

**USING THE READING MATRIX TO ASSESS
EFFECTIVELY THE READING COMPREHENSION
IN SEKOLAH MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN
TENGHILAN, TAMPARULI.**

PERPUSTAKAAN
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SOSIAL**

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DECLARATION

The materials in this dissertation are original except for quotations, excerpts, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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CONFIRMATION

I confirmed having read this dissertation entitled

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COMPREHENSION IN SEKOLAH MENENGAH
KEBANGSAAN TENGHILAN,
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ABSTRAK

MENGGUNAKAN MATRIKS MEMBACA DALAM MENGAKSES PEMAHAMAN MEMBACA PELAJAR DI SEKOLAH MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN TENGHILAN, TAMPARULI

Pemahaman Membaca adalah satu daripada misteri dalam konteks Bahasa Inggeris terutamanya dalam skop pembacaan. Tanpa diketahui oleh ramai orang terutamanya para guru, pengetahuan para pelajar terutamanya dalam skop pembacaan tertentu dalam pemahaman membaca dapat diakses dengan menggunakan Matriks Membaca. Pada masa sekarang, ujian Pemahaman Membaca akan hanya menjadi ujian yang menunjukkan symbol angka. Walaubagaimanapun, dengan menggunakan Matriks Membaca, para guru dapat membahagikan markah para pelajar kepada band yang mana terdapat Band Satu sehingga Band Enam. Selain daripada itu, dengan Matriks Membaca ini, para guru akan dapat mengetahui kekuatan dan kelemahan para pelajar dengan melihat diskriptor yang terdapat di Matriks Membaca ini. Setiap band mempunyai diskriptor yang berlainan dan dapat memberitahu guru keupayaan setiap pelajar. Sementelahan itu, para guru akan dapat mencari kedudukan keupayaan setiap pelajar. Kajian ini adalah untuk mengetahui keberkesanan Matriks Membaca apabila digunakan untuk Pemahaman Membaca. Terdapat tiga puluh responden untuk kajian ini. Mereka dipilih berdasarkan keputusan mereka dalam Peperiksaan Semester Pertama dalam mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Setiap tingkatan dari Tingkatan Tiga sehingga Tingkatan Lima mempunyai wakil yang terdiri dari sepuluh orang pelajar yang mendapat markah tertinggi dalam tingkatan untuk subjek tersebut. Selepas mereka dipilih, mereka akan diberi ujian diagnostic. Ujian ini terdiri daripada soalan- soalan yang diambil dari peperiksaan sebenar PMR dan SPM. Selepas pengkaji mendapat skor, pengkaji akan memadansuaikan markah para pelajar kepada band- band. Selain daripada itu, berdasarkan band, setiap pelajar mempunyai diskripsi masing- masing yang mana ia menunjukkan kekuatan dan kelemahan pelajar tersebut dalam Pemahaman Membaca. Berdasarkan analisis yang dibuat, dapatan yang didapati menunjukkan bahawa Matriks Membaca boleh membantu para guru untuk memadansuaikan markah pelajar, mengetahui kekuatan dan kelemahan pelajar serta dapat membahagikan markah pelajar dalam band- band tertentu mengikut kebolehan para pelajar. Para guru akan dapat mengenalpasti para kebolehan para pelajar bagaimanana mereka membuat Pemahaman Membaca dalam pengorganisasian, inferensi dan pengpreferensasian.

ABSTRACT

USING THE READING MATRIX TO ASSESS EFFECTIVELY THE READING COMPREHENSION IN SEKOLAH MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN TENGHILAN, TAMPARULI

Reading Comprehension is one of the mysteries in English context, particularly in the Reading area. Unknown to many, including the teachers, students' knowledge on certain Reading Comprehension areas can actually be assessed by using a Reading Matrix. In this time being, a Reading Comprehension test will only be a test with some numerical symbol. Nevertheless, by using a Reading Matrix, teachers can tabulate the student's marks into bands, which consist of Band One to Band Six. Apart from that, from the Reading Matrix itself, the teachers will know the students' strengths and weaknesses by looking at the descriptors provided in the matrix. Each band has different descriptions and it can in a way tell the teachers about the students' performance. Even better, the teacher can also do benchmarking based on the students' marks. This research is about wanting to assess the effectiveness of a Reading Matrix in Reading Comprehension. There are thirty respondents in this study and they were chosen based on their results in the First Semester Examination for English subject. Each form from Form Three to Form Five were represented by ten students who achieved the highest marks in their forms. After they were chosen, they were given a diagnostic test. This test consisted from the real PMR and SPM question papers. Then, after the researcher had the scores, she tabulated the students' marks into bands. Apart from that, based on the bands, the researcher can identify each student's descriptors where it showed the students' strengths and weaknesses. Based on the analysis made, the findings obtained showed that Reading Matrix can indeed help the teachers to tabulate the students' marks, knowing the students' strengths and weaknesses and benchmark the performance of the students. The researcher was able to identify the students' ability of doing Reading Comprehension in terms of Reorganization, Inferential and Literal Comprehension.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

What is reading? Reading is a process where someone 'interacts' with their thoughts and the symbols written in a piece of paper, cloth or any smooth surface. It is a process where the readers encode and decode the symbols and turn it into a meaningful language. According to Wallace (1992), reading is interpreting means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. This, according to her, intent on the writer's part which the reader has some purpose in attempting to understand.

Meanwhile, according to Anderson (1999), reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning. Meaning does not reside on the printed page alone, nor is it only in the head of the reader. A synergy occurs in reading which combines the words on the printed page with the reader's background knowledge and experiences. Then, we can say that, reading is the central part of the language system. People read for pleasure for example as a hobby or simply just to fill in their idle time. Other than that, reading is also connected for

getting information. In order to know something or in doing something, we must therefore have to read.

Needless to say, there are some ways of reading. First, is the skimming. This process involves quickly running one's eyes over a text to get the gist of it. Secondly, is the scanning. This needs the readers to quickly go through a text to find the particular piece of information. Thirdly, is the extensive reading. It involves reading longer texts and is usually for one's own pleasure. This process is usually associated with fluency activity and mainly in track to global understanding. The last way is the intensive reading. It is a process where the reader reads shorter texts, extracts specific information and while doing this, he reads for details. Then, why is reading comprehension related to reading skills?

For Grellet (1981), reading comprehension is like understanding a written text and with the means of extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. And thus, we can say that if the students know how to read for information, then they will surely understand the core points of certain texts. This is echoed in Littlefair's (Riley and Reedy; 2000) statement that said that if pupils or students are to become competent readers which means good readers and writers of both narrative and non-relative genres, the students must be able to discover information and reconstruct it for their

own purposes and with that, they will require a sense of the overall forms of all those genres and of the language which is commonly used in them. Little can be gained if the readers fail to comprehend what was read.

So, how does a teacher grade his students' level of reading proficiency?

As what Anderson (1999) said which can be stated as that we as in the role of a teacher, need to have two perspectives of evaluation of reading which are the big picture and the small details. Teachers need to step back from their work with the students to see a global measure of measure of progress and improvement. They also must have tools for allowing themselves to look up close and personal at strengths and weaknesses that their students have. Meanwhile, according to Stoller (1986), he pointed out that making progress charts and graphs can facilitate reading improvement and is a "critical aspect of the instructor's responsibilities". Therefore, a universal reading matrix should be develop to rectify this problem in order to gather and eventually indicates the student's true reading proficiency.

1.1 Background of Study

According to Abdul Rashid Mohammed et. al. (2006), reading comprehension is the most important aspect of any language test and the grades that are obtained by the teachers are the only source of information that the teachers have concerning the reading proficiency of the students. We must understand that, although the students may have the same grade, it does not mean that their level of proficiency is in par. Therefore, there should be a more concise or standardized reading matrix evaluation that can act as reading indicator for the teachers specifically to do the benchmarking towards their student's proficiency.

Students' reading proficiency can be tested by giving them a standardized written reading comprehension test. As such, it represents a measure of reading achievement and provides a broad picture of what our students should be able to read and understand at specific grade level. Students use various skills and strategies in the reading assessment. This test provides information about student's achievement that is needed to help the teachers as the education professionals to understand strengths and weaknesses in students' performances and make informed decisions about education.

Several stages were involved in the development of reading matrix such as the development of test battery, development of reading ability

indicators and finally the development of the ESL reading matrix. With the teachers in mind, this single reading matrix can eventually help the teacher to use it as the yardstick in relation to the students' reading proficiency at any educational level (Form One to Form Five) by referring to the Reference Standard and the Descriptions of Students' Reading Abilities.

Benchmark can be referred to as something that is used as a standard by which other things can be judged or measured. (The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001). Benchmark is a way to help the teachers to categorize students into which bands they are suitable to be in. These students will be categorized based on their performance on tests or exams and thus, the teachers will know the students' strengths and weaknesses just by referring to the benchmark.

Benchmarking has been done in many ways. For example the study that has been done by Knight, Padron and Waxman (1985). They conducted a study to determine if there were differences in either the type or frequency of cognitive strategies used by the ESL and monolingual students while studying English. In their research, they are using The San Diego Quick Assessment to determine the students' reading levels. A matched passage from the Ekwall reading Inventory Manual (Ekwall, 1979) was then used to identify the strategies the students were using during a reading task. Their

subjects, the Spanish- speaking students were permitted to speak in their native language in order to clearly explain the strategies that they have been using while reading. Using an adapted version of a structured interview format from Chou, Hare and Smith (1982), the students' strategies were categorized as follows:

1. Re-reading
2. Selectively reading
3. Imaging
4. Changing speed
5. Assimilating with personal experiences
6. Concentrating
7. Assimilating with passage events or thinking about previous events
8. Noting/ searching for salient details
9. Summarizing
10. Predicting outcomes
11. Self- generated questions
12. Student perceptions of teacher expectations
13. Rehearsal

In the end of the study, they found out that English monolinguals have been using the Concentrating strategy the most, while ESL students have been using the Perceptions of Teacher's Expectations the least. The researchers had found out that ESL students may not have enough time to develop strategies of reading in their first language and instead they just predict what the meanings of the words are quickly.

Many studies in the area of reading strategies and how to benchmark it. It was found out that younger and less proficient students use fewer strategies and use them less effectively in their reading comprehension (Garner, 1987; Waxman, and Padron, 1987). A Waxman and Padron's (1987) study had involved 82 Hispanic ESL students and they had been administered on the reading comprehension section taken from Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Karleson, Madden and Gardner, 1966). The test was to determine the relationship between the strategies cited by students and gains in reading comprehension. The Reading Strategy Questionnaire, a fourteen item Likert-type of questionnaire (Waxman and Padron, 1987) was administered to the subjects so that they could indicate the extend to which they have been using a particular strategy. The benchmark was that a score of 3 meant that the students have been using the strategy all the time, a score of 2 meant it was

used some of the time, whereas a score of 1 indicated that the student perceived have not been using the strategy at all.

From these studies we can say that benchmarking have been done in many areas of reading but not as extensively as benchmarking for reading proficiency.

Bear in mind that there are no benchmark for reading proficiency in Malaysian Education system. Malaysian teachers will refer the Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran to do their lesson plan but they certainly cannot refer to it in order to know their students' abilities. It is widely known that the only reading objective in the English Language Syllabus is to "...listen to, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form..." (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan 4, 2003:1). This is not a specific objective as it is quite vague and certainly cannot be used to assess students' knowledge.

Nevertheless, in Malaysian University English Test Syllabus, the objectives are clear and the specifications respond to the needs of teaching and learning. The Specific Objectives of MUET in reading comprehension are:

- a) to enable students to understand texts beyond the literal level

- b) to enhance students ability to understand the interconnectivity of text content from a variety of genres
- c) to develop students' ability to respond critically to various texts

(MUET Syllabus; 2003:11)

The syllabus also seeks the students to understand what the linear and non- linear texts are. Stated below are the skills that must be emphasized while teaching reading to the students:

- i) skimming and scanning
- ii) deriving meaning of words from context
- iii) understanding sense relationships
 - within a sentence
 - between sentences
 - within a paragraph
 - between paragraphs
- iv) distinguishing main ideas and supporting details
- v) distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant
- vi) distinguishing fact from opinion
- vii) making inferences
- viii) making hypothesis
- ix) predicting outcomes

- x) drawing conclusions
- xi) transferring information from linear to non- linear texts,
and vice- versa
- xii) paraphrasing
- xiii) summarizing
- xiv) using the skills of intertextuality
- xv) reading critically

Unfortunately, although with a complete set of specific syllabus, it still cannot help the teachers to monitor students' progress and with that, we certainly need to call for a standard reading matrix.

The context of this research is that, in the end, the teachers will be able to know what their students' abilities are and maybe it can be rectify before any teaching and learning takes place.

It is an understatement if somebody said that it is easy to do the assessment of reading comprehension. As there are no standardized ways to measure reading comprehension abilities, then, perhaps, it is better to have a reading matrix for the teachers to refer in order to measure the students' performance. According to Snow (2003), there are two principles which are widely accepted as the core truths of educational reform. These are: