

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS*

JUDUL: A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF READING ON WRITING PERFORMANCE
AMONG FACULTY OF CIVIL ENGINEERING STUDENTS

SESI PENGAJIAN: 2007/2008

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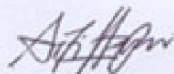
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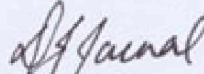
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**A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF READING ON WRITING
PERFORMANCE AMONG FACULTY OF CIVIL ENGINEERING
STUDENTS**

SITI HAJAR BINTI MOHAMED HUSIN

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Bachelor in Science and Education TESL**

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APRIL 2008

“I declare that this thesis entitled “**A Study On The Effects Of Reading On Writing Performance Among Faculty Of Civil Engineering Students**” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree”.

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To my beloved mother, father,
and family members
For their love, affection, and encouragement
To the love of my life,
Rakib
For having faith in me,
Your unconditional love and unfailing support
Those keep me going

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the effects of reading on writing performance among Faculty of Civil Engineering students. A total of twenty students from the Faculty of Civil Engineering had been identified and selected for the purpose of this research. This group of students is taking an English language course that is UHB 2422 Advanced English for Academic Communication. There were two writing sessions. The first session required the students to write an essay according to the topic given without reading the materials on related topic. Then, they were required to answer the questionnaire regarding their personal views on writing without reading text. On the other hand, in the second session of writing, the students were given a text to read and later produced a mind map based on their understanding of the text. The text then was taken and they were asked to write an essay on the given topic. They were required to answer the questionnaire regarding their personal views on writing with reading text. Observation was also made during both writing sessions. The results showed that reading has positive effects on the students' writing. The findings of this study were discussed and recommendations for future research were also suggested.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk menyelidik kesan membaca ke atas prestasi penulisan pelajar di Fakulti Kejuruteraan Awam. Seramai dua puluh orang pelajar dari Fakulti Kejuruteraan Awam telah dikenal pasti dan dipilih untuk kajian ini. Pelajar-pelajar ini sedang mengikuti subjek Bahasa Inggeris iaitu UHB 2422 Advanced English for Academic Communication yang merupakan subjek wajib universiti. Kesemua pelajar ini menjalani dua sesi penulisan di mana sesi pertama pelajar dikehendaki menulis karangan berdasarkan kepada tajuk yang diberikan tanpa membaca teks yang berkaitan dengan tajuk. Pelajar-pelajar kemudiannya diminta menjawab soal selidik berkenaan dengan pandangan mereka terhadap sesi penulisan pertama yang mereka jalani. Manakala di dalam sesi penulisan kedua, pelajar-pelajar diberikan sebuah teks dan mereka diminta membaca teks tersebut seterusnya menghasilkan sebuah peta minda berdasarkan pemahaman mereka terhadap teks tersebut. Teks tersebut kemudiannya diambil dan pelajar diminta menulis karangan berdasarkan kepada tajuk yang diberikan. Pelajar-pelajar kemudiannya diminta menjawab soal selidik berkenaan pandangan mereka terhadap sesi penulisan kedua yang mereka jalani. Pemerhatian juga dibuat ke atas kumpulan pelajar ini semasa sesi penulisan berlangsung. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa membaca memberi kesan yang positif ke atas penulisan pelajar. Dapatan kajian ini dibincangkan dengan lebih lanjut dan cadangan-cadangan untuk kajian pada masa hadapan turut dikemukakan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
SPM	-	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
MUET	-	Malaysian University English Test

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.2 Introduction

Reading is a very complex process which requires an active participation on the part of the reader. Some scholars have pointed out their point of view about the reading process to highlight the complexity of reading. According to Roy Harris (2000), the message in the printed text is not something given in advance - or given at all - but something created by the interaction between the writer and reader as participants in a particular communicative situation. To Smith (1997) reading is asking questions of printed text and reading with comprehension becomes a matter of getting your questions answered. This means reading is a thinking process in which it requires the reader to understand and perhaps to use different skills in gaining the information from the text such as inferring, questioning, predicting, and drawing conclusions.

Other than that, reading also can be regarded as an interactive process. It cannot be seen obviously but when we read a text, we will think. At this moment we actually evaluate the relevance of the information. We will try to relate it with our previous knowledge and experience.

“Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. The ability to anticipate that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate what has not yet been heard is vital in listening.”

(Goodman, 1967:127)

Reading involves many complex skills that have to come together in order for the reader to be successful. For example, proficient readers recognize the purpose for reading, approach the reading with that purpose in mind, use strategies that have proven successful to them in the past when reading similar texts for similar purposes, monitor their comprehension of the text in light of the purpose for reading, and if needed adjust their strategy use. Proficient readers know when unknown words will interfere with achieving their purpose for reading, and when they won't. When unknown words arise and their meaning is needed for comprehension, proficient readers have a number of word attack strategies available to them that will allow them to interpret the meaning of the words to the extent that they are needed to achieve the purpose for reading.

Reading is also a complex process in that proficient readers give to the text as much as they take. They make meaning from the text by using their own prior knowledge and experiences. Proficient readers are constantly making predictions while reading. They are continuously anticipating what will come next. Their prior knowledge and experiences with texts as well as with the world around them allow them to do this. It is this continuous interaction with the text that allows readers to make sense of what they are reading.

Reading is one of the important skills that students should possess in learning process. It offers a productive approach in improving vocabulary and word power. Reading also can help readers keep abreast of the various styles of

writing and new vocabulary. Students who make reading as a habit usually have good language skills, and they grasp the variances in phonics much better.

Reading helps in mental development and is known to stimulate the muscles of the eyes. It is an activity that involves greater levels of concentration and adds to the various skills of the reader. It is a pleasure that enhances the knowledge acquired, consistently. The habit of reading also helps readers to decipher new words and phrases that they come across in everyday conversations. The habit can become a healthy addiction and adds to the information available on various topics. It helps students to stay in-touch with contemporary writers and makes them sensitive to global issues.

Writing, on the other hand, is the learned process of shaping experiences into text, allowing the writer to discover, develop, clarify and communicate thoughts and feelings. It requires the development of thinking skills. According to Applebee (1984) and Emig (1977), writing is the externalization and remaking of thinking, and to consider writing as separate from the intentions and beliefs of the writer is not to address composition as a reflective tool for making meaning.

Writing can be an act of discovery, of communication, of joy which connects us to work, to culture, to society and to knowledge. According to Bello (1997), “writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one’s thoughts and feelings”. It can be challenging whether to write in our own native language or in second language.

Reading and writing can be defined in so many ways according to individual’s interpretation. However between these two skills, they still have the connection and it is a complex relationship. According to Thaiss (1984), “listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the four modes of language, are

inextricably related". That means listening/speaking and reading/writing are interdependent pairs. Reading and writing exist only in relation to each other. To illustrate the connection between reading and writing is like waking to sleeping and giving to receiving. This statement shows the relationship between reading and writing. According to Song (1998), reading has been recognized to influence writing since reading provides writers with ideas to write about and a model to internalize.

Another scholar, Zamel (1992) points out students who write during and/or after reading can understand that reading changes as they bring new responses to it. It means that reading is a beneficial act. This shows that reading and writing can complement each other.

Nelson (1998) in the *Reading-Writing Connection Viewed Historically*, she chronicles the history of the relationships between reading and writing within academia or higher education. She shows that this relationship is an old and complex one. However, in the early of 20th century, it was being heavily influenced by the scientific method in which new disciplines were being created and older ones were remodeling themselves to fit this new emphasis.

In this research, the focus will be on the effects of reading on writing performance among students at the tertiary level of education. The results of this research should be able to open their mind towards the importance of reading to improve their writing performance and perhaps could motivate them to read more. Besides that, the students could see the difficulties in writing that they might face if they do not have the habit of reading.

1.10 Background of the Study

Higher education or tertiary level of education also known as academia is an institution which prepares the students for the workplace environment and equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in a profession related to their field. Writing is one of the essential skills that students should at least have. However, the ability to write is not really enough as the students should equip themselves with good writing skills so that they can produce a good piece of writing.

The problems of the students at the higher level of education are that they do not know or they are not aware of how to improve their writing performance. Reading is another skill which is very closely related to writing. The problem here is that the students could not distinguish the connection between reading and writing. They could not perceive how reading can actually help them in improving their writing performance. For them, reading and writing are two different skills which do not belong to each other. In other words, reading is reading and writing is writing. This has been the focal point of this researcher to do this research.

The learning behavior at higher level of education is different from the primary and secondary education. In higher education, of course, the students are expected to have critical thought, to have independent learning and research and willingly to seek assistance as part of learning. Most of the students think that to improve their writing performance, they should be trained explicitly on the writing skills. However, they should also be made aware of improving their writing performance through reading.

In school, the students are taught explicitly grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures. Meanwhile reading itself exposes students to varieties of language use as well as widens their vocabulary. It forces students to become

aware of the importance of interpretation on the reading side of writing, both for themselves as readers and those who will eventually read their own texts. The inclusion of reading can show the utility of writing as a tool to help students understand what they have learned.

In this research, perhaps it will give students at higher education particularly in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) different views on how they can improve their writing performance. This research focuses on the effects of reading which are significant to the students' writing performance.

1.11 Statement of the Problems

At the higher level of education such as college and university, writing is one of the language skills that students should perform. Usually a good reader makes a good piece of writing. This statement sufficiently shows that reading and writing have their own connection and share a very close relationship with each other.

Reading and writing are two skills which complement each other. However, many students do not realize the existence of the connection between reading and writing and how those skills influence each other.

The statement of the problem of the research is the students are not aware that reading actually can help them in writing. Therefore, this research is aimed at investigating the effects of reading on the students' writing performance. In addition, this research will also shed light on the ways reading help students in writing as well as the difficulties they face in writing without reading the text.

1.12 Purpose (s) of the Study

The purpose of the study described in this research report is to investigate the effects of reading on students' writing performance. Furthermore this study is conducted to find out the difficulties in writing without reading the text as well as to find out the ways reading help the students in writing.

1.13 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are:

1. To determine the effects of reading on the writing performance among Civil Engineering students.
2. To examine the ways reading help students in writing.
3. To examine the difficulties in writing without reading the text.

1.14 Research Questions

1. Does reading have an effect on the writing performance of students?
2. How did reading help students in writing?
3. What are the difficulties in writing without reading the text?

1.15 Significance of the Study

By conducting this research, it is hoped that the students at higher level of education especially UTM students will be aware of reading can benefits them in writing. Therefore, they will acknowledge that there is a connection between reading and writing performance. Perhaps later on the students will make reading as their hobby in their spare time. It is because to have a good piece of writing is not something that can only be learned explicitly but also through reading habits.

This research could also provide us with the knowledge of the benefits of reading and how reading can improve their writing performance. This could shed some light for the lecturers to help the students improve their writing performance. The lecturers can make use of the skills that the students already know in improving their writing performance. Other than that, lecturers can design or create activities for the students to help them to improve their writing which involves the reading skills.

1.16 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is only focused on the effects of reading on writing performance among Civil Engineering students in the main campus Skudai, Johor Darul Takzim. The respondents are selected randomly from the Faculty of Civil Engineering. They have taken or currently taking UHB 1412 that is English for Academic Communication and UHB 2422 is the Advanced English for Academic Communication.

1.17 Operational Definition

1.9.1 Reading

Reading can be defined in many ways. However, in this research reading is the cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message. It also refers to an active skill-based process of gaining knowledge from oral, visual, and written texts. Besides that, reading relates to how we interpret something that is written or printed and used the information for other purposes such as writing.

1.9.2 Writing

There are a number of different ways to describe writing. Writing is the act of creating written works. It is also the work of a writer; anything expressed in letters of the alphabet. It also can be defined as letters or symbols written or imprinted on a surface to represent the sounds or words of a language. Writing is a communication by means of written symbols. As for this research, writing means how people put into words the ideas and knowledge in written form and share it with other people.

1.9.3 Effect

Effect is something brought about by a cause or agent; a result. It is the power to produce an outcome or achieve a result; influence. In this research we will look at how reading influences the writing performance among UTM students.

1.9.4 Performance

Performance can be defined in several ways: a dramatic or musical entertainment, the act of performing; of doing something successfully; using knowledge as distinguished from merely possessing it or the action of accomplishing something. The focal point of this research is on the writing performance which focuses on the students' achievement in accomplishing their writing task.