to play in the broader education scenario in Malaysia. English is a means of communication in certain everyday activities and certain job situations. This is also

an important language to enable Malaysia to engage meaningfully in local and international trade and commerce. At the same time, it also provides an additional access to academic, professional and recreational materials" (MoE, 1998). English Language Teaching (ELT) in primary education, therefore, aims at equipping pupils with the basic English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and knowledge of grammar to enable them to communicate orally and in writing whether in and out of school for different purposes and different situations. MOE (1995) aim is by the end of primary schools in English language syllabus which focus on four skills. Narrow to the point of reading, 'read and understand different kinds of texts for enjoyment and information'. The aim of MoE is to ensure the pupils are able to read and write simple English as they complete their primary education. Here, extensive reading plays its vital role as it helps pupils to achieve this objective.

The significance of the research is to introduce teacher the techniques on how to use the ER approach to teach English vocabulary. Through an Extensive Reading approach, students enjoy their reading process and are able to acquire the vocabulary. Extensive reading is to increase the pupils reading ability in the target language develop positive attitude towards reading, motivate pupils to read by selecting appropriate materials and gain in various aspects of vocabulary acquisition in the target language. It is time for the teachers to actually immerse in their current skill and upgrade their teaching techniques in teaching English language whether in the classroom or outside. If extensive reading approach on vocabulary acquisition shows proven results, this technique should be shared with other ESL teachers for the benefit of all learners.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Extensive Reading (ER) : Bamford and Day (2004) describe extensive reading as an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. They choose their own reading material

and read it independently of the teacher. They read for general, overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment. An Extensive Reading approach is to get students reading in second language and liking it.

Vocabulary Acquisition : Vocabulary acquisition is the way in which people expand the number of words they understand when learning a language. It is defined as a natural progression in the use of language. It is an unconscious process that occurs when language is used in ordinary conversation.

English Language Reading Programme (ELRP): A reading programme which was began in Malaysia, 1926 to promote reading in English.

Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca (NILAM): A reading programme which was implemented by Ministry of Education on 1999.

Class Reader Programme (CRP): A complete and systematic programme with the objective of helping children to read well from a young age.

Ministry of Education (MoE): A body of education established by the government.

Comprehensible input : Comprehensible input means that students should be able to understand the essence of what is being said or presented to them.

continuous reading could bring about a different impact on pupils' vocabulary acquisitions. This could put a highlight on the importance of the teacher's role in ensuring proper and continuous extensive reading process.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A