

Reading for pleasure importance



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It is important to read as it can improve children's language use and by reading for pleasure they can adapt to the language easily. According to Reyhene (1998) children who read for pleasure could somehow improve their language skills unconsciously and automatically. Besides that, Bignold (2003) pointed out that the reading habit could enhance or improve children's reading skills. Therefore, the main issue of reading is that it helps to expand young people's experiences and knowledge (Green, 2002). Children not only can expand their knowledge but they can also cultivate reading habits for lifelong learning (Pandian & Ibrahim, 1997). It is usually being recommended that reading behavior should start at an early age and conducive reading environment plays an important role in order to stimulate lifelong reading (Pandian, 1997; Anderson, 1982; Winebrenner, 1971; Sanacore, 1990; Krashen, 1996).

The exposure to reading for pleasure could help the children in many ways and it can increase or improve their reading achievement. Reading materials appear important for the development of reading comprehension such as reading fluency, or the ability to read text quickly and accurately (Chall, 1996; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Stanovich, 1986), and learning many vocabulary because children are more likely to encounter new words by reading rather than from their daily conversation (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988). Reading could increase children's background knowledge that could help to assist future growth in reading comprehension (Stanovich, 2000).

2. 2 TEACHERS' ROLE

Teachers play an important role where they could be described as the one who can instill intrinsic motivation to read among the students. Cole (1999)

recommended that in order to motivate students to do pleasure reading, a teacher must be motivated to discover their students' literacy personalities. Cole (1999) also talks about the role of librarian teachers who could offer the students with an enormous variety of books on various topics, levels and genre to capture the interest of students in reading. Students will have the interest to read if the librarian teachers could provide books according to the four stages of reading development such as building fluency, reading for pleasure, reading to learn and mature reading (Gillet & Temple, 1994; Fong, 1997).

According to Abeyrathna & Zainab (2004), teachers could help inculcate the reading habit by giving students the experience of reading under guidance such as helping students to select materials based on their interests.

Students are usually motivated to read by adults and take the adults as their reading model. Parents would be in the first rank, teachers would be in the second rank and librarians would be the third choice in being the students' reading model (Hughes-Hassell and Lutz 2006). Most of the students are motivated to read usually because of the parental and home influences. Teachers should never take for granted that reading potential of students can happen anywhere although they come from an environment where reading is not valued (Duncan, 2010). Teachers can have strong and lasting effects on students' reading attitudes and practices (Pitcher et al. 2007). Teachers must adopt an enthusiastic attitude toward reading and openly discuss their personal reading lives with students. In the class, teachers can have sharing book recommendation or just mention a recent enjoyable reading experience that could help change the perceptions and beliefs of

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nonreaders. The main problem is that most teachers do not do reading for pleasure. Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) found that most graduate education students viewed reading as important, yet many were disinterested and did not engage in regular personal reading. Teachers can't expect students to be excited about reading if they themselves are not personally engaged in reading for pleasure (Duncan, 2010).

2. 3 ROLES OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

This is the part where the roles of the library are being stressed and the environment of the library plays an important role. Every classroom should have a classroom library collection that can be filled from the main library collection. It is easy to access and at the same time could encourage and motivate students to read (Gniewek, 1998). The school librarians are the ones who should provide a richer collection by having latest books and knowing the students' reading preferences. According to Abeyrathna & Zainab (2004), students are not happy with the library collection when it comes to reading for pleasure. There were a vast differences on the books that the students' need and the books that was available for them to read. It is suggested that to solve the problem, the school library should have borrowed some books from the public library for teaching and reading needs. This could help financially for the school and obtaining reading materials that students are interested in.

In Thailand, a study was carried out about the roles of libraries. According to Somsong (1999), the roles of libraries, librarians and library programs play an important role in helping to stimulate and develop reading interests among students. There are lots of studies that indicated that children who

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are in schools that have libraries and librarians read a lot often compared to children who attended schools that have libraries but no librarians to guide them (Lance, 1994; Lance, Rodney and Hamilton-Pennell, 2000). It is important to have librarians in the library as they can help provide resources for the students regarding their reading preferences. They can help children search for the books that students prefer easily by organizing the books according to its genre which will trigger the students' interest (Whelan, 2004).

Reading can also be integrated with electronics such as reading e-mails and journals from the internet (Pandian, 1997). Libraries should have equipped with electronics such as computers and internet connection to provide the latest issue or information (Whelan, 2004).

Librarians should renew their effort in guiding and tutoring the children for the usage of the libraries to stimulate and to promote positive attitude towards using the library for leisure reading (Chai, 1996). A warmth feeling of librarians who welcome readers to read in the library could help in stimulating students to read more.

In Sri Lanka, the National Library and Documentation Service Board (NLDB) carried out a survey in 2002 and found the following situations; reading habits of students was poor due to the condition of the school libraries that was not encouraging as the book collections were old and most students read “light” materials such as magazines, novels, comic books and newspapers (Abeyrathna & Zainab, 2004).

2. 4 PARENTS’ ROLE

Parents play an important role in order to reinforce the child’s reading habit and interest (Cole, 1999). The first teacher for reading are the parents as they are the role models for their children and this apply to the interest in reading either to gain knowledge or for pleasure. According to De Medina (1976), who studied 50 families in Brazil, reading only occurred when there is a place to read at home, if the adults bought books and also if there is someone who guides the children to read often at home.

There is another study which supports that home does influence reading among children. According to Kather’s (1996), the study is on the children who were active in participating in extracurricular activities or have children that perform well on their reading test and have parents who were actively involved in school activities (Goldenberg, 1992). Home environment did influence ninth grade students’ attitude towards reading. Home environment can be included when a child is used to being read to, having a public library use, receive books as gifts, large personal and parental book collection and have subscriptions to magazines (Abeyrathna & Zainab, 2004).

Parents who are readers can encourage reading for pleasure among their children but it will be reduced once the child grew older (Demise, 2001). College students do not need parental encouragement as they usually read for pleasure. Besides that, they also do not need their educational status to make it as a leisure reading habits (Blackwood, 1991).

Parents who create a pleasant atmosphere that fosters reading by providing space, reading materials, encouragement and example will endorse their children the love for reading (Pandian, 1997; Greaney, 1996).

2.5 ATTITUDES ABOUT READING

There are two motivations that could encourage students to read for pleasure. The first one would be individual's feelings about reading.

Alexander and Filler (1976) stated that the feelings of the reader can be influenced by involving themselves in reading, thus attitudes about reading should relate to individuals. The theory of information pickup suggests that perception depends completely upon information in the “stimulus array” rather than atmosphere that are influenced by cognition. According to Gibson, perception is an express outcome of the properties of the environment and does not engage in any form of sensory processing. Information pickup theory stresses that perception requires a lively organism. The act of perception depends upon an interaction involving the organism and the environment. All perceptions are made in reference to body position and functions (proprioception). Awareness of the environment derives from how it reacts to our movements (Gibson, 1977).

The second motivation is children's interest in reading. Researchers have looked into the interest that affects comprehension. Schiefele (1996) found that college students who were interested in the text materials used in the study understood those materials more deeply than did students who were less interested in the materials, even when the students' prior knowledge of the materials and general intelligence were controlled. In studies of fifth and sixth graders, Renninger (1992) found that interest in the materials

enhanced comprehension, even of materials that were quite difficult for the children (although there were some gender differences in these patterns). Thus interest in reading appears to be an important motivational variable influencing different aspects of reading performance.

2. 6 REASONS STUDENTS DO NOT READ FOR PLEASURE

One of the main reasons students do not read for pleasure is because of the technologies. According to Gunasekara (2002), there are three major hindrances to the promotion of reading habits. It includes preference to chat using the computer, listening to the radio and preference for television viewing.

There are also some students who liked to read and considered themselves readers but did not take the time to read regularly or update their knowledge. This does not mean that they are reluctant to read but they gave priority to other activities such as sports, social life and school work (Abeyrathna & Zainab, 2004).

2. 7 ACADEMIC READING PURPOSE

Most reading was done mainly for examination purposes (Abeyrathna & Zainab, 2004). Students usually read to prepare for examination. A recent Malaysian survey on the reading behavior of 22, 400 individuals and 6, 050 households by the Ministry of Education revealed that only 20 per cent of Malaysians read regularly (Pandian, 2001). This review (New Straits Times, 29 August, 1996) further stressed that the small figure includes students who read just to pass exams.

In Malaysia, the students associate reading with academic tasks and not for knowledge or pleasure most of the time (Sunday Star, May 26, 1991). By doing this, it does not enable students who can read to use the activity in a significant way for self or social development (Pandian, 1997).

The main hindrance on reading for pleasure is the excessive concern of students with reading textbook for examination purposes. Students will regard reading to pursuit knowledge in preparing for the examination as the main purpose of reading and they will never realize the importance of reading for pleasure or enjoyment (Abeyrathna & Zainab, 2004).

2. 8 TECHNOLOGIES AND COMMUNICATION

Public awareness has been haggard to the rising crisis of non-reading among Malaysians especially among the Malaysian students. Readership behavior here refers to reading skills and enthusiasm to read for information and leisure as well as reading practices that appoint different prints and audio-visual contents, such as newspapers, magazines, non-textbooks and informative material of various multimedia (Pandian, 2001). The cultivation of reading habits is also inclined by a series of other factors like exposure to media and computers. We live in an era where technologies are the center of everything and we tend to be occupied by it. ' One study investigating the media exposure among young people in the Klang Valley has observed that in a week these young people spend about 14. 6 hours on television, 3. 4 hours on video, 4. 1 hours on computer, 16. 3 hours on radio, 7. 11 hours on newspapers and 4. 7 hours on books and comics' (The Star, May 8, 1997). The above findings advocate that the visual representation is becoming arguably more significant than the printed word (Pandian & Ibrahim, 1997).

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This proves that Malaysians spend more time on technologies rather than having the printed materials to read.

Reading reluctance happens when a generation who can read chooses not to read. This situation can lead to generating more reluctant readers. The term reluctant readers refer to the people who can read but do not read. The focus on reading is critical given the growth of communications technology and the adjustment of reality we tackle in modern societies. In order to make reading more meaningful, it is important for young people to learn not only to read but nurture reading behavior for lifelong learning. There are many new forms of reading texts such as mass and multimedia but it does not ensure if communication technology will be used to sustain students' reading for pleasure and lifelong learning (Pandian, 2001).

2. 9 READING MATERIALS PREFERRED BY STUDENTS

Easy access to books could promote or encourage students to read more. In an article of a magazine by Duncan (2010), it is suggested that every classroom should have a library where the books are filled with high-interest reading materials that students would love to read. Books that are easily accessible are most likely to be read by students when they do not have anything to do. Lots of researches have been done on the most important role which is the home environment itself that could promote and create lifelong readers but for students who could not afford to buy any reading materials, the classroom library must provide many reading materials that could be easily accessed. It can also help to promote positive reading

attitudes and help the students to improve their reading performance (Young & Moss 2006).

Teachers are the ones who will be in charge of picking the texts that are popular among students. Teachers should not limit the students' reading by only providing books they feel students “ should” be reading. Teachers need to widen the concept of reading materials and also supply books with a wide range of fiction and nonfiction books (Duncan, 2010). Comics, series books, magazines and other materials not traditionally read in school should be considered (Lesesne, 2003). Students who are intimidated by books, magazines and comics might be interested in reading as it offers a comfortable and risk-free reading experience (Duncan, 2010).