THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF IBRT MODULE FOR ESL READING COMPREHENSION AMONG MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2022

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the content of this thesis is my own work except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at designing and developing an Inquiry-Based Reciprocal Teaching (IBRT) Module to assist Malaysian ESL educators in improving their reading comprehension instruction with the intent of developing their learners' reading comprehension through a methodical, attainable, and consistent use of reading strategies, as well as evaluating the effects of this module on ESL learners' reading performance. This study adopted a modified design and developmental research approach with the ADDIE framework, which was carried out in three phases. The needs of 282 Form Four ESL learners in Penampang, Sabah were identified during the needs analysis phase, and further supported by the perspectives of 12 ESL educators in the same district. The design and developmental phase obtained the views and decisions of seven experts on the overall design, strategies, and activities in the module prior to the implementation of the module through a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test group design in one of the secondary schools in Penampang. Two groups of Form Four ESL learners with equivalent characteristics; the experimental group ($n = 42$) and the control group ($n = 42$), were involved in this part of the study. Their reading performance was analysed using the pre-test and post-test mean scores. The main findings indicated that the post-test mean scores of the Form Four ESL learners who were exposed to the newly-developed module was significantly higher than those ESL learners exposed to the traditional approach, with $t(82) = 9.71$, $p > .05$, $d = 0.52$, indicating a medium effect size. The module also resulted in the ESL learners' change of perceptions towards reading comprehension. The implications of this study shed light upon the current pedagogical approach to teaching reading comprehension, which provides a guideline for ESL educators in lesson planning and an auxiliary tool for teaching and learning reading comprehension.

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ABSTRAK

REKA BENTUK, PEMBANGUNAN DAN KEBERKESANAN MODUL IBRT TERHADAP PEMAHAMAN MEMBACA DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH MENENGAH

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mereka bentuk dan membangunkan Modul Pengajaran Timbal Balik Berasaskan Inkuiri dalam membantu pendidik di Malaysia menambah baik pengajaran pemahaman membaca pelajar mereka melalui kaedah yang lebih sistematik, koheren dan lestari. Kajian ini turut menilai keberkesanan modul terhadap pemahaman membaca pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL). Kajian ini menggabungkan strategi pengajaran timbal balik dengan model pembelajaran berasaskan inkuiri yang berfokuskan kepada kemahiran pemahaman membaca. Pendekatan reka bentuk dan pembangunan digabungkan dengan kerangka ADDIE dilaksanakan melalui tiga fasa dalam kajian ini. Fasa analisis keperluan telah mengenalpasti keperluan 282 orang pelajar ESL Tingkatan Empat di Penampang, Sabah yang turut disokong oleh 12 orang pendidik dalam daerah yang sama. Fasa kedua iaitu fasa reka bentuk dan pembangunan melibatkan kesahan tujuh orang pakar dalam reka bentuk, strategi dan aktiviti yang dilaksanakan dalam modul. Seterusnya, proses pengujian modul dilakukan melalui kaedah kuasi eksperimen berkumpulan secara pra-ujian dan pasca ujian di salah sebuah sekolah menengah di Penampang, Sabah. Dua kumpulan pelajar ESL Tingkatan Empat yang mempunyai ciri-ciri yang setara iaitu kumpulan eksperimen (n = 42) dan kumpulan kawalan (n = 42), terlibat dalam kajian ini. Prestasi pemahaman membaca mereka kemudian dianalisis menggunakan skor min pra-ujian dan pasca ujian. Dapatan utama kajian menunjukkan bahawa skor min pasca ujian pelajar ESL Tingkatan Empat yang terdedah kepada modul yang baru dibangunkan lebih signifikan berbanding pelajar ESL yang terdedah kepada kaedah tradisional dengan t (82) = 9.71, p> .05, d = 0.52. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan terdapat kesan saiz yang sederhana. Secara keseluruhannya, modul yang dibangunkan berjaya mengubah persepsi pelajar ESL terhadap pemahaman membaca mereka. Implikasi kajian ini membuktikan bahawa pendekatan pedagogi pengajaran yang disyorkan boleh digunakan sebagai panduan oleh pendidik ESL dalam menyediakan rancangan pengajaran serta dijadikan bahan alternatif dalam membantu pengajaran dan pembelajaran pemahaman membaca pelajar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

5E - Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate

ADDIE - Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate

ESL - English as a Second Language

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference

DDR - Design and Development Research

IBRT - Inquiry-Based Reciprocal Teaching

MEB - Malaysia Education Blueprint

MKO - More Knowledgeable Others

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PISA - Programme for International Students Assessment

SBELC - Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools

ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter scrutinises the context within which this research was conducted before addressing the statement of problems pertaining to the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in English as a second language (ESL) classroom. The subsequent sections outline research purposes, objectives, questions, hypotheses, significance and limitations of the study. The operational definitions and a succinct outline of the thesis organisation conclude this chapter.

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1.2 Research Background

The adoption of the English language as a world language expands its functions to include international language and global language. Language becomes international when reconceptualised and indigenised by non-native speakers (Sharifian, 2017). In contrast, the new technological age and globalisation have transformed the English language into the language of global communication (Halliday, 2019). The profound need to learn and master the English language is due to its overwhelming dominance as the world's lingua franca (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2001), its use either as an official or co-official language in 45 countries, and its status as the language of aviation, diplomacy, science, computers and tourism (Mahu, 2012). In Malaysia, the acknowledgement of the English language stature is manifested in its institutionalisation as a second language in the Education Ordinance since 1957, its reaffirmation in the Education Act 1996, the 1970 National Education Policy (MOE, 2012) and its infusion as a compulsory subject to be taught at all levels of education.

The current generation of Malaysian ESL learners needs to equip themselves with diverse knowledge and language proficiency in line with the international standards, as proficient English language users have better opportunities than others. Hence, the second shift in Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 manifests the efforts to align the English language national syllabus with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (MOE, 2013). In secondary education, this alignment resulted in the implementation of the new curriculum that ushered in the inauguration of the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools (SBELC). Apart from focusing on ensuring learners' proficiency by empowering them to use the language in daily routine, for knowledge attainment and for future occupational needs, SBELC also concentrating on comprehensively strengthening educators' language proficiency and pedagogical skills (MOE, 2013).

In preparing Malaysian ESL learners to meet the demands of the challenging era of globalisation through the successful acquisition of the English language, integration of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is required. Among them, reading is often portrayed as the most ineluctable medium for independent learning (Kiew & Parilah, 2020; Karadag et al., 2019; Normazidah et al., 2012; Grabe & Stoller, 2002). It is often portrayed as a crucial skill to master in an academic setting as reading provides knowledge and enjoyment, as well as acts as a tool to consolidate and extend one's proficiency (Aina & Parilah, 2021; Oktovia & Fitriana, 2017). Reading literacy is an amalgamation of cognitive and linguistic competencies ranging from basic deciphering to understanding words, massive comprehension structures, and integrating meanings with one's world knowledge.

Whilst decoding, interpreting, and ruminating on texts remain significant skills, prodigious attention has been paid to integrating the readers' ability to utilise multiple reading strategies to monitor their comprehension and resolve uncertainties (Ulu, 2019). The shift in the focus has redefined reading comprehension. It is now viewed as a fusion of highly complicated, productive, and multi-faceted processes that involve an integration of linguistics and previous knowledge of the readers, accurate utilisation of reading strategies (Lian & Azlina, 2020; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001) and correct manoeuvring through the complexity of the textual evidence (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Elleman & Oslund, 2019).

As globalisation and technological advancements place heavy emphasis on reading as a rudimentary skill for educational achievement and occupational progress (Kim et al., 2019), the SBELC explicates the primary purposes of reading as to ensure the achievement of independent reading through learners' ability to relate textual information with background knowledge (MOE, 2018). Learner-centred approaches in the teaching and learning activities in SBELC, such as project-based learning and inquiry-based learning, allow the educators' empowerment in facilitating the optimisation of the learning process. Although samples of teaching plans are provided, teachers might still face difficulties fully comprehending the steps and strategies required when dealing with reading comprehension (Aina & Parilah, 2021; Aziza & Abu Bakar, 2019; Sidhu et al., 2018; Suriati et al., 2017).

Though prevalent efforts have been put into enhancing ESL learners' reading comprehension, many still fail to understand the texts comprehensibly (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). As postulated by Elleman and Oslund (2019), skilled readers who clearly understand simpler texts might face comprehension difficulties when the texts become more challenging with increased text complexity. Similarly, even after years of exposure and development of reading competency, the decoding ability of ESL learners in primary education does not substantiate successful attainment of reading skills and strategies among them in secondary education (UNESCO, 2017; Hazita, 2016; Normazidah et al., 2012). In addition, university graduates with a history of reading difficulties also performed poorly in text generation (Mackay et al., 2019).

Although strengthened reading skills facilitate the success of reading comprehension (Anderson, 2003; Carrell, 1989), this process does not occur automatically. Learners' incomprehensiveness of text inhibits their learning process as the lack of reading ability hampers their understanding and appropriate interpretation of the information presented in the text (Wanzek et al., 2018; Cooper et al., 2014; Woolley, 2011; Mason, 2004). Learners' inability to acquire the essential subject matter could acutely impede their academic performance (Sheikh et al., 2019; Wanzek et al., 2018). The increased complexity in the text further intensified the problems for upper secondary ESL learners, as texts tend to get more challenging at this level.

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To counter the precipitous decline in the English language competency (Aina & Parilah, 2021), the embedment of more learner-centred and action-oriented approaches such as inquiry-based learning as well as innovative instructional pedagogies into the national curriculum witness a shift away from the traditional teaching and learning approaches to instructional practices that emphasise active participation in authentic learning situations (MOE, 2013). The development of reading skills to remedy reading difficulties, improve comprehension, and increase textual understanding (Oktovia & Fitriana, 2017) is an irrevocable step as reading skills are essential elements in the reading comprehension process (Karadag et al., 2019). Hence, investigating reading strategies is crucial because reading difficulties resulting from a lack of reading strategies are significant barriers to academic performance in learners (Iskandar et al., 2017; Alghail & Mahfoodh, 2016).

A valid starting point to address these reading comprehension perplexities is to establish a credible transfer of meaning from the text to the reader using reading comprehension strategies (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). Furthermore, scholars in the field of reading comprehension (Brown, 2017; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017; Pressley, 2006; Anderson, 1999) are adamant that accurate understanding and text interpretation require readers to make informed decisions in the selection of reading strategies (Lian & Azlina, 2020) and to merge the elicited textual information with their background knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2020).

Another countermeasure to rectify these predicaments would be to ensure that Malaysian ESL educators are aware of the purposes and importance of modelling appropriate reading strategies that are pivotal in improving readers' knowledge, overcoming reading complexities, and counterbalancing textual knowledge (Oktovia & Fitrina, 2017). Hence, in bridging the reading comprehension gap, apart from having an awareness of the learning needs of the learners, ESL educators also need to acknowledge the purposes of reading and be competent in the use as well as the teaching of reading strategies and pedagogies (Kim et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2004). Therefore, it necessitates the rebranding of instructional strategies and some alterations in the teaching methodologies of reading comprehension in classrooms.

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1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the great appreciation of high competency in English literacy skills and intensifying efforts as well as modifications to revamp the curriculum to improve the current English language proficiency of Malaysian ESL learners (Hazita, 2016), the results of the reading literacy rate at the international standard are in appalling condition. Malaysian ESL learners' poor performance in the English language is evident in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), a worldwide study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to measure the scholastic performance in Mathematics, Science and Reading of 15-year-old learners.

In 2009, with the OECD average reading score of 493 (OECD, 2010), Malaysia scored a mean score of 414 and ranked 55 among the 74 countries. In 2012, with the OECD average score at 496, Malaysia achieved only a mean score of 398 (OECD, 2012) and was placed at 59 out of 65 countries participating in the programme that year. Unfortunately, Malaysia was excluded from the PISA ranking in 2015 due to a shortage of the weighted response rate (51%) (OECD, 2016). In 2018, with the OECD average score of 487 (OECD, 2019) and 77 countries, Malaysia ranked 56 with a mean score of 415.

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Table 1.1 illustrates the mean performance of the Malaysian learners in PISA reading from 2009 to 2018.

Table 1.1: Malaysia PISA Reading Mean Scores from 2009 to 2018

Items	Years		
	2009	**2012**	**2018**
OECD Average Score	493	496	487
Reading Mean Scores	414	398	415
Ranking	55/74	59/65	56/77
Level	2	2	2

Source: OECD (2019)

PISA's 2009, 2012, and 2018 results saw the placement of Malaysian ESL learners in the baseline level or Level Two of the eight-level PISA reading scale, in which the learners have the required skills in selecting and locating explicit

information, identifying the main ideas, reflecting on simple typographical features, and justifying their statements (OECD, 2019). Malaysian ESL learners might have difficulties attending to more complex texts. These results also cautioned Malaysian ESL learners about their ineptitude and depicted the heightened prevalence of reading difficulties. This condition is alarming as PISA reported a strong correlation between the countries' mean reading performance and literacy rate (OECD, 2019).

Malaysian ESL learners' worrying performance as shown in Table 1.1, is further explicated in the results of English Language Papers in Malaysia Certificate of Education or *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM). Although the results of the English 1119 papers are unable to detail the learners' performance specifically in the four language skills, they still represent the learners' overall achievements in the English language at a particular level (MOE, 2018). The results may also support and explain their low PISA reading performance.

Whilst the nation's analysis showed a steady increase in the percentage of passes; from 79.4% in 2018 to 80.5% in 2019 and a slight drop to 80.1% in 2020 (Table 1.2), it also disclosed that after 11 years of learning the language, not even 50% of the learners managed to achieve a minimum grade of C in SPM English 1119 papers: 45% in 2018, 47% in 2019 and 46.3% in 2020.

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A notable issue is the low subject grade average or *Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran* (GPMP) in the levels of English language achievements for ESL learners in Sabah. A smaller GPMP indicates an increase in candidates with excellent grades (A+, A and A-), hence, better performance.

Table 1.2: Analysis of Students' Achievements for SPM English Papers (2018-2020)

Year	Percentage			Passes	Candidates	GPMP (Nation)	GPMP (Sabah)
	A+, A, A-	B+, B, C+, C	D, E				
2020	16.2	30.1	33.8	80.1	379,404	5.85	-
2019	16.0	31.0	33.5	80.5	386,462	5.81	6.63
2018	14.4	30.6	34.4	79.4	388,899	5.98	6.80

Source: Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (2020)

Based on Table 1.2, although the national GPMP in 2019 recorded a GPMP of 5.81, which is an increase of 0.17 from 2018, it saw a slight decline of 0.04 to 5.85 in 2020. However, the reported GPMP achievement for Sabah was much lower than the national GPMP. They were recorded at 6.80 in 2017 but increased significantly to 6.63 in 2019. When this was reported, the GPMP for 2020 had yet to be disclosed.

The extensive discussion among the researchers regarding the explication of reasons for the poor command of English amongst the Malaysian ESL learners resulted in these critical elements. Among them are the education system and reforms (Hazita, 2016; Normazidah et al., 2012), limited language exposure (Philip et al., 2019), learners' level of anxiety (Balakrishnan et al., 2020), learners' attitudes and motivation (Kiew & Parilah, 2020; Thang et al., 2011), learning characteristics and difficulties (Siti Zulaiha & Arifin, 2015; Hiew, 2012), learning styles (Nooraini & Suhaida, 2018) and difficulties in understanding academic texts (Raihana, 2018).

Furthermore, among the reading impediments encountered by Malaysian ESL learners are difficulties in understanding unfamiliar words and a lack of essential reading skills (Hiew, 2012), as well as misconceptions in reading academic texts (Raihana et al., 2018). The focus of teaching reading comprehension predominantly resides in searching for the correct answers (Yee & Su, 2020) and completing the comprehension tasks (Harrison, 2010). The lack of emphasis on the importance of the qualitative dimensions of instruction resulted in the inability of the learners to acquire the necessary reading skills to become proficient readers (Harrison, 2010).

This is evident in the results of the needs analysis performed in this study on 282 Form Four ESL learners in the district of Penampang, Sabah, which was conducted to examine the learners' self-perceived use of reading strategies while attempting to read texts. The results reported a total mean score of 6.87 out of ten, indicating only medium usage of reading strategies among these learners.

In addition, one of the secondary schools in the same district was randomly selected to further investigate learners' self-perceived use of reading strategies and their reading comprehension performance. With a reported mean score of 6.82 for

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