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**Analysing Teachers' Reading Habits And Teaching Strategies  
For Reading Skills**

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**Abstract**

Reading, being one of the factors considered when establishing the level of literacy of a population, is one of the biggest concerns in the development and success of a nation. It is definitely the language skill that is given most attention in Malaysia. This study seeks to analyze teachers' reading habits and teaching strategies for reading skills. Sixty five Secondary School English Language teachers around the Klang Valley participated in the study. The main methodology employed in this study was a survey questionnaire. Additionally, interviews were conducted with five of the participants who had also

responded to the questionnaire. The study showed that respondents in the Klang Valley do read but it is not their main choice when it comes to how they spend their spare time. Results of the study also showed that respondents were familiar with reading strategies and used various strategies when teaching for reading skills. Some recommendations and suggestions are put forward by the researcher in this study including the suggestion that consideration be given for further studies in this area as the current study indicates that it would be beneficial.

**KEYWORDS: aliteracy, reading, reading habits, reading strategies, ESL teachers.**

## **Introduction**

Reading is seen as the cornerstone of education; A skill to master as it is the foundation of lifelong learning. Carrell, Devine and Eskey (1984) state that for English as a second or a foreign language, reading is considered the most important among the four macro skills. It is through reading that one gains information, stirs the imagination and develops creativity and variety of language expressions and structures. Being a crucial element of the literacy level of a population, it is one of the biggest concerns in the development and success of a nation. This challenging responsibility seems to rest on the shoulders of teachers in building and cultivating this skill amongst students.

It is interesting to note that the Malaysian National Library Study in 2005 states more than half of the 60,441 Malaysians surveyed read less than 7 pages a day (Bakar, 2006).

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Prior to this report, two surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education on National Literacy in 1982 and 1996 revealed that, in the earlier survey, an average Malaysian citizen read a mere page or two a year whilst the latter revealed an average of two books a year (Kaur and Thiyagarajah, 1999). These studies show that Malaysians are not avid readers.

Emphasis has been placed on students' reading habits and various programmes have been set in motion to encourage reading over the years. However, poor reading habits have been observed as in the above studies. How about our ESL teachers? Do they themselves read and if they do what are their reading habits?

Teachers are seen as role models for students and need to set an example for them to follow. Applegate and Applegate (2004) used the metaphoric reference "Peter Effect - How can I give what I myself do not have?" (Nathanson, Pruslow, Levitt, 2008). If reading is to be taught, it should be practiced by teachers as well. Teachers should also be lifelong learners of the language they teach.

Language learning strategies are important for language learning. Teaching reading strategies would not only develop reading proficiency among students but also build them up to become autonomous language learners. For an ESL teacher, it could well affect the manner in which the second language is taught in the classroom.

A teacher who is well read would most probably be abreast with current issues and teaching methodology, thus bringing more value into the lessons. Through reading, prior knowledge is built and experience gained. Reading would enhance their teaching-learning activity in the classroom, benefiting students in the end. Teachers would also be able to employ their reading strategies in the classroom.

With this in mind, the teachers' teaching strategies should also be looked into as it could have a profound effect on how students develop in their second language learning. Thus, this study focuses on and attempts to answer the following questions:-

- a) What are ESL teachers' reading habits, types of reading materials and frequency of reading?
- b) What kinds of teaching strategies do teachers use in teaching reading skills in their classroom?

***Research into teachers' reading habits and teaching of reading strategies***

Adebayo's (2009) research of reading habits of secondary school teachers in Ado-Oda, Nigeria, showed that teachers read their textbooks daily. However, there was a lack on

versatile reading. The research also showed that teachers did not have a fixed time for reading and only read when needed. Adebayo (2009) believes that teachers should develop a love for reading. It is through reading that teachers broaden their knowledge base and gain new ideas and information. This raises the question of Malaysian ESL teachers' versatility and frequency of reading. As professionals, self development would play an important part in their teaching careers and the building of future generations.

Subramaniam, Shahizah and Khoo (2003) conducted a research project exploring the pedagogical implications of the Ministry of Education incorporating a literature component into the secondary school English language syllabus. Even though this research is not directly related to the present study, it does highlight secondary school English teachers' reading habits. It showed that out of 600 teachers from 5 Malaysian states, only 56.6% read academic books, comics, picture books, novels and other literary type texts. The rest did not read or only read newspaper or magazines. This is alarming. Competent language teachers are aware of the nature of reading, how it develops and its uses in their daily life and classroom practice. Teachers need to keep abreast with current knowledge about the language and use of that language is essential.

Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitt (2008) carried out a research study among teachers and prospective teachers. A questionnaire survey was administered to 747 students who were enrolled in a graduate school of education. The research showed teachers acknowledged

the importance of reading; they however, did not practice this and were not enthusiastic about personal reading themselves. The findings indicated a high prevalence of aliteracy. The question arises whether Malaysian ESL secondary school teachers have a high prevalence of aliteracy. In their research, they also highlighted findings from *The National Endowment for the Arts* (2004) findings indicating that “reading is in decline in every social and educational stratum”. This would definitely have serious implications to a nation’s development and growth.

Another research study comprising, 1200 primary teachers was conducted by Cremin, Bearne, Mottram and Goodwin (2008) who aimed to explore primary teachers’ personal reading habits and their perception of the importance of literature. This research suggests that difficulties in developing and motivating students’ interest in literature and reading for pleasure would occur if teachers’ knowledge of and use of children’s literature in classrooms are not broad. If teachers’ personal reading habits and knowledge of literature is of concern at primary school level, clearly importance should also be placed on secondary school teachers as well. Thus, this also highlights the need to analyse Malaysian secondary school ESL teachers’ reading habits.

Rasey and Koppenhaver’s (2009) study “*What does research say about teachers’ personal reading habits and their impact on instructional practices and student motivation?*” states the following:-

- a) As teachers believe in the value of reading merely as a leisure activity, many do not make time for it (McKool and Gespass, 2009; Scott, 1996).
- b) Teachers, who do read regularly, use various recommended instructional methods in their classroom practice (Morrison, Jacobs, and Swinyard 1999; McKool & Gespass, 2009).
- c) Teachers' reading habits influence the methods they use to motivate students into reading. Teachers who are not able to motivate students adequately are probably those who “never experienced the sheer rapture of a good book”; “Peter Effect” by Applegate and Applegate (2004).
- d) The increase of aliteracy among teachers and pre-service teachers is of concern. Thus, there is a need to conduct programmes and projects such as “Teachers as Readers” that was conducted in 2006 in UK. This programme had the stated aim to boost the literate identities of teachers.

In general, studies have shown that the use of reading strategies is important (Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik's, 2008). For example, it has been observed that instructors believed ideal reading instruction should include reading strategies. It has also been revealed that participants using reading strategies in their daily lives use more reading strategies in their classes. Based on this, the current study also incorporates the need to identify reading strategies used by teachers in their personal life and in the classroom. Ghanaguru,

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Liang and Kit's (1998) have also shown that one's background knowledge relates to the reading strategies used in teaching strategies and classroom practices.

Based on the findings from previous studies, it was felt that there is a need to identify the reading habits of teachers in Malaysia. Would similar results hold true of Malaysian teachers as well? Is the "Peter Effect" found among our teachers? What are the reading strategies used in the classroom? Are they related to their personal reading strategies? It would be beneficial to analyse Malaysian English teachers reading habits and teaching strategies in the classroom as it would impact on the development of independent, mature and autonomous teachers and students in relation to their reading habits and skills.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

The survey approach using questionnaires was used for quantitative data collection in this study. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006) claim that surveys are a widely used non-experimental research form in education. They are able to measure attitudes and opinions of groups towards a certain issue as well as being quick, and inexpensive (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen, 2006). For this study, the semi-structured open-ended



interview would be used too. Interviews are widely used for research purposes. It would be advantageous to use them in this study as the study seeks to gather data on opinions, beliefs and feelings of the subjects about the situation in their own words (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen 2006).

### ***Participants of the study***

A total of 65 Secondary School English Language teachers around the Klang Valley participated in the study. From these 65 participants, 5 Secondary School English teachers were used for the interviews. The criteria for selection of participants for this study were based on teachers teaching English reading comprehension in the secondary school (Forms 1-6). This sampling would give a good picture of their perception of the importance of reading, their reading habits, beliefs and the teaching of reading strategies.

Convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling technique. This non-probability sampling technique was considered adequate for this study as this was a small-scale study over a limited period of time. Participants were selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Furthermore, participants selected were those exposed to the area studied.

### ***Instrumentation***

This study used a directly administered questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. This data gathering technique in survey research has the advantage of a high response rate and low cost, making it suitable for the researcher to analyze teachers' reading habits and teaching strategies for reading skills.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part of the questionnaire gathered information on the teacher's demographic profile. This section comprised general questions like participants' gender, age, years of teaching experience and qualifications. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the teachers' reading habits. Each question had options for participants to choose from. The third part of the questionnaire included open-ended questions and Likert-type items to identify participants' reading strategies. Participants were asked about the importance of reading to them, the use of reading strategies in their daily reading and reasons for teaching reading strategies in their classroom.

The fourth and the last part of the questionnaire probed whether participants used or taught reading strategies in reading instruction. A 5-point Likert scale was used for this part of the questionnaire. This part of the questionnaire was adopted from Cabaroglu and Yurdaisik's (2008) study, which was in turn adopted from a study carried out at Eastern Mediterranean University by Sallı (2002).

Interviews were designed to gather detailed information about the participants' reading habits and teaching of reading strategies. Part 1 of the interview questions about what motivated them to read, how reading helped them as persons and as teachers, where their reading materials are obtained from and the amount spent on reading materials. Participants were also asked whether they influence their students to read and whether their reading habits influenced their students. Answers to these questions enabled the researcher to evaluate the emphasis placed on participants' interest in reading and their beliefs about reading. Part 2 of the interview looked at how teachers defined strategies and their use in their daily reading. Questions were designed to elicit information on the difficulties faced by their students in reading, how they dealt with these problems, and whether they employed any particular reading strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts before, during, or after reading.

### ***Data collection procedures***

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the confidentiality and non-traceability of the participants from the questionnaire response. Participants were asked to give their opinions as frankly as they could as it was crucial to meeting the success of the study. Once the questionnaires were completed and collected, the researchers went through the data received and analyze the details received.

Interviews were conducted with only 5 teachers after questionnaires had been analyzed. The idea was to gain in-depth understanding of the teachers' reading habits and about the teaching of reading strategies. Most of the interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, depending on the need to further probe for answers. Interviews were in the semi-structured format and took place at a place and time convenient to the teachers.

### ***Data analysis***

#### *Demographic information of the respondents*

In this study, 80% of the respondents were females and 20% were male respondents (Table 1). The ages of respondents ranged from 20 years old to older than 50 years old. They were categorized between 20-30 years old, 31-40 years old, 41-50 years old and above 50 years old for this study. Thus, the mode of age was between 20- 30 years old (49.2%) (see Table 2).

Table 1. Gender distribution of the respondents

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Female	52	80
Male	13	20

<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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Table 2. Age distribution of the respondents

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20 -30 years old	32	49.2
31- 40 years old	15	23.1
41- 50 years old	13	20.0
> 50 years old	5	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Reading habits information of the respondents*

From the questionnaire administered, the respondents were asked to indicate their three favourite choices of how they spend their spare time. From Table 3 below, Watching TV/Movies was the clear favourite (22.6%), followed by Surfing the Internet (21%) and then Reading (20.5%). Socializing seemed to be the least favourite spare time activity at 7.7%.

Table 3. Favourite choice of how spare time is spent by the respondents

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Watching TV/Movie	44	22.6
Surfing the Internet	41	21.0
Reading	40	20.5
Listening to Music	29	14.9
Hobbies and Sports	21	10.8
Socializing	15	7.7
Missing (no response)	5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Based on the one-to-one interviews, only one out of the five respondents interviewed did not love reading. The interviews also revealed that respondents were motivated to read by materials that had interesting titles or topics or those that broadened their knowledge and language skills.

Table 4 indicates the replies to the question on frequency of teachers' leisure reading, in the questionnaire, showing that the majority of respondents did this "almost daily" (36.9%). The rest responded "every other day" (23.1%), "during weekends" (20%), "during holidays" (18.5%) and one responded "never" (1.5%).

Table 4. Frequency of leisure reading of the respondents

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Almost daily	24	36.9
Every other day	15	23.1
During weekends	13	20.0
During holidays	12	18.5
Never	1	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Interviewed respondents were asked for the reasons that prevented them from reading more frequently. Most of the interviewees said that time was a constraint due to their workload. Interestingly, one interviewee said that it was her short attention span that prevented her from reading more.

Based on Table 5, respondents provided interesting responses regarding the types of materials they read. Newspaper was most read (19.1%), followed by Magazines (15.2%) and materials from the Internet/Website (14.6%). Books like Novels (10.5%), Fiction (8.2%) and Non Fiction (6%) ranked lower. The least read materials were Illustrated books (1.6%) and Comics (2.9%).

Table 5. Choice of materials read by the respondents

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Newspaper	60	19.1
Magazines	48	15.2
Internet/Websites	46	14.6
Novel	33	10.5
Fiction	26	8.2
Text books	21	6.7
Non-Fiction	19	6.0
Cook/Travel books	19	6.0
Self-Help books	16	5.1
Health books	13	4.1



Comics	9	2.9
Illustrated books	5	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6 shows that majority of respondents indicated that they read the newspaper daily (58.7%). The rest indicated that the newspaper was read at least 3 times (12.3%) or twice (10.8%) a week. The data gathered here indicates that all 65 respondents did indeed read the newspaper even if it was only once a week.

Table 6. Frequency of respondents reading newspaper in a week

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Daily	38	58.5
5 times	4	6.1
4 times	3	4.6
3 times	8	12.3
2 times	7	10.8
Once	6	7.7

<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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As shown in Table 7, 23.1% of the respondents said that they read books more than 5 times in a week. There was a large number who read books 3 times and once a week. (21.5% each). It was interesting to note that 7.7% of respondents indicated that they “never” read a book even once a week.

Table 7. Frequency of respondents reading books in a week

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
>5 times	15	23.1
4 times	6	9.3
3 times	14	21.5
2 times	11	16.9
Once	14	21.5
Never	5	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Interviewees were asked how they obtained their reading materials and most of them replied “at the bookshop”. Apart from this, reading materials were also obtained from the school library, as gifts, from friends, and from the Internet. In fact, all five interviewees stated that they read materials from the internet. One of the interviewees said she used the Internet as it had “faster and easier access”. When asked how much they spent a month on reading, there were various answers. Three said that they spent around RM25 a month; the other two spent above RM50 but not more than RM100.

Table 8 below shows a majority (69.2%) of these respondents viewed reading books as “pleasure reading”. The remaining 30.8% viewed reading books as obligatory as part of work.

Table 8. Respondents consideration of reading books

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Pleasure Reading	45	69.2
Obligatory (Work)	20	30.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The five interviewees were asked how reading the sort of material they read helps them and these were the responses they provided:-

- a) Interviewee 1: “Learning from experts and experienced people about the skills and how do they bring about changes in lifestyles”
- b) Interviewee 2: “Gain more knowledge, reading and writing skills”
- c) Interviewee 3: “It is informative and reading helps me to relax and relief from the stress of work and etc.
- d) Interviewee 4: “It helps me to write academic papers better....”
- e) Interviewee 5: “Fulfil my personal interests”.

*Teaching Reading Strategies Information of the Respondents*

The following findings were obtained from Part D (Teachers' Teaching Reading Strategies) of the questionnaire and interviews as well. A majority of the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the reading strategies concept, used it personally and knew why they needed to teach reading strategies; it was important to know the types of reading strategies that are used in the classroom. Various reading strategies were categorized under pre-reading (see Table 10), while-reading (see Table 11) and post-reading (see Table 12).

Table 9 presented below has been summarized and generated by using SPSS in order to analyse the level of each Reader Response Reading Strategies used by the respondents. It is interesting to note that post-reading strategies scored the highest (M=3.74, SD=0.68), followed by pre-reading strategies (M=3.69, SD=0.55) and then while-reading strategies (M=3.43, SD=0.59). However, it can be seen that the means for all the 3 categories were above the midpoint on the 5-point Likert scale.

Table 9. The level of usage of reader response reading strategies by respondents

<b>Reader Response Reading Strategies</b>	<b>No of Active Samples</b>	<b>Missing Samples</b>	<b>Min Score</b>	<b>Max Score</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard</b>
Pre-Reading Strategies	55	10	1	5	3.69	0.55
While-Reading Strategies	55	10	1	5	3.43	0.59
Post-Reading Strategies	55	10	1	5	3.74	0.68

The results of each item in the three categories of Reader Response Reading Strategies are presented in the following tables (Tables 10-12).

Table 10. Items related to pre-reading strategies

<b>Reader Response</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard</b>
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Reading Strategies		(rank/ %)		
<b>Pre-Reading Strategies</b>  (Active samples = 55, Missing= 10)	I have the students quickly look over the text before reading.	3 (24.6)	3.56	1.18
	Before doing discussions or any other activity, I have students read the text.	4 (29.2)	3.67	1.04
	I use instructional aids (e.g. realia, music etc.) to set a context.	3 (40.0)	3.27	0.99
	I ask students to read the titles and predict what the text is about.	4 (29.2)	3.84	0.98
	I teach vocabulary before students read the text.	3 (36.9)	2.93	0.98
	I set a context before students begin reading.	4 (41.5)	3.71	0.96
	I ask students to look at illustrations/pictures and try to guess how they relate to the text.	4 (29.2)	3.96	0.96
	I ask students warm-up questions related to the text before reading.	4 (35.4)	4.04	0.84
	I ask students to relate the text/topic to their experience.	3	3.91	0.84

		(29.2)		
	I set a purpose for reading.	5 (30.8)	3.96	0.94

In the result of Pre-Reading Strategies (Table 10), the item “I ask students warm-up question related to the text before reading” scored the highest (M= 4.04, SD=0.84), whereas “I teach vocabulary before students read the text” (M=2.93, SD=0.98) was the lowest. However, it is also seen that most of the respondents usually or always set a purpose for reading texts.

As for While-Reading Strategies (Table 11), the highest score was for “I ask students to underline key words and/or phrases” (M=4.05, SD=1.04) and the lowest score was for “I tell the students to skip unknown words” (M=2.21, SD=1.18). Respondents also tend to get students to underline words unknown to them as well as use a monolingual dictionary.

Table 11. Items related to while-reading strategies

<b>Reader Response Reading Strategies</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mode (rank/ %)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard</b>
<b><i>Whilst-Reading</i></b>	I allow students to use a bilingual dictionary.	1	2.75	1.35

<p><b>Strategies</b></p> <p>(Active samples = 55, Missing= 10)</p>		(21.5)		
	I stress the importance of reading every word.	2 (29.2)	2.83	1.30
	I ask students to use monolingual dictionary.	5 (27.7)	3.62	1.28
	I tell students to read carefully and slowly.	4 (29.2)	3.56	1.23
	I ask students to take notes while reading.	3 (27.7)	3.29	1.19
	I tell the students to skip unknown words.	1 (32.3)	2.21	1.18
	I teach students to read the first and last paragraphs more carefully.	3 (29.2)	3.0	1.15
	I have students read aloud in class one at a time.	3 (29.2)	3.18	1.14
	I ask students to read the text more than once.	4 (27.7)	3.45	1.10
	I ask students to underline unknown words	5	4.0	1.09



	(35.4)		
I set a time limit for reading in class.	3 (27.7)	3.64	1.08
I ask students to underline key words and/or phrases.	5 (33.8)	4.05	1.04
I ask students to try to visualize what they read.	3 (27.7)	3.60	1.04
I tell students to make guesses about up-coming information in the text	3 (27.7)	3.45	1.02
I teach all the new vocabulary in the text.	3 (29.2)	3.40	0.97
I ask students to relate what they read to what they already know.	4 (32.3)	3.85	0.93
I ask students to guess/predict the meaning of unknown words.	4 (36.9)	3.98	0.91
I teach students how to guess the meaning of unknown words.	4 (30.8)	3.76	0.90

In Post-Reading Strategies (Table 12), the item “I ask comprehension questions about the text” (M=4.13, SD=0.98) scored the highest and the lowest score was for “I give students a quiz about the text” (M=2.93, SD=1.01). It is also seen that most respondents always or usually discuss the text with their students after reading has been done. The data gathered from the questionnaire were similar to the responses received from the interviews on reading strategies used during pre, while and post reading.

Table 12. Items related to post-reading strategies

<b>Reader Response Reading Strategies</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mode (rank/ %)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard</b>
<b><i>Post-Reading Strategies</i></b>  (Active samples = 55, Missing= 10)	I ask students to discuss the text after reading.	4  (35.4)	4.02	1.03
	I ask students to interpret the text.	4  (40.0)	3.60	1.03
	I ask students to summarize the text (written or oral).	4  (27.7)	3.65	1.02
	I ask students to comment on the text.	4  (29.2)	3.73	1.01
	I give students a quiz about the text.	3	2.93	1.01

	(20.8)		
I assign students tasks to do using the information in the text.	4 (33.8)	3.78	0.99
I ask comprehension questions about the text.	4 (36.9)	4.13	0.98
I give students follow-up activities related to the text.	4 (35.4)	3.91	0.95
I ask students to draw conclusions about the text they have read.	4 (30.8)	3.90	0.93

Most interviewees commented that reading strategies were used to enable students to relate to the text read and their experiences and this was thought worthy of note by the researcher. In fact, four out of the five interviewees ensured that relevant questions were asked as their pre-reading strategy for students to be able to relate to the material that they were going to read.

However, responses received were varied for post-reading strategies between the questionnaires and interviews. Interviewees stated their activities included requesting an oral summary, reading aloud, using contextual clues, discussing the conclusion, identifying patterns of organization as well as skimming and scanning. Interviewees were

asked about the most important difficulty faced by their students when reading. The reply obtained was reading vocabulary and at times pronouncing words. As a result, these teachers would find ways for their students to use the dictionary, reread, underline difficult words and use these words in their lessons.

The analysis of the data in this study proved to be valuable based on the results obtained from the research questions, administration of questionnaire and interviews. These findings provide a basis for discussions of the research questions posed initially as well as for recommendations in the final part of this study

## **Discussion of results**

### ***What are ESL teachers' reading habits, types of reading materials and frequency of reading?***

Based on the data obtained from both the questionnaire and the interviews, it was found that Secondary School English Language teachers do read. This is regardless of their gender, age, academic background and teaching experience.

Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitt's (2008) research finding that many teachers do not make reading a priority especially during their leisure time seems to hold true also in this

current study too. Watching TV/Movies was the most preferred activity (22.6%) as compared to Reading (20.5%) which came in as the third favourite leisure time activity.

Those that were interviewed indicated that they were motivated to read materials that had interesting titles or topics and those that broadened their knowledge and language skills. The Data shows that the majority of respondents (60%) did leisure reading almost everyday or every other day. This is indeed a relatively good indication considering that those interviewed said that time was a constraint due to their workload. Of those who undertook to read, their reading materials were mostly Newspapers (19.1%) and Magazines (15.2%).

In reference to these choices of reading material, these materials are considered to be light reading (Malaysians still not reading enough, 2009). Respondents' preference for books like Novels (10.5%), Fiction (8.2%) and Non Fiction (6%) ranked lower. It has to be noted that the majority of respondents indicated that they read the newspaper daily (58.7%) as compared to books (23.1%). The data collected showed that of those who read only "once a week", 7.7% read newspaper whilst 21.5% read books.

The results of this study coincides with the UN Development Programmes' 2007/2008 report as well as The Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that "Malaysians are more inclined to read light material" (cited in *Tharumaraj, J & Nooreen Noordin (2011). Malaysian Journal of ELT Research, Vol. 7 (1), p. 203-245. [www.melta.org.my](http://www.melta.org.my)*

Malaysians still not reading enough, 2009). The Deputy Prime Minister expressed his concern noting that citizens from developed countries seem to read more books. As teachers are regarded as role models, they should read more books as they have an undeniable influence on their students.

In light of Malaysia's emphasis on the Information Super Highway and the Multimedia Super Corridor, it is good to see that those interviewed do read material over the internet. In fact, 14.6% of the respondents indicated that surfing the internet was part of their leisure time activity. This statement, however, is difficult to interpret as what was meant by surfing the internet was not investigated. However it does indicate that the internet is being increasingly used as a source of information through reading.

Besides this, the data show that respondents get their reading materials mostly from bookshops. Some did indicate that reading materials were received as gifts. Others borrowed from the school library and also from friends. It would be interesting to conduct an investigation to explore whether school libraries are equipped with academic and leisure reading resources for teachers.

The amount of money spent on reading materials also gives an insight into teachers' reading habits. Data from interviews showed that three out of the five interviewees spent around RM25 a month on reading material and the other two spent above RM50. Not one

of the interviewees spent more than RM100. One of the interviewees indicated that RM60 was actually spent on newspapers. The Malaysian government has long allocated RM1000 as yearly tax relief for reading materials and the data on spending here does not seem to meet the intention of the tax relief. This part of the analysis should be further probed into.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the data showed that the majority of respondents in this study indicated that reading books is considered as “pleasure reading” (69.2%) and the remaining viewed it as “obligatory” due to reasons of work requirements (30.8%). This however, is not reflected in their responses about their favourite leisure time activity as well as frequency of reading books. This was emphasized in Rasey and Koppenhaver’s (2009) study, citing McKool and Gespass (2009) and Scott (1996) that teachers believe in the value of reading as a leisure activity but many do not make time for it. The question that arises is whether teachers do not read as much as they ought to because because they consider it to be “pleasure reading”. Or is it because they do not consider it relevant to their teaching? Interview responses in the present study revealed that the materials the teachers read mostly for relaxation, personal interest and growth.

The English language is an evolving language (DeLoatch, 2009). It is through reading that one learns and thereby is able to impart the knowledge gained from it. The study shows that the respondents do have a considerable reading habit. However, it also shows

that there is room for them to improve in their reading habits especially in the choice of materials read and frequency of reading. Teachers need to venture into more extensive and intensive knowledge-driven reading materials.

Tella and Akande (2007) state that the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning and has the capability of transforming life and society. Hayes (1991) points out that the reading habit of teachers can affect the way their students take up reading. It is therefore imperative that the reading habits of teachers be stressed and developed for their personal growth as well as that of their students.

***What kinds of teaching strategies do teachers use in teaching reading skills in their classrooms?***

The discussion above and findings already acknowledges that respondents are familiar with the concept of reading strategies and apply them when they read. It also points out that respondents use reading strategies in their teaching strategies and classroom practices. They also provided reasons why reading strategies are used in the classroom. This research question basically aims at finding out the type of reading strategies used by respondents in their classrooms. It is important that reading strategies are taught as they enable and equip students to employ appropriate strategies according to the text being read (Chitravelu, Sithamparam and Soon Choon, 2005).



Based on the results of the findings, respondents used a range of reading strategies in their reading lessons. This finding should be welcomed, since, as Tankersley (2003) points out, “good teachers would know that a wide variety of methods and strategies help build strong learners and those students respond differently according to their own backgrounds and learning styles”. However, when analysis was conducted to establish which categories of strategies were used more, it showed that post-reading strategies scored the highest, followed by pre-reading strategies, and then while-reading strategies. This result was different from Cabaroglu and Yurdaisik’s (2008) research, which showed that pre-reading strategies were used more than post-reading strategies. The following discusses the strategies used within the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading categories.

Pre-Reading Strategies are important to any reading activity. They set the stage for students in connecting their prior knowledge to the new materials. Respondents in this study seemed to use all the strategies within this category in one way or another. Responses received seem to indicate that strategies were “always used”, “usually used” or “sometimes used”.

The findings indicate that warm-up questions related to the text to be read was mostly used in their teaching practices. Two interviewees acknowledged that relevant questions were asked during the pre-reading stage for students to be able to relate to the reading

materials. Respondents also showed they would usually or always set a purpose for reading texts. This strategy is crucial in the pre-reading stage as it establishes the reason why certain texts are read and sets the mind in connecting to its purposes. The least used strategy was to teach vocabulary before students read the text. Further study might be needed to understand the reason for this.

While Reading Strategies are needed to help readers construct meaning from the text, develop fluency and make connections to the real world (Tankersley, 2005). It enables students to practice their inferring and judging abilities as well as ensures conscious reading. At this stage, respondents of the study seem to practice asking students to underline key words and/or phrases. This strategy scored the highest in the choice of strategy.

The study also showed that respondents also practiced getting students to underline words unknown to them, use a monolingual dictionary and guess/predict the meaning of unknown words. Applying these practices in teaching strategies is good as it makes students conscious of their reading and gives them practice in using their inferring abilities. The least practiced strategy was asking students to skip unknown words.

Emphasis was shown to be placed on Post-Reading Strategies by respondents as reflected in the findings. The use of comprehension questions about the text was highly utilised.

Respondents also tend to “always” or “usually” discuss the text with their students after reading has been done. These types of activities were mostly used to ensure what was read was understood and students developed the ability to connect new knowledge with their prior knowledge (Tankersley, 2005). The least practiced strategy at this stage was giving students quizzes about the text.

Teaching students a variety of reading strategies and how to employ them to construct meaning from the printed page is crucial. It would also result in students enjoying as well as appreciating the text that they read. The end result that should be achieved would be developing independent, mature and autonomous readers.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

It is generally accepted that Reading is crucial to all areas of education. It is definitely a skill to master and practice throughout one's life, as lifelong learning equips one with great knowledge. In the area of language learning, one will continually acquire a variety of language expressions and structure. Carrell, Devine and Eskey (1984) state reading for a second or foreign language is considered most important among the four macro skills. This is particularly so in a “global” language such as English as it is a fast evolving

language, with new words, changing usage of words, phrases, expressions and structure happening almost on a daily basis (DeLoatch, 2009). Thus, there is a need for teachers to read to keep up-to-date with these changes.

The majority of respondents indicated that for them reading was considered something they did for pleasure. Although the study showed that it was not their main choices for spending their spare time, many enjoyed reading. Interviewees also indicated that not much money was invested in developing their reading habit. These are concerns that need to be addressed. Teachers shoulder the responsibility of building and cultivating the reading skills of their students. This can only be achieved if more teachers cultivate and develop their personal reading habit.

The following are some of the recommendations the researcher would like to put forward based on the findings and discussion of this study.

### ***Reading programs for teachers***

The Education Ministry in the Malaysian Government has always come up with reading programmes for students in schools to instil good reading habits and promote independent language learning. The researcher's recommendation is for the Education Ministry to widen its scope and come up with reading programmes for teachers. In Rasey

and Koppenhaver's (2009) study, it is seen that programmes like "Teachers as Readers" were carried out in UK in 2006. This was to break the cycle of aliteracy among teachers and strengthen their literate identities.

Such programmes could also be beneficial for Malaysian teachers especially in the English language. Another option within this recommendation would be to provide a list of books that teachers are encouraged to complete within a year. This list should be updated yearly to keep it current. Teachers might want to develop their reading skills but may not be sure of the books they should be reading. Apart from this, reading programmes should also emphasize and publicize the Government's intention to build "reading teachers" and also develop their English language skills. An additional benefit would be that students would notice such activities and be encouraged to read as well. Hayes (1991) highlights that teachers reading habit can influence the way students regard reading.

***Stock up school libraries with reading materials for teachers***

School libraries are important for teachers as much as it is for students. It would probably be one of the easiest ways to access reading materials for teachers. Those who cannot afford to purchase books would have the alternative of borrowing them from the library. Books sold in Malaysia for the general public are expensive. Apart from this, school

libraries may be of crucial importance to those in the rural areas as, in terms of accessibility, well stocked bookshop are few.

Books stocked in libraries should be valuable to teachers both for “pleasure-reading” as well as to enrich them academically. The Education Ministry might need to set aside a budget allocation for this and actively promote these books for libraries in schools. Apart from this, books stocked should be new, current, wide ranging and interesting, to ensure teachers are kept up-to-date and motivated to read.

### ***Subscribing to reading materials***

The Education Ministry should look into providing sponsored or subsidized subscription to identified English language magazines or periodicals for English language teachers (and indeed for all teachers in general). Magazines such as “Just English” or “Readers Digest” could be subscribed to for English language teachers. The “Just English” magazine provides various articles, teachers’ teaching and learning resources and language games, which language teachers can benefit from. Readers Digest, on the other hand, is renowned for its reading materials and its use of language. By subscribing to such reading materials, English teachers are able to access at least one source of reading materials per month. Such sponsorship could encourage teachers to read and build on their independent language learning.

**Suggestion for further research**

Teachers' reading habits are very important for their personal growth and career. They also affect the development of students' knowledge and interest in reading. The current study only analyses a small sample of secondary school English teachers in and around the Klang Valley. Thus, generalization of these findings towards the population at large would not be accurate and reliable. Thus, it is strongly suggested that a national study be undertaken on teachers to ascertain their reading habits. Resulting from this study, the necessary actions to build and cultivate good reading habits among teachers can be developed.

It would be beneficial to investigate the current status of school libraries. As they are a source for obtaining reading materials, it is crucial that these libraries are well stocked with materials that are both valuable and up-to-date. As this study would be related to teachers' reading habits, it would be important to investigate the availability of relevant reading materials for them in school libraries. It is also important to investigate whether, with an increased availability of reading resources, the teachers would utilize them.

Apart from the above suggestions, this study should look into teachers' beliefs about teaching strategies. It would be beneficial to investigate nationwide whether teachers' beliefs translate into their classroom practices. This could be achieved through classroom observations. Further, it would be good to investigate reasons behind teachers' decisions in choosing certain reading strategies over others. This would give an insight into factors influencing their teaching reading strategies and whether the right choices are being made.

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