

HABITS AND ATTITUDE IN ENGLISH READING OF
SMK RAJA MUDA MUSA STUDENTS

BY

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the degree of Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to identify the current reading habit and attitude among secondary school students of SMK Raja Muda Musa. Students' reading habit were determined based on their preferences of reading materials and time spent on reading activity with additional focus on whether students divert their attention towards the Internet in searching for softcopy materials. A total of 220 students were selected among form one to form five students of SMK Raja Muda Musa. Using the adopted questionnaire of Adult Survey of Reading (ASRA) by Smith (1991) the response were then analysed to seek students' reading habit and attitude in reading in English as a whole. From this study, it is found that in regards to reading materials be it hardcopy or softcopy students were prone to entertaining materials as comics were found to be the highest preferable materials among the school students and the time spent for reading was much lower compared to the time spent surfing the Internet. In term of reading attitude, students showed neutral response towards reading involvement but were not able to enjoy themselves when it comes to reading enjoyment despite of disagreeing that they possess difficulty or anxiety in reading process. From these findings, it can be suggested that the school and teachers should take actions and organized more reading initiatives to promote reading activity that suits today's generation.

خلاصة البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى التعرف على عادة وموقف طالب المدارس الثانوية الوطنية رجا مودا موسى من القراءة . ومت تحديد عادة القراءة لدى الطلبة بناء على املواد املقروءة والوقت املستغرق يف نشاط القراءة مع تركيز إضافي على ما إذا كان الطالب يصرفون انتباههم حنو الإنترنت حثا عن نسخ إلكترونية .وقد مت اختيار 220 طالبا من الصف الأول حث الصف اخلامس من امدرسة الثانوية الوطنية رجا مودا موسى . ومت استخدام الستيبيان املخصص لدراسة القراءة الذي طوره مسيث (1991) للبالغني، ومت حتليل الإجابت لمعرفة عادة القراءة وسلوك الطالب يف القراءة ابللغة الإنكليزية ككل .وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة يف ما يتعلق ابلواد املقروءة سواء كانت ورقية أو إلكترونية، أن طلبة امدراس مييلون أكثر للمواد املسلية، وأن الوقت الذي يقضونه يف القراءة قليل جدا مقارنة ابلوقت الذي يقضونه يف تصفح الإنترنت. و فيما خيص موقف الطالب من القراءة، أظهر النتائج أن الطالب حمايدون حنو القراءة لكنهم مل يتمكنوا من الستمناح ابلقراءة عندما يتعلق الأمر ابلقراءة لالستمناح، ابلرغم من عدم موافقتهم على أنهم يعانون من صعوبة أو قلق يف عملية القراءة .ومن هذه النتائج، ميكن اقتراح أن تتخذ امدرسة واملدرسون إجراءات وأن ينظموا امزيد من مبادرات القراءة لتعزيز نشاط القراءة الذي يناسب اجليل احلايل.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nur Farahafizah binti Mohd Fauzi

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*To My Beloved Late Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, my other half, my students and
my friends*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Reading is a process of constructing meaning which involves complex cognitive process in decoding symbols that in return, creates a meaningful activity. Hence, it has become a foundation where the budding of other academic skills revolving vocabulary, word power, sentence construction through constant exposure and language skills, takes place. Adetunji (2007) stated that reading is an act of translating symbols that requires an understanding of what the texts are trying to imply, hence the vitality of the readers' ability to process the information.

Despite the similarities between the activity of reading and the habit of reading, Sanzkaeo (1999) has defined reading habit as a behaviour that expresses the liking for reading and can also be considered as a pattern that individuals would like to organize their reading activity. The activity of reading is regarded as a habit when it is repeatedly carried out as stated by Chettri (2013). Wagner (2002) believes that reading habits become measurable through the amount of materials being read, the frequency of reading as well as the average time spent on reading. Thus, this study focuses on identifying students' reading habit in English as it relates to the fact that reading plays a huge role in students' education as it is mainly used to empower reading skills, strengthen the ability to understand and to critically apprehend the reading materials.

However, in order to encourage a reading habit, reading needs to first become part of their daily routine. In recent years, focus has been given on the importance of reading and its effect on students' achievement and their ability to improve language skills. As such, Isuigo Abamike (2001) emphasized the direct influence that reading

habits provide towards students' performance, both for exams and leisure. Fielden (2004) added that students who learn to read on their own without force are more likely to form a reading habit. In return, they would develop skills to perform critical reflection in selecting, analysing, critiquing and synthesizing the materials they have read and are able to select other materials that will help in developing their language skills.

Unfortunately, reading has lost its place among adults and youngsters and continues to be a growing problem that creates a non-reading community. To curb the issue, softcopy materials and digital reading has been made easier now that Malaysians are capable of owning a data-based computer or phone. Yet, numerous studies can be found showing that Malaysians are not reading enough and the process of encouraging this habit, especially among younger generations of today's society, gets more difficult.

Research has proven that Malaysians are poor readers especially adults whilst children only prefer to read when preparing for their examination rather than reading for entertainment or solely for acquiring knowledge (Inderjit, 2014). The World Education Report (1993) states that Malaysia then had one of the lowest literacy rates with 78.4% compared to other Southeast Asian neighbours like Singapore with 100%, Indonesia (81.6%), Thailand (93%) and the Philippines (89.7%). It was also supported by Inderjit (2014) who stated that:

Today, the country's population is close to 20 million, however the Malaysian literacy is only around 85% and it will be impossible to improve, especially if the young, do not cultivate reading habits

Prior to that, as stated by Panadian (1997), the government had insisted on instilling English as the medium of instructions in certain tertiary levels to increase the

need to empower English skills—which in return had cause a major paradigm shift. In addition, reading in English is much more accentuated in today's era as the need for students to be able to read and comprehend English materials is important to assure positive language learning.

As the advent of television and exposure of Internet dawns upon its users, leisure time for reading and enhancing comprehension skills have decreased. Additionally, even schools that use English as second language with demand to read both languages, has become a thing of the past.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Throughout the years, reading has been considered as a vital academic language skill that needs to be acquired by an individual. Through reading, individuals are able to grasp new knowledge and attain information that can be stored in their schemata. The importance of reading is strengthened by the claims that individuals with good reading habits will have the chance to widen their mental horizon and multiply their opportunities (Loan, 2009). While there are levels of learning environment involved, this does not diminish the importance of reading, as supported by Noor (2011).

Since reading acts as an indispensable tool in learning, it forms an integral part of various learning situations which according to Yusuf (2007), creates a bridge between the gap of knowledge and ignorance. The U.S Department of Reading (2005) states that one who is unable to read will not be able to succeed—this indirectly secures the future of a school's life as reading is capable to directly influence the performance of students (Isuigo-Abamike, 2001). Additionally, reading skills help to expand views, develop experience and produce thoughts that are useful in completing tasks. Essentially, reading acts as a learning base; when a child is capable of reading,

it becomes the centre of his educational process. Despite that, students are still found reading with the sole purpose of passing an examination or due to involvement in a language competition.

The Malaysian National Library (2006) reported an increase on the literacy rate. Despite of the increase, the number was still considerably small with the emergence of another issue. A phenomenon known as the “reluctant reader” where individuals are able to read, but prefers not to, has been identified and proven as a culture. As studied by Ismail and Elias (2009), an increasing number of students have been identified as “reluctant readers” as they were discovered to have a positive attitude towards reading but were reluctant to read when English non-fiction factual materials and resources were concerned. It is then supported by a study on early reading habit and its impact on reading literacy which portrayed a link that relates extensive reading to free voluntary reading—when students are exposed to a particular activity throughout their learning session, students are more likely to develop the habit of reading (Bendriss, 2011) which can be an alternative in curbing the reluctant reader phenomenon.

In a study conducted by Jadal (2013), only a minimum of one to two hours per day was spent for reading by a majority of students. Without adequate time spent on reading, it led to the lack of reading habits among students. In Malaysian context, result revealed that Malaysian polytechnic students have expressed low interest towards reading as the activity was not found to be enjoyable as compared to technology-related activities (Subashini & Balakrishnan, 2013). It is disheartening to know that such little weight is placed upon the importance of reading and the effect reading has on one’s life.

According to Haliru (2015), students in developing countries do not consider reading to be a relevant leisure activity that can be carried out to build up their social interaction skills. In fact, there are several factors that contribute to the lack of interest towards reading as a daily routine habit. Several of these factors are: (a) lack of positive role models both at homes and schools, (b) peer influence; and (c) limited availability of reading materials either at home or schools (Shameem, 2016). Besides that, when students experienced difficulty in reading upon encountering materials that are hard to comprehend and was not able to perform well in answering comprehension questions that follows, it caused them to lose interest towards reading as a whole. Safiah (1990) also supported the statement that students now are lacking in their reading habit and the interest towards reading are decreasing as they are not able to correlate the importance of reading with their daily performance.

A number of observations have shown that students with low reading habit are mainly represented by students in developing countries as reading was not considered a leisure activity to be enjoyed. Ramatu (2010) believed that this phenomenon can also be caused due to the advents of ICTs like Internet, mobile phone, video games and other viewing gadgets. It comes with the perception that the advancement of technology increases exposure towards reading materials that can be obtained on the cloud which becomes one of the alternatives in triggering students to read more. It creates an easier reading activity as compared to using hardcopy materials.

However, Liu (2005) stated in her study that the growth of electronic media may give a negative implication to reading as people are less engaged in extensive reading and thus reducing their ability to read deeply and sustain prolonged engagement in reading. Besides, it is also found that online reading for information is not widely used just yet in Malaysian schools especially in rural areas (Zurina, 2013).

Despite of the growing number of studies portraying the level of reading habit and how the contributing factors are leading to its decreasing amount of students' interest, only a small number of studies were conducted targeting the rural area students' sample. Additionally, none of the study was able to share the impression and idea of students in rural area especially in Kuala Selangor regarding their reading habit and attitude. The foregoing reasons prompted the researcher to investigate the level of reading habit amongst secondary students in SMK Raja Muda Musa, Kuala Selangor.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The object of this study is to investigate the reading habits among secondary school students of SMK Raja Muda Musa, Kuala Selangor. Specifically, the investigation places focus on reading habits in English as it is students' second language in schools and simultaneously gathering students' perception towards having reading habits. For the purpose of this study, reading habits will be measured in terms of types of reading materials that are of interest and the amount of time spent on reading as well as their overall attitude towards it.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research questions were built based on several references of similar studies that focus on students' reading habit in English. The data in this study was obtained and analyzed to adverse the research questions below:

1. What is the reading habit of the secondary school students in terms of the following?

- a. Types of reading materials they read that covered both traditional and online materials?
 - b. Time spent on reading and time spent on surfing the Internet?
2. What are the students' attitudes towards?
- a. Reading involvement
 - b. Reading enjoyment
 - c. Reading anxiety and difficulty

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

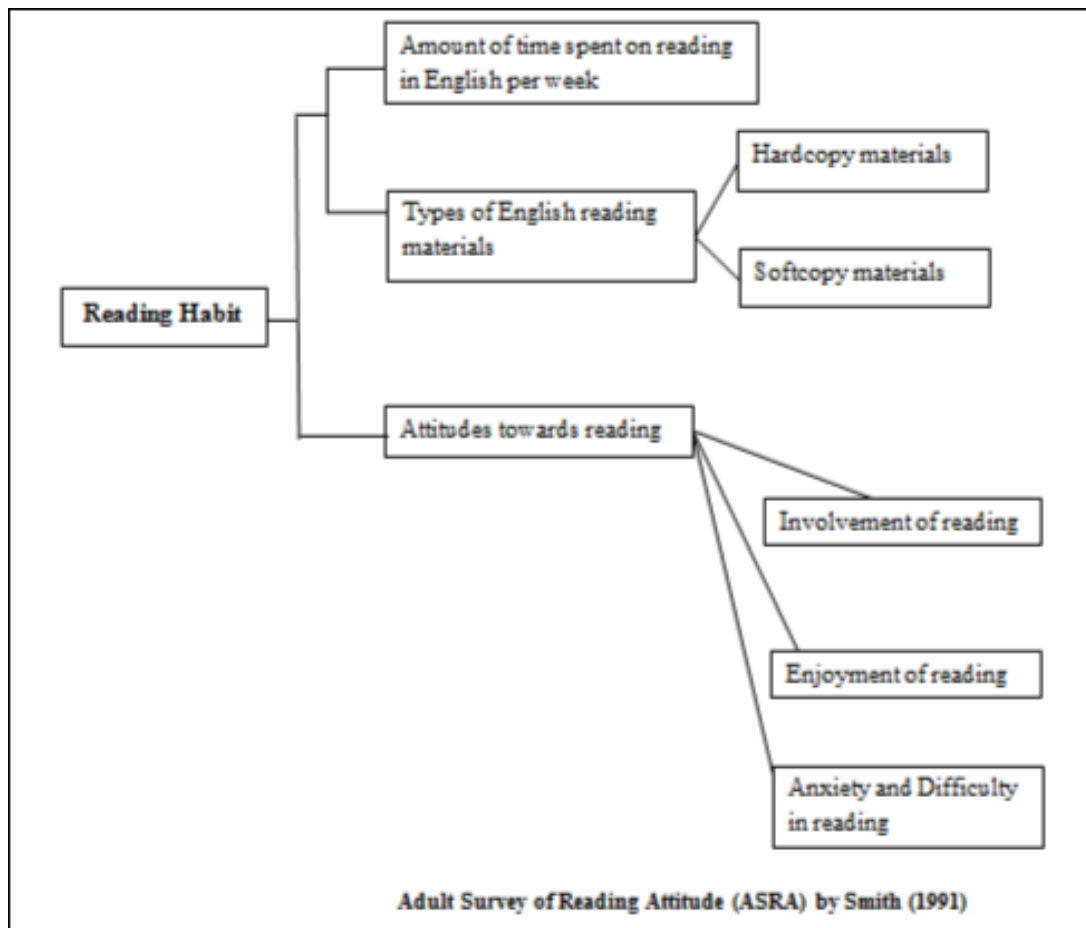


Figure 1.1 Proposed Conceptual Framework of the Study

The declining of students' reading habit is worrisome as according to Jadal (2013), the most time a student would spend for reading activity is a maximum of three hours. Thus, this study aims to use the framework above to measure and obtain a scale of students' reading habit through three aspects; amount of time spent, types of materials and attitudes towards reading. Reading habits can be determined using three observable aspects. The first is through the amount of time spent on reading, specifically English materials. It is then followed by types of reading materials students indulge themselves in. Past studies placed its focus on hardcopy materials as books and publication were at its peak. However, the advancement of technology has brought in a reading trend known as digital reading or online reading where the emergence of electronic books, websites and other reading materials using portable devices are becoming a norm (O. Akarsu, 2014). This then constitutes the two divisions under the aspect of types of reading materials used during reading activity. In measuring these two constructs, a questionnaire by Adult Survey of Reading Attitude (ASRA) by Smith (1991) was designed to assist the observation. Providing several choices, students will be able to select their preferences and answer the time they spend on reading to measure the first aspect of reading habits.

Aside from the materials and time spent, reading habit is measurable through the third aspect which is reading attitudes (Cesar, 2011). According to McKenna Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition, an individual's reading attitude will develop based on three factors; their surroundings, the development of feelings namely pleasurable or frustration; and the role of reading experience throughout reading process. Hence, with the same questionnaire obtained from Smith (1991), the study aims to fulfill the division of the research that divides reading attitudes into three

constructs: involvement, enjoyment and anxiety-fused difficulty faced during reading process.

Involvement in reading activity emphasizes on the various reading activity and respondents' feelings and experience when they participate in it. Respondents will also get to express their feelings regarding the shared passion among the people around them as an act of engagement in reading session. Enjoyment in reading focuses on the feeling of satisfaction and joy when receiving reading materials and indulging in reading sessions to build passion. Enjoyment is defined regardless of where the reading process took place. The last construct of the reading attitude involves anxiety and difficulty in reading. This can be related through some studies where the lack of reading habit among students can be caused by bad experiences that they encountered which triggered the anxiousness in facing the next reading activity. Thus, through a 5 Likert Scale questionnaire, this study intends to explore the reading habit level among secondary school students of the school further, based on the construct shown above.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This section of the study highlights the importance of reading, just as stated by Anderson (1985), reading is considered as the cornerstone of success. Reading is a type of real-life experience that expands beyond school years and into adult life where it can be regarded as a mode of thinking. It encourages individuals to use complex skills which will assist them in achieving understanding of printed words, skimming for information and intensive reading. In addition to that, Kirsch and Guthrie (1984) also stated that reading contributes significantly in reaching job success and career development, which further proves the importance and significance of reading habits. Furthermore, students and tertiary learners who perform well in reading in English

language manage to enhance their language skills while acquiring higher chances of getting better career opportunity. However, despite the importance of reading, according to Imran Ariff (2010), though Malaysians are reported to read more compared to previous years, they have still not adopted reading habits.

Situations involving reading are usually seen during examination season for students while adults would read to prepare for career prospects. Reading habits are undoubtedly beneficial; yet it is still hard to inculcate the habits among the youth and generation nowadays. It is also believed that if Malaysians were to adopt reading habits, there is a high possibility of Vision 2020 being achieved (A. Wahab, 1995). Consequently, in order to identify the factors and levels of interest among students in reading English materials to develop the habit, various studies have been conducted.

While recognizing the importance of reading, it is also important to take note of steps taken to encourage the activity of reading in English. A major paradigm shift had when the policy of Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening Command of English (MBMMBI) was introduced. This policy was implemented with hopes that students would create better engagement with reading texts and literary materials that can be a catalyst in enhancing their reading skills. It leads to the belief that story reading is an actual important language learning mechanism that accelerates one's development in language process. English has become vital for these new generations as they need to learn such skills as most of reading materials in every stage of education revolve around this language. Thus, one of the programs being introduced under this policy is the Highly Immersive Program (HIP). It became compulsory for every school in Malaysia to adapt HIP into the school environment as a mean for students to adapt to English speaking surrounding which then would trigger their language skills into becoming a fluent speaker. Schools have also selected one day per

week where students are required to read English materials during assembly to familiarize themselves with reading in English. Ultimately, steps have been taken and means have been prepared; it is up to the students to start practicing this activity and turn them into a habit.

That being the case, the study expects to unveil the amount of readings carried out by students as well as the materials and medium used that makes students continue reading, especially in their second language. At the same time, by exploring students' perception towards reading habit, teachers can further play a role to use the materials that is suitable to inculcate their reading passion.

1.7 LIMITATION OF STUDY

The research is designed to study students' reading habits in English where factors such as preference for reading materials and time spend on reading will be studied. In obtaining students' perception towards reading, participants consist of secondary school students. There is no prior requirement or specification in selecting the students aside from exposure to reading activity. The study will be conducted in SMK Raja Muda Musa, Bestari Jaya.

For the purpose of this study, as all participants are students of this specific school; results obtained from the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other schools. To carry out the study, the use of questionnaire complete with several sections and specific items was used to obtain student's perception on reading habits and the materials preferred by students in reading in English.