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<tr>
<td>871122-11-5134</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zaidah bt. Zainal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING HABIT AND MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEST RESULT AMONG STUDENTS IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION

NORUL ALIMA BINTI NORDIN

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science and Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JULY 2011
I declare that this thesis entitled “RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING HABIT AND MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEST RESULT AMONG STUDENTS IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION” 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.

Signature : ....................................................
Name : Norul Alima bt. Nordin
Date : 5 July 2011
“He grant wisdom to whom He please; and he to whom wisdom is granted receive indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the message but men of understanding”

“Allah memberikan hikmah (ilmu pengetahuan) kepada sesiapa yang dikehendakiNya dan orang-orang yang diberikan ilmu pengetahuan beerti ia telah diberikan kebaikan yang banyak”.

(Al-Baqarah: 269)

To my beloved family,
To the Love of my Life,
Frydaus
And Dr. Zaidah Zainal:

This one is for you
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Last but not least, to my fellow TESLians, thank you very much, together we strive for the excellence. Thank you for our unforgettable moments together. Hope our friendship never last.

Thank you all and may ALLAH bless you always.
This study was conducted to find out if there is any correlation between English reading habit and Malaysian University English Test (MUET) result. A total of sixty students from the Faculty of Education had been identified and selected for the purpose of this research. All the students are required to answer a set of questionnaire which consists of forty one questions. The questionnaire was used to determine the students’ English reading habit, their preferred reading materials as well as their opinion towards the reading and English language proficiency connection. Then, ten students are selected for the interview session. The interview session was conducted to find out on respondents’ personal views on how reading habit can help them get good result in the Malaysia University English Test (MUET). The result showed that reading habit has a very weak negative association with MUET result. The findings of the study were discussed and recommendations for future research were also suggested at the end of the paper.
ABSTRAK

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<td>TESL</td>
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<td>NILAM</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an interactive process that involves interaction between a reader and the text. It cannot be seen obviously but when we read we will try to relate what we read with our background knowledge. We will evaluate the relevance of the information in the text and relate it with our previous knowledge and experience. Thus, Goodman (1967) defines reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game which involves an interaction between thought and language.

In addition, reading also can be regarded as an enrichment exercise for the mind and heart. To Wenden (1987), reading should be a continuous process in one’s life as it provides knowledge as well as personal satisfaction. It also provokes one into thinking. It has no doubt that reading is a very important skill as it can help to increase the reader’s proficiency in a particular language. It goes without saying that students should read a lot to help them in their learning process.

Reading habit conversely refers to the amount of time spent by readers to read. It also refers to quantity of reading done. Usually avid readers will spend most of their time with reading. They will read a variety of reading materials in any circumstances. According to Ong (2002), there are five categories of readers which are:

1. The non-readers who believe that reading is a boring activity and a waste of time.
2. The marginal readers who do not have much interest in reading. They would rather do other activities than read and will only read if it is really necessary.
3. The avid readers who actually love reading. Reading is their favorite hobby.
4. Those who read for job-related needs who specifically read because they believe that reading plays a vital role in their job as regards the knowledge and skill that can be acquired through reading.
5. Those who do not deny that reading is important but find that they do not have the time. These may be those who are involved heavily in their work.

Moreover those who read a lot will enhance their verbal intelligence, that is reading will make them smarter. Good readers according to Baunmann and Duffy (1997) are:

1. Mentally engaged
2. Motivated to read and learn
3. Socially active around reading task
4. Strategic in monitoring the interactive processes that assist comprehension
   - Setting goals that help their reading process
   - Monitoring their emerging text
   - Coordinating a variety of comprehension strategies to control the reading process

   (Cited in Scoenbach et al. 1999)

However, second language reading ability is heavily dependent on proficiency (Clarke, 1979/1980; Cziko, 1980; Wong, Filmore and Valadez, 1986 cited in Fatimah Hashim and Balakrishnan, 2006). This means that a student who has a low English proficiency level would have difficulty reading in that language. Research conducted by Krishnan et al. (2009) has shown that students who read more in English have greater English language proficiency. Not only that, the result of the research also shows that reading materials outside the classroom subject areas do help in the proficiency level of the students.
In this research, the focus will be on the relationship between reading habit and the MUET result among proficient and non proficient students at the tertiary level of educations. The result of this study should be able to open their mind towards the importance of having reading habit to achieve good MUET result. Besides that, the students could see the differences in reading habit between the proficient and non proficient students and this perhaps could motivate them to read more.

1.1 Background of study

The Malaysian University English Test was first introduced in 1999. It is a mandatory requirement for admission into public universities as it was introduced with the aim of bringing about a higher level of English language proficiency, especially crucial for those entering university. Thus, students who wish to further their studies at degree level have to sit for this test. The test is divided into four parts which include listening, speaking, writing and reading. These four parts have different division of percentage with reading part contributing to 45% of the overall marks. Reading has the highest percentage compared to the other three parts. Thus it can be said that reading comprehension is a crucial test component to assess the language proficiency and understanding of students in Malaysians school and institution of higher learning. However there was not even half of the students who get Band 3 and above in the test.

Realizing the importance of reading and the lack of interest in reading among Malaysians, the government has tried to overcome this problem by instituting several measures. For example, NILAM introduced in 1998 aims to inculcate good reading habit among primary and secondary school students. Not only was that, literature component for secondary level was introduced in 2000, with the hope of promoting the reading skills among students.
In this research perhaps it will give students, who will sit for MUET, a different view on how they can get good result in MUET. This research focuses on the influence of reading habit which is significant to MUET result.

1.2 Statement of problems

Reading is not a favorable activity among Malaysians. The information, communication and culture Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr. Rais Yatim recently said that reading has become an enveloping habit for Malaysians with most reading an average of eight to twelve books a year. Survey conducted by the National Library in 1982 reported that Malaysians only read an average of one to two pages a year. Fortunately, the reading habit among Malaysians improved to two books per year when the National Literacy Survey was repeated in 1996. Nonetheless, the last National Literacy Survey carried out in 2005 reported that Malaysians still read an average of two books a year. In short, there had been no improvement in reading amongst Malaysians. Thus, it can be said that reading is not a habit amongst them.

Most Malaysians read in Bahasa Malayu followed by English and finally Mandarin. In other words, Malaysians who can read well in English language is relatively low compared to reading in national language, Bahasa Melayu. As for students, Pandian (2000) reports that 80.1% out of 674 university students and 76.2% out of 975 Form Four students were reluctant to read materials in English. The students will only read the English materials in order to complete academic tasks but not for their knowledge and pleasure.

In 2007 Malaysian Examinations Council had revealed that a total of 40,515 or 45.12% of the MUET candidates achieved Band Three or higher in the mid-year Malaysian University English Test (MUET). In other words, half of the students failed to get good band in MUET. Thus, it will be difficult for them to apply for certain courses such as medicine, pharmacy, law etc. that require certain MUET band
as entry requirement. As for that, the choices of courses that they can apply will be restricted due to the limitation of their MUET result.

Reading habit and MUET result might correlate with each other. However, many students do not realize the existence of connection between reading habit and MUET result and how those two things influence each other.

The statement of the problem of the research is that students are not aware that reading actually can help them achieve good result in MUET. Therefore, this research aimed at investigating the effects of reading habit on MUET result and also gives some ideas on the ways reading habit helps students to achieve good result in MUET. Furthermore, this research will also expose the students to the difference in reading habit between proficient and non-proficient students.

1.3 Purpose (s) of the study

The purpose of this study described in this research report is to investigate the relation between MUET result and reading habit as well as to look at the difference in reading habits between proficient and non-proficient students. Furthermore, this study is also conducted to find out the ways reading habit helps students in MUET.

For this particular study, MUET overall results are used instead of only selective skills such as reading. It is because the holistic mark in MUET portrays overall students’ language proficiency. As according to Arshad et al. (2008), MUET is one of the main measures of English language proficiency for admission into Malaysian universities. As for that, the mark of only selective skills in MUET cannot be used to determine whether the students are proficient or not. Not only that, MUET itself resembles reading skills. It is because reading part in MUET contributes the highest percentage which is 45% of overall mark. In other words, reading component is the largest part of the MUET as the students will be tested on different types of passages.
and tasks including cloze passages, information transfer, and interpretation of diagrams, tables and graphs.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the research are:

1. To find out: a) is there any relation between students result on MUET and their reading habit, b) examine if there is difference in reading habit and preferred reading materials between proficient and non-proficient students.

2. To examine the ways reading habit help students in MUET.