

THE ENGLISH READING HABITS OF YEAR 6 STUDENTS IN SEKOLAH
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To my beloved family

my parents Nazarunisha and Abu Hasan

my brothers Zubair and Salman

my sisters Rumaisa, Amatullah and Alia

thank you for everything!

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of English literature in Malaysia's primary school English syllabus is hoped to foster reading habit that has been reported as declining among Malaysian children. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the students' readiness to accept this syllabus by exploring the current state of their reading habit or more specifically, the state of English reading habits of year 6 students in Sekolah Rendah Islam Hidayah, as well as to identify the factors that influence their decision to read in an attempt to help develop a syllabus that is tailored to solve related problems. Their level of awareness on the benefits of extensive reading was also studied. The research employed the explanatory mixed method design where quantitative data were collected first in the form of questionnaires and are more heavily weighted than qualitative data from the interview. The results showed that the majority of the respondents were average readers and only 22 percent of them were avid readers. However, the respondents did not have any problem related to reading and were highly aware of the benefits of extensive reading. Furthermore, all of the factors investigated in this study did have impact on their reading habit.

ABSTRAK

Pengenalan kesusasteraan bahasa Inggeris dalam sukatan pelajaran di peringkat sekolah rendah diharap dapat menyemai tabiat membaca yang telah dilaporkan semakin merosot di kalangan kanak-kanak di Malaysia. Oleh itu, kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menyelidik penerimaan pelajar-pelajar terhadap sukatan pelajaran ini dengan menyelami tabiat membaca semasa mereka, atau lebih khusus lagi, tabiat membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris murid-murid tahun 6 Sekolah Rendah Islam Hidayah, serta mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kehendak mereka untuk membaca dalam usaha menyediakan sebuah sukatan pelajaran yang bermatlamat menyelesaikan masalah-masalah berkenaan. Tahap kesedaran mereka terhadap kelebihan banyak membaca juga telah dikaji. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah campuran berpenerangan (*explanatory mixed method*) di mana data kuantitatif dikutip terlebih dahulu dalam bentuk soal-selidik dan lebih berat daripada data kualitatif daripada temubual. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian besar daripada responden adalah pembaca sederhana manakala hanya 22 peratus daripada mereka adalah pembaca baik. Walaubagaimanapun, para responden tidak menghadapi masalah berkaitan pembacaan dan mempunyai kesedaran yang tinggi mengenai kelebihan banyak membaca. Lebih-lebih lagi, semua faktor yang diambil kira dalam kajian ini mempunyai kesan terhadap tabiat membaca mereka.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ESL - English as a Second Language
ETeMS - English for Teaching Mathematics and Science
L1 - First language

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The decline in the English proficiency of ESL learners is always associated with reading. A plethora of research have proven that extensive reading plays a significant role in developing language proficiency (Cho et al., 2008; Krashen, 2004; Lee, 2004; Cunningham & Starnovich, 1998; Lee et al., 1997; Elley & Mangubhai, 1991; Grabe, 1991). Reading is also an activity that can determine a person's level of knowledge and thinking. The benefits of reading are already obvious; therefore this research set to explore whether children nowadays share the same pleasure in reading.

1.2 Research Background

The decline in Malaysian learners' English proficiency is worrying. Berita Harian (2009) reported that the result of English subject that was below par brought down the whole UPSR result of students in Johor in year 2008. Many steps have

been taken by the government to improve the current situation. One of them was the introduction of ETeMS (or English for Teaching Mathematics and Science). The issue of ETeMS had brought English into the spotlight but after many debates, the teaching of Mathematics and Science is now reverting to the national language. As to compensate for the loss of attention on English, the Ministry of Education has started to incorporate literature into the English syllabus for primary school students through the Primary Literature Project (The Star, 2008). This effort is deemed a good start to solve the declining of reading habits among Malaysians.

Researches and surveys are showing gradual decline in the reading habits of not only Malaysians, but also of nations all around the world. The popularity of television and internet has taken over peoples' free time and the role of books has been reduced (McKool, 2007; Rios, 2004; McKenna et al., 1995; Shen, 2006). People do not look for leisure in reading anymore. After all, the advancement of the multimedia technology which integrates various multimedia (e.g.: text, graphic, animation, audio and video) is more attractive than books which, at most, has graphics accompanying the texts.

This problem is affecting the society and should be an issue of concern to everyone in order for it to be resolved. Hence, this research was conducted to explore the current state of the reading habits of children in Malaysia, specifically in English, and to identify the factors that influence their reading habits. The research also set out to discover the level of awareness of these children about the benefit and importance of reading. The findings of this research is hoped to be useful for improvising the literature syllabus.

1.3 Statement of Problem

It has been widely reported that the decline of the reading habit among Malaysians is getting more and more obvious. This is evident mainly from the quality of their language output. Reading as a leisure activity is gradually becoming depreciated and the internet and the television seem to be more appealing to a wider range of the society in these days.

The introduction of English literature in Malaysia's primary school English syllabus is hoped to foster reading habits among Malaysian children. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the students' readiness to accept this syllabus by exploring the current state of their reading habit and to investigate factors related to the habit in an attempt to help develop a syllabus that is tailored to resolve related problems. Their level of awareness on the importance and benefits of extensive reading were also studied.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research was conducted to:

1. discover the state of English reading habits of year 6 students of Sekolah Rendah Islam Hidayah
2. find out the children's level of awareness of the benefits of extensive reading
3. identify the factors that influence their decision to read?

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What is the current state of the English reading habits among year 6 students of Sekolah Rendah Islam Hidayah?
2. How aware are these children of the benefits of extensive reading?
3. What are the factors that influence their decision to read?

1.6 Research Scope

The scope of this study is to look at the children's reading habits in the English language only. As for their reading materials, although internet reading has been acknowledged by some researchers such as Shen (2006) and Huges-Hassel and Rodge (2007), the present study did not include internet reading when investigating their reading habits because its reliability is questionable as the process of publishing an online article does not necessarily go through credible process like most published books. Therefore the reading is focused mainly on English narrative books. While the target population are upper primary students (year 3-6), the sample studied are year 6 students who have undergone the extensive reading programme of the Primary Literature Project.

1.7 Research Significance

This research offers valuable information for the teachers and syllabus designers because it potentially gives a general overview of the current state of reading habit of Malay children in English. Using the findings of the factors influencing the reading habit, measures can be taken to solve arising problems that discourage their reading habit. This research could also give suggestions on how to implement the syllabus that is tailored to the students' wants and needs.

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