

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

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Annotation: This article provides information on improving students' reading comprehension through authentic materials.

Key words: reading skills, authentic materials

INTRODUCTION

Most students nowadays have shown their lack of interest in reading English language materials. Reading interest is important in encouraging the students to read because students who cannot read would not be able to succeed in school and life. Baba and Affendi, 2020 mentioned that the ability to read is crucial in which reading affects an individual's intellectual and emotional growth. As the result, good readers would have more chances in broadening their mental horizons and better opportunities of success. Students who seldom read would encounter problem(s) in knowing the progress happening around them. Reading is not only reading the words, but it requires a process of interaction between the students' prior knowledge, language proficiency, understanding the real meaning and information encoded in the text. If the students do not practice themselves to read, they would fail to grasp the content and structure of the text (Ismael, 2021). In order to know the current issue, students need knowledge to obtain through reading including the materials that they could regard as their background for a start. After reading the information from the materials, the students would have mental process that requires the students to participate in the creation of meaning actively rather than passive skill. The students need to be exposed to something that would trigger the imagination and thinking. In relation to this, initial reading like reading a short passage is very effective for the students' first language learning. The rhetorical organization of a text interacts with the students' formal schemata. For instance, the background knowledge and experience with textual organization affect the reading comprehension. There are different measures of reading comprehension that are influenced by the text structure such as comprehension-written recall protocols, summaries, retellings, and questions-answering. Hence, the teachers' skills in accessing the students' strength, limitations, and in building strategies can shape the students' interest towards reading.

MAIN BODY

English has played an important role and is taught as a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools. English is said to be a compulsory subject as it

becomes more important in this globalized world and is used to be a medium of instruction in schools. Ramiza and Albion (2013) as cited in Hussan Sahib and Stapa (2021) also agreed that English language continues to be taught as a compulsory subject due to the evolution in Malaysian education system. However, not all Malaysian students could master the English language well and it is one of the most critical subjects. Several problems affect the students' learning English as a second language in Malaysia. Among those are because of their family environment that gives less support of encouragement, peer to peer learning and the interest towards the language itself. Due to this, the students are not able to learn the English language mainly in reading. This is because the students have low self-esteem in learning and demotivated. At this time, the English teachers should play their role to guide the students to learn English language through reading. Various strategies should be made, for instance, the teachers should provide sufficient reading materials and give ample practices to the students in order to get them fluent in reading.

Reading is a process that involves word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Reading is also a receptive psycholinguistic process in which the students create the meaning from the text read. If the students are able to read, they are more than just being able to recognize the letters and decode words. Apart from that, reading the authentic materials helps the students to get familiar with various forms of the written text as well as the functions. The familiarization with various forms of written text is a way to access the students' interest to seek for more informative information from the article read. The use of authentic materials to teach English language helps to develop the students' reading comprehension, absorb the information read, enable the students to set the study goals, and prompt the use of revision techniques (Qizi, 2021). Ameen and Kamal (2021) claim that, the use of authentic materials enhances the ability of the students to transfer what they learn inside the class to the outside world. Thus, reading various forms of authentic materials help the students demand a considerable language activation in which the students employ their brains using their knowledge in order to get the meaning of an utterance or text read.

The Roles of Authentic Materials in Developing Reading. Authentic materials are defined as the printing materials, videos materials and audio materials that the students could encounter in their daily lives. For instance, change-of-address forms, job applications, menus, voice mail messages, radio programs and videos. The authentic materials are not only specifically to be used in the classroom. The teachers could make various learning tools with the help of authentic materials for the students as the materials are authentic. Due to the complexity in vocabularies and structures, the authentic materials have been strongly debated and all these could be regarded as learning devices. Besides, it is also good for the students to improve their English language especially in reading skill, for example, in the English secondary textbooks.

There are various kinds of reading activities given in the textbooks the students could learn including learning the new grammars and vocabularies that suit their level and ability. On the other hand, the language used in the textbooks close the language gap between the classroom knowledge and real life. Regarding the requirement of the classroom knowledge, the language used in the textbooks is only valid in a classroom environment whereas in real life, the students have to deal with the language of brochures, office works, application forms and other cultural products. It is depending on the students themselves to read what kind of authentic materials they wish to read. So, teachers in schools must encourage the students to read for pleasure.

In fact, authentic materials are abundant in Malaysia. The authentic materials used in class could be very useful tool to motivate the students and enable them to feel comfortable in learning the English language. Therefore, students should be exposed to varieties of authentic reading materials of different text types. This would help to familiarize the students with the convention of text types appropriate to their needs. Initially, the roles of authentic materials could be only useful in the classroom in as much as they help the students to develop the required reading skill. The use of authentic materials in reading among the students could be useful as the students are introduced to real discourse such as in video interviews with famous people where intermediate students listen for gist and the reading text provide various patterns of reading text that are ideal to teach the mini-skill like scanning. Hence, to enhance the students to read, suitable strategies could be done to use the authentic materials in attracting the students’ interest to read and learn the English language.

The Teachers’ Roles in Teaching Reading by Using Authentic Materials. It is undeniable that the teachers play their vital role in encouraging the students towards reading the authentic materials. If the students are able to read and enjoy the reading activities conducted by their teachers, they would get motivated and putting more efforts to learn English language through reading with the help of authentic materials. Motivation is something related to the students’ behaviours that they have to set their mind up to figure out certain work (Zaman, 2015). In Tu and Zhou (2015) as cited in Nguyen, Phan and Vu (2021), motivation is an essential aspect in language learning success. This is because learning is self-initiated, yet requires motivation in order to keep the students to engage in learning activities conducted by their teachers. It is so for learning English as a second language is something that is learnt especially among the non-native students. In this aspect, the teachers have to put more efforts in their teaching in order to encourage the students to read English language materials.

Teachers could emphasize the hands-on activities so that the students could have fun in reading the English materials. The teachers should aware on the current curriculum to make sure it is well-matched to the students’ interests and abilities. In secondary schools, there are different levels of students’ abilities in reading. Aligned

with the CEFR context most of the students in secondary schools could not reach the B2 and C1 level of proficiency in reading. It is maybe because of the teachers' strategies that might not attract the students to learn reading. As the result, the students would get bored and easily feel demotivated. Hence, to get a better achievement in learning English as a second language among the secondary school students, the teachers should provide interesting reading materials with fun activities so that the students could enjoy the reading lesson. The teachers as well should make sure the students are ready to learn the English language. If the readiness of learning is at the higher level, there will be a higher level of attentiveness. As for the students' attitudes, generally, the students have positive attitudes towards English language learning. Therefore, kudos must be given to the teachers for making their students able to read the English language reading materials.

Moreover, to get develop reading skill in the teaching of English language, the teachers should give their responsibilities to filter the materials used via the selection of the learning objectives and conduct the activities for reading. In line with this, the teachers should set the target and inform the students that there will be a time limit for the students to read. The teachers need to observe the class when reading to see whether the students have enough time to read the reading materials.

In order to encourage the students to read English materials, the teachers could develop the interactive theories related to reading into their lesson such as schema theory. Schema theory depends on the fact that every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge. The schema theory is important in reading comprehension as it is used to guide the students to comprehend the written materials that provide the directions for the students to construct the meaning from their own understanding towards the knowledge (Ismael, 2021). By using schema theory, it helps the English teachers in secondary school to practice their students to digest the information and interpret the meanings in a relevant manner.

CONCLUSION

This study intends to focus and explore more on the use of authentic materials in teaching reading as a second language, the roles of the authentic materials in developing reading among the students and the teachers' roles in teaching reading by using authentic materials. The reviews have been made and most of the researchers in previous studies claim that authentic materials give positive impact to the students to improve their reading skill. English teachers should always be aware of their students' needs in reading in order to make sure they could be good reader in the future. For example, provide the ample reading materials to the students so that the students could gain a lot of vocabularies and learn the grammar types from the written text. In school, teachers should continue implementing the reading programmes such as the “NILAM Reading Programme” and personal observation towards the students' progress in

reading ability. By doing so, it may help the students to instil the reading habit because they could see the number of books they have read.

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