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AN ECLECTIC APPROACH IN TEACHING READING AMONG
POOR READERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
A CASE STUDY

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AN ECLECTIC APPROACH IN TEACHING READING AMONG POOR READERS OF
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotation and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a complex process as it involves multifaceted steps of recognizing words, understanding what is read, reading fluency as well as requiring a drive to keep on reading. Reading becomes more difficult if the text is in a second or another language other than one's mother-tongue. Studies have been conducted and reading materials, both printed as well as technological based have been developed to help students become better or good readers. However, learners of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) still face difficulty in reading. Regardless of these abundant materials and studies, there is still a need to conduct studies because in Malaysia, especially in rural areas, there are still problems in second language reading. Thus, this study aims to explore the problems faced by eighteen Year Five students at Sekolah Kebangsaan Gemilang (pseudonym) in the southern part of Malaysia. This action research case study incorporated the e-Xra module in the attempt to find an eclectic approach to improving the students' reading comprehension. Findings indicate that the students encountered phonemic, pronunciation and comprehension problem but this could be overcome with supportive activities and materials.

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**SATU PENDEKATAN EKLEKTIK DALAM PENGAJARAN
PERBENDAHARAAN KATA DI KALANGAN PEMBACA LEMAH DALAM
BAHASA INGGERIS**

ABSTRAK

Membaca merupakan satu proses kompleks yang melibatkan pelbagai peringkat dan langkah dalam mengenal perkataan, memahami apa yang dibaca, membaca secara lancar seterusnya menimbulkan minat untuk terus membaca. Membaca menjadi sukar apabila teks adalah dalam bahasa kedua atau bahasa lain selain daripada bahasa ibunda pembaca. Kajian telah dijalankan secara bercetak atau teknologi bagi membantu pelajar membaca dengan lebih baik dan bagus. Walaubagaimanapun, pembaca Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua masih bermasalah dalam membaca. Walaupun terdapat pelbagai bahan dan kajian, namun kajian terkini perlu dilakukan di Malaysia terutama di luar bandar kerana masalah ini agak serius. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji masalah yang dihadapi oleh lapan belas pelajar Tahun Lima di Sekolah Kebangsaan Gemilang (bukan nama sebenar) di selatan tanah air Malaysia. Kajian tindakan ini menggunakan Modul Membaca e-Xtra dalam mencari pendekatan eklektik untuk memperbaiki pemahaman membaca pelajar-pelajar ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mempunyai masalah fonemik, sebutan dan pemahaman. Namun masalah ini dapat diatasi dengan bantuan aktiviti dan bahan yang sesuai.

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS

ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
KBSR	Integrated Curriculum for Primary School
KBSM	Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School
NUTP	National Union of Teacher Parent
SL	Second Language
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has a long history of English as a medium of instruction in the education system (Amin Embi 2000). Furthermore, the new policy, which is the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English was introduced in 2003 by the Ministry of Education. Thus, this has highlighted the importance of English as a medium of instruction in Malaysian education system. Nevertheless, not everyone in the education system benefits from the new policy. It was pointed out that Malay students especially, the ones in rural areas have problems learning English (Ain Nadzimah and Heng 2004).

In learning English, reading is considered one of the most important skills which language learners should obtain, particularly as it helps to build vocabulary and leads to lifelong learning and improvement in first and second language skills (Hua Lin and Kim Hughes Wilhem 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to teach reading skills in English among the poor readers.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Reading is an important skill in learning and acquiring English as a second language. It is generally agreed that reading is a complex process. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought (Walberg 2003). It is in many ways even more linguistically and intellectually challenging than other language skills (Philips 1984). Moreover, according to Philips (1984), second language reading may be even more complex, for it requires processing using sufficient knowledge of the language.

Learning to read is an important educational goal. For both children and adults the ability to read opens up new worlds and opportunities (Walberg 2003). According to Garbe & Stoller (2002), the most common way for students to learn new information is through reading. Reading is considered one of the most important skills which language learners should obtain, particularly as it helps to build vocabulary and leads to lifelong learning and improvement in first and second language skills (Hua Li & Wilhem 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for students to be able to read.

Most people learn to read without difficulty. However, some children need additional help. Therefore, reading instructions need to take into account different types of learners and their needs (Walberg 2003). In addition, in reading, there are skills that need to be acquired in order for reading to be meaningful. The students have to learn reading skills in order to be engaged with the text they read in a meaningful way. Among the reading skills that the students need to be acquainted with are understanding main ideas, predicting outcomes and guessing vocabulary from the text.

In Malaysia, the teaching of reading is normally carried out in language classes in primary schools beginning from primary one; seven-year-old students. In the national schools, the students are first taught the mechanics of reading, using the medium of instruction at the beginning of their first year. For English language, the students will begin with the basic reading skills of word recognition and phonics, and then the comprehension skills, as prescribed in The English Language Primary Syllabus.

In learning to read, the students learn to recognize and read, read and match, group words, arrange and discriminate words. In the upper primary classes, year four to six, teachers will go on to the development of reading comprehension and study skills such as using dictionaries, encyclopaedias and reading maps, plans and graphs. As stated in the objectives of the English Language programme (1983:3) in the syllabus, the pupils are expected to be able to read aloud and silently so that they can comprehend and enjoy fiction and factual prose and also improve their vocabulary and knowledge by the end of the primary school.

The basic foundation of being able to read well and enjoy reading should start from the primary level. It is important that the students develop an interest in reading in the early years and discover the pleasure of reading for themselves. This will lead them to do independent reading and to learn through reading on their own.

Therefore, this study attempted to discover the problems students faced in reading in English text. In addition, it also attempted to find out whether the use of e-Xra reading module would enhance poor students' reading comprehension in English.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A Malaysian National Library report in 2003 entitled 'Experience and Efforts in Literacy Programmes' stated that Malaysians only read two books a year on average cited in Lyall (2005). It can be surmised that rural Malaysians read even fewer books than this. In addition, reading skills can not be picked up easily. In order to encourage children to read, they should understand the pleasure of reading through having books read to them and seeing adults around them enjoy reading. On the other hand, in rural Malaysia, most children come to school without having had this experience.

In primary schools, students learn English language for six consecutive years. However, by the end of their sixth year in primary school, there are still a number of students who could not acquire those language skills.

In the context of second language reading instruction, teachers should replicate real-world or authentic reading purposes in the classroom. Beaumont (1990) suggests that the responsibility of the teacher to teach gives the classroom its own authentic purpose for reading and that the responsibility of the teacher to teach gives the classroom its own authentic purpose for reading and that is an educational purpose. Furthermore, it seems appropriate to include study or reference reading which involves, for instance, using a dictionary or an encyclopaedia – skills that all learners need. Whether learners have obvious reasons or not for learning the target language, they may at least find some reasons for their learning of the target language which is English language.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to find out the problems faced by the rural students in reading in English and to explore the use of e-Xra reading module in teaching reading skill among the poor readers.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are:-

1. To identify the problems that the students are facing in reading in English.
2. To explore the use of e-Xra reading module in enhancing students' reading comprehension.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses two questions:-

1. What are the problems that the students face in English reading?
2. Does the use of e-Xra reading module enhance students' reading comprehension?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Radha Nambiar (2008) states that reading can help empower the learner and make him a confident motivated learner because with the increasing awareness of one's abilities and thought processes one can help one take control of one's learning. The key role of reading in academic learning necessitates that a learner be a successful reader. When a learner can read and learn from academic texts he can better understand his content area texts.

Therefore this study hopes that the use of e-Xtra reading would help students in reading and enhance students' reading comprehension. Moreover, it is hoped that the use of the module will help the students to understand the text that they are reading in English. The writer also hopes that at the end of the day, the students will be able to read for understanding and pleasure.

Nevertheless, it is felt that this study is not beneficial to English teachers only but to parents as well, especially those who have interest in motivating their children to read. They should instil reading habits at home and be aware of the importance of the reading strategy and in this case the use of e-Xtra reading module.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.8.1 READING

Reading is the process when the readers make meaning of the written text they read. In this study, reading was referred to the second language reading. Reading is one of the language skills in English as a second language. Anderson (1999) defined reading as an active and smooth process that involves the reader and the reading material or text in order to construct the meaning. Goodman (1967) as cited in (Abisamra, 2001) defined reading as a receptive language process and it is a psycholinguistic guessing game.

1.8.2 e-XRA READING MODULE

E-Xtra stands for eclectic-express reading approach and can be defined as the integration of several approaches to teaching reading designed to develop the basic skills. It recommends an effective learning-to-read programme for children aged four years old and above as well as

for those with reading difficulties. E-Xra is a learning-to-read programme based on phonological training designed to help readers read texts through recognition of phonemic family and sight words. The module postulates the teaching of vocabulary before starting to read texts where readers are introduced to commonly found sight words.

The module consists of five components. They are the Reading Module 1-2, Reading Module 3-4 and Reading Module 5. E-Xra emphasizes on a hierarchical reading process that starts off with the smallest unit: English alphabetic phonological awareness. Basic consonants rules, basic vowel rules, blends, two letter digraphs (two letters making one sound) are covered in Reading Module 1-2. For example, Module 1b includes consonant letters blending with 'r': br, cr, dr and tr and two letter digraphs: ch, ph, rh and wh. Meanwhile Reading Modules 3-4 include vowel combination (short vowels and long vowels) and diphthongs. For example, phonemic family words with long vowel 'o', vowel combinations 'oo' ending with consonant 'd' and long vowel 'a' ending with consonant 'b' and silent 'e' are included in these modules. Meanwhile Reading Module 5 promotes thematic reading. Themes like Family, In the city, Picnic and School are introduced in the module. This module acts as an enhancement reading activity. Readers are expected to be able to read words, sentences, short paragraphs and thematic stories at this level.

1.8.3 POOR READERS

According to Hoover & Gough (1990), the individuals in this group are said to have unexpected reading problems, in that their reading competence is well below the expected level despite having normal or above average intelligence, adequate educational opportunity and no obvious sensory or neurological damage. He added that the source of the difficulty for

the vast majority of poor readers is failure to develop accurate and efficient, word identification or recognition skills.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces the educational phenomenon faced by rural area students in reading in English. This is followed by statement of the problem, purposes of the study, objectives, research questions, significance of the study and definition of terms.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates complete information about reading in English, teaching reading skill, problems that students face in reading in English, the use of e-XRA reading module in teaching reading among the poor readers and some previous studies that are related to this study.

2.2 PROBLEMS THAT STUDENTS FACE IN READING

Reading is the cornerstone of academic success. Poor reading ability correlates with long-term negative outcomes (Clarke 2002). Students with poor reading skills in the beginning are likely to have poor skills in the future.

Being able to read is an important educational objective as it opens up new worlds and opportunities (Walberg 2003). The most common way for students to learn new information

is through reading (Grabe & Stoller 2002). Reading is also considered an important skill which language learners should obtain, particularly as it helps to build vocabulary and leads to lifelong learning and improvement in first and second language skills (Hua Li & Wilhem 2008). However, reading is a complex process as it involves multifaceted steps of recognizing words, understanding what is read, reading fluency as well as requiring a drive to keep on reading. It also involves various skills such as skimming, scanning and making conclusion; acquisition of language aspects such as vocabulary items and sound system. Meanwhile, understanding what is read involves interpreting the strings of words joined in the sentences in order to make sense of what is read. Readers first would have to use their background knowledge of the language and knowledge of the reading content to understand the sentences and then relate to their own experiences to make sense of the reading materials in order for the reading process to be meaningful. In other words, readers not only need to know the vocabulary items, they need to understand how and why the words are joined together and relate to their own knowledge and experience in order to further understand what is read.

Study by Hu and Nation (2000) cited in (Tomoko Ishii and Schmitt 2009) showed that learners must know 98-99% of words in discourse to understand it well. This means that learners need to know between 5000 to 7000 word families to be conversant in spoken English and between 8000 to 9000 word families to be able to read a range of authentic texts such as novels and newspapers. Not only that, Tomoko Ishii and Schmidt (2009) further found that learners who have problems with vocabulary, have a limited number of words, limited knowledge of secondary meaning senses, limited awareness of the different derivative forms of a word (such as silly and silliness) and use L1 translations in trying to understand

the meaning of L2 words. This indicates that in order for learners wishing to function at a high level in English, acquiring vocabulary is essential.

It is even more important for readers of English as a Second /Foreign Language (SL/FL) because they may not know all the words that they come across in an English text. They may be able to read or pronounce the words but to know or understand the meanings of the words requires familiarity with the words as well as knowledge of the denotation and connotation of the words. Neuman and Dwyer (2009) assert that vocabulary is more than words. They claim that vocabulary is knowledge. Knowing a word's meaning is to know what a word represents and further beginning to understand the association of concepts that goes with the words. Research studies by Velluntino, Fletcher, Snowling & Scanlon (2004) cited in (Neuman and Dwyer 2009) suggest that it is this rich interconnection of knowledge that drives children's comprehension. Thus, vocabulary acquisition is now recognized as an essential element of learning a second language, and one which needs to be addressed as a significant role in reading development.

Studies have been conducted and reading materials, both printed as well as technological based have been developed to help students become better or good readers. However, learners of SL/FL still face difficulty in reading.

2.3 TEACHING READING SKILLS

In school, every child goes through the reading process and learns to read from the lower to the higher level. Teachers try their best to ensure that the students acquire reading skills in the classroom. The skills have to be nurtured at a young age so that children will enjoy

reading and form good reading habits. They should be given guided practice in reading activities in schools.

According to Nuttal (1982) intensive reading which is also called as reading for accuracy involves approaching the text under the close guidance of a task which forces the student to pay great attention to understanding of the text; not only of what it means, but also of how the meaning is produced.

In Malaysia, the Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools (KBSR) and the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM) administer the teaching and learning of English in Malaysia. According to Koo (2001) cited in Radha Nambiar (2008) reading is taught and learnt as a mechanistic, discrete and hierarchically ordered process involving the mastery of singular skills. This is in line with the syllabus which adopts a skill-based approach to the teaching and learning of reading.

In Malaysian classroom context, the teaching of reading focuses on literal comprehension skills such as word or sentence recognition. This demonstrates that learners are taught to answer comprehension questions not having a holistic understanding of the text but by using the question to look through a text to seek answers.

Ponniah (1993) cited in Radha Nambiar (2008) states that in class, teachers instruct learners on the skills to answer comprehension questions and basically prepare them for examinations, which are naturally comprehension based. Students are taught to read a text first, underline difficult words and then use a dictionary to source the meaning of each word. Then the comprehension questions are used to identify the important ideas in a text. A very

popular method employed in school is to get learners to identify main ideas in each paragraph and more often than not these main ideas are usually in the first few lines of each paragraph.

Furthermore, Clarke (2002) cited in Radha Nambiar (2008) believes that there are six learning steps in reading in English. The first step is of the progression is understanding the concept of words, next is alphabetic awareness, third is phonemic awareness, then phonics, followed by word recognition, next fluency and lastly comprehension.

In China, Hua Li and Hughes Wilhem (2008) state that approaches within the classroom began to shift from the predominately grammar-translation method to more communicative approaches which encourage interaction. In reading lessons, more was done to link reading comprehension and background knowledge, to use text-centered approaches while fostering both interpretive and productive skills, and to provide learning strategies training. Although lacking experience with these newer approaches as language learners themselves, teachers were expected to change their approaches and to teach reading from both a top-down and bottom up framework with skill and strategy training integrated within their lessons.

2.5 RESEARCHES ON PROBLEMS OF READING IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, rural school learners are still found to be poor readers of English as a second language. For instance a study on 130 Form One students in one of the rural schools in Malaysia found that about 40% of them failed to make meaning at word level and 70% failed at sentence level and less than 10% were able to understand discourse (Abdul Halim & Mariam 2005).

Another study by Ibrahim (2005) cited in (Abdul Halim Ibrahim 2006) showed that rural students were reading below their grade level and the majority of them did not have appropriate reading tools to read effectively. The study also showed that many students in Malaysia continue to struggle with reading, even at tertiary level.

Meanwhile, the 2006 national budget illustrated that more than 100,000 students nationwide cannot read (Utusan Malaysia 2006). This was supported by Lok Yim Pheng, the National Union of Teacher Parent (NUTP) General Secretary (Utusan Malaysia 2006). As a result, the Ministry of Education started to look into reading remedial classes. At the same time, individuals and publishers began to promote various means, programmes or products that they claim to be effective in teaching reading among Malaysian school children.

2.6 READING MODELS AND E-XRA APPLICATIONS TO TEACHING READING

There are many approaches in teaching vocabulary among ESL readers. However the question is how vocabulary is best taught so that vocabulary acquisition is enhanced? Recent research has suggested that it is better for readers at their beginning of their language acquisition process to focus on learning the most frequent words. Meanwhile, Pavicic (2003) in (Mehta 2009) dealt with a way to improve students' abilities to explore, store and usage of vocabulary items. He determined the role of vocabulary teaching and how a teacher could help their learners. He said that the teacher should create activities and tasks to help students to build their vocabulary and develop strategies to learn the vocabulary on their own. Another study done by Yu (2004) supported this study but used a more advanced strategy in teaching vocabulary in which he suggested the use of language corpora (electronic authentic language

databases that can be available via internet or as software installed in desktops). Language corpora can be either a collection of written or spoken texts; for example, collections of written texts that can be extracts from newspapers, business letters, popular fictions, books, or magazines or published or unpublished school essays. He believed that by integrating language corpora in vocabulary classroom, learners are engaged in the activities and lead the learners to be actively involved.

In the Bottom-Up Model, also referred to as the Outside-In Model; reading is perceived as a linear process involving reading from left to right, identifying each letter - a letter at a time, identifying words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and their pronunciation. According to this model, precise, sequential identification of letters, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and pronunciation are required in order to comprehend a reading text. This model also postulates that reading begins with identifying visual information from the reading text. The visual information is picked up during the complex process. The model promotes finding meaning from text and successful reading depends on the reader's ability to interpret accurately. This indicates that the first language aspect to be acquired or learned is the vocabulary item. Moreover, according to this model, learners are not expected to have background knowledge of the target language.

The Bottom-Up model emphasizes a single-direction and part-to-whole processing of a text. The meaning of the text is expected to come naturally as the code is broken based on the reader's prior knowledge of words, their meanings, and the syntactical patterns of his or her language (McCormick 1988). Dechant (1991) further explains that the Bottom-Up model operates on the principle that the written text is hierarchically sentence levels) and that the reader first processes the smallest linguistic unit, gradually compiling the smaller units to

decipher and comprehend the higher units (such as sentence syntax organized (beginning with grapho-phonics, phonemic, syllabic, morphemic, word, and ending with). The processes involved in this model are incorporated in the e-Xra reading module where the module starts with the smallest unit which is the monosyllabic words of English language and progresses to sentence level. This postulates a hierarchical reading process that is appropriate to poor readers of ESL who do not have background knowledge of the target language. This means that the e-Xra reading module incorporated some notion of the Bottom-Up Model.

The second model is the Top-Down Model. This model believes that reading starts with what readers bring to the text and work its way down to the print. Readers will use their non-visual information to select minimum visual cues and meaning is achieved through the use of such higher level information. In this model, readers start reading by using their knowledge of the language and the subject matter to predict the text. They will then sample the text, but instead of identifying every letter, one letter at a time and then every word, readers will choose the most productive language cues, for example chunking of the printed text and testing their hypothesis. The process starts from what the readers know or prior knowledge and goes down to what is seen on the print. According to McCormick (1988) reading is a matter of bringing meaning to print, not extracting meaning from print. The Top-Down model perceives that readers are engaged in a set of hypothesis, sampling input, testing it, whether re-hypothesizing or confirming the hypothesis, and sampling again. In other words, readers identify letters and words only to confirm their assumptions about the meaning of the text (Dechant 1991). This is why this model is also known as an inside-out, concept-driven and whole to part model.

In relation to e-Xra reading module, the Top-Down model is incorporated. Even though the module provides pictures, not all words are provided with each picture. Therefore, a reader has to make predictions, process information, and reconstruct a message encoded by a writer. For example, Module 1d lists a group of words such as cap, nap, rap, flap and slap. Only a picture of a cap is provided. Thus, the reader has to guess the meaning of other words listed. This indicates that the concept of the Top-Down model is integrated in e-Xra Reading Module.

The third reading model is the Interactive Model which recognizes the importance of both the text and the reader in the process of identification and interpretation and perceives reading as an active and interactive process. In this model, reading is not a linear process; it is a non-directional process where knowledge from different sources interacts to produce the most appropriate interpretation of a message. Grabe's Interactive Model (1991) refers to the interaction of reader-text interaction and simultaneous processing of many component skills. Readers of this model reconstruct meaning based on the printed text and their prior knowledge. Readers' prior knowledge provides them certain expectations that help in making predictions regarding the meaning of the text. Furthermore, the interactive model suggests that the reader constructs meaning by the selective use of information from all sources of meaning (such as syntax and semantics) without adherence to any one set order. According to Goodman (1981), the Interactive Model is one which uses print as input and has meaning as output. However, the reader provides input too and in interacting with the text, is selective in using just as little of the cues from text as necessary to construct meaning. The reader simultaneously uses all levels of processing even though one source of meaning can be primary at a given time (Dechant 1991). The model recognizes what the text can contribute and the importance of the identification process which allows readers to be more accurate at

reading the actual written message. Readers are able to construct the intended message rather than the message they think should be there in a situation. This is where a reader's background knowledge which includes their experience and culture would have an impact on the meaning making process.

Relating these to the e-Xra Module, the Interactive Model is illustrated in Module 1d where pictures are provided next to each short passage. In addition, the words provided in Module 1d of the e-Xra Module are simple words that ESL readers can associate with such as cat, van, fan, mat and hat. These are the words that they are familiar with and that they can relate to. Providing simple words to these ESL readers encourage the readers to interact with the text thus constructing meanings from the words.

In short, the e-Xra module postulates all the three reading models. It has taken into account different approaches to reading. For instance, the Bottom-Up Model proposes that vocabulary items may be acquired in isolation. Meanwhile, the Top-Down Model puts emphasis on the background knowledge of the target language. It proposes that a reader uses whatever cues to be able to make the connections between the words read. Finally, the Interactive Model goes further than the Top-Down Model in the sense that it emphasizes on the interaction between the reader and text. The reader interacts with the text during the reading process in which readers use all cues and knowledge such as pictures, background knowledge and experience to comprehend what is read and make reading more meaningful. These aspects are incorporated in e-Xra's step-by-step modules.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to B. Bernhardt (1991), there are different groups of second language readers. A first group of second language readers consists of school children. This group may be subdivided into two, consisting of minority and majority children. One sub-group of the school children are children who do not speak the majority language of the classroom natively. These second language speakers require content instruction in the majority language, and are therefore, dependent on reading and writing skills in a language other than their own for ultimate educational attainment. The latter group consists of majority language-speaking children. These children are found in immersion programs placed therein to enhance their education. In short, the minority group members of schools children need some sort of a reading programme or intervention in learning the language. Figure 1.1 below explains this.

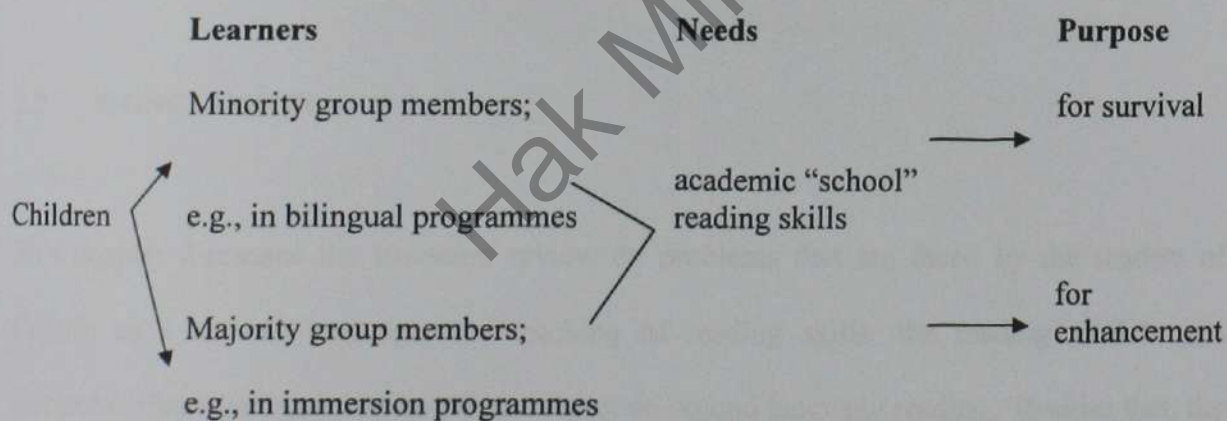


Figure 1.1

Even though this study does not adopt a primary theoretical framework on reading in a second language the study adapts a concept and incorporated it into one framework to suit the purpose of this study.

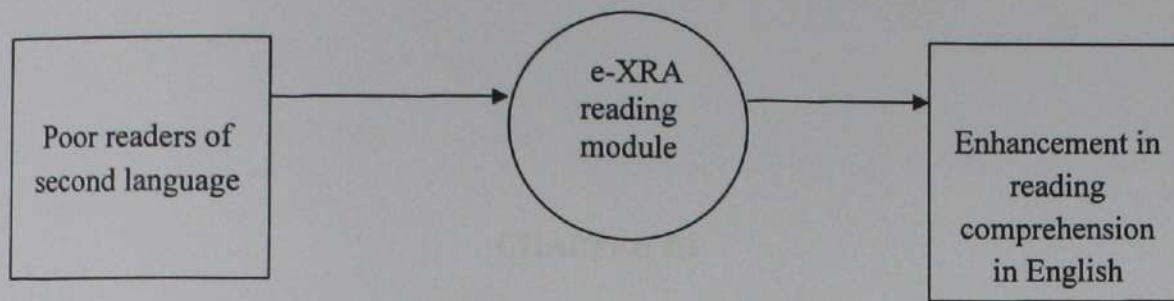


Figure 1.2

In the study, the poor readers are the Year Five students who are facing reading problems. e-XRA is the module used in assisting the students to read. This serves as an intervention in enhancing the students reading comprehension. Besides the e-XRA reading module, encyclopaedia is used to give clear picture of the words or sentences that the students have read. In addition, the students are encouraged to use dictionary in order for them to understand the meaning of the words better.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the literature review on problems that are faced by the readers of English as a second language, the teaching of reading skills, the reading models and researches that have been conducted in the past on second language reading. Besides that, the conceptual framework of the study is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology of data collection of this study. Specific components of the methodology will be discussed namely research design, subjects of the study, research instrument and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, the researcher attempted to identify the problems in reading English as a second language that the young students face in a rural area in the Southern part of Johor. This study was in a form of action research case study. In other words, always, action research is conducted among a group of colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. The study was conducted in a case study research design as well as it examines the real-life situation and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of

method. Researcher Yin (1997) defines the case study method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Additionally, according to Creswell (2005), action research seeks to improve specific, local issues. It calls for educators or teachers to involve in research to study concerns in their own schools or classrooms and to implement site-based councils or committees in schools to enhance research as an integral part of daily classes and education.

3.3 PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING

This study was conducted as a part of a larger research project on community development in Kampung Hilir (pseudonym). The project was aimed to increase the community's well-being through education. Several activities were conducted involving school children in three schools in the *kampung*. A needs analysis was first conducted at the beginning of the project. It was discovered that that 18 Year Five children from Sekolah Kebangsaan Gemilang (pseudonym) were not able to read well in English. It was a concern because the students are the 2010 Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) candidates. Prior to the project, the school had already conducted a reading programme for the students and the students had improved in reading in Bahasa Melayu. However, according to their English teacher, they are still very poor readers of English. Although two of the 18 students can read in English, they do not understand what they read. Thus, there was a need to seek measures to help them improve on their reading in English. This study therefore focused on this group of students; making it a Case Study in design. In addition, this study was also an attempt to find the best way to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition of the target language; in this case English. An action research methodology also seemed to be appropriate. Thus, this study was an action research case study as it was an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1997) and sought to improve a specific local issue (Creswell, 2005).

3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

Several instruments have been used for this study. The e-XRA reading module was used as the primary material for the intervention of the reading. E-Xra Reading Module 1-2 was used in the study due to the student's reading ability. This module was used to suit the diverse needs of the students in reading. As the module started off with alphabetic awareness and progressed to word and sentence level, the module was an appropriate module for this group of students who have reading problems in reading in English as the second language. Other modules, Modules 3-4 and 5 were not used due to the limitation of the study; only eight weeks were allotted.

Prior to carrying out the e-Xra reading module, the students were asked to read three short reading passages. The first passage consists of a sentence with 16 words. The second passage consists of seven simple sentences with 42 words. The third passage consists of five more complex sentences with 37 words. These reading passages were taken from the students' Year 5 English text book because the vocabulary items in the passages were incorporated in the first section of the e-Xra Module. The purpose of this task was to gauge the students' knowledge of English vocabulary items. Most of the students were able to read words that are simple and common to them (such as the, big, dog, to, the, that). However, they were not able to pronounce words that were not familiar with. Such as bug, bleed, boil, spill, soil and chap. The students' reading revealed that the students need a systematic reading approach to enhance their reading in English as a second language.

Then the first cycle of the study was carried out. The students read through Modules 1a to 1d. These sections began with the first component of the e-Xra module where the students were exposed to alphabets and phonemes. This was to make the students aware of phonemes; an auditory process in identifying the sounds in English. In phonemic awareness, the students learnt a code for learning to sound out written words. They were also introduced to syllabic sounds of English words. This was to initiate recognition of common words in English.

Here, the students were also introduced to upper and lower cases in the English language as organized in Module 1a of the e-Xra reading module. This was followed by Modules 1b and 1c that introduced monosyllabic sounds of English words. The focus of this stage was on recognition and pronunciation of the syllables of common English words. Students were asked to pronounce collectively and individually. Individual reading aloud and choral reading were the main activities. Modules 1a, 1b and 1c introduced English vocabularies in isolation. Thus, students only knew how to pronounce the words but there was no indication of comprehending or knowing the meanings of the words. Also, there were no further activities provided to gauge students' comprehension at this word-level reading.

The following section was Module 1d where monosyllabic words were introduced in short passages. A picture is provided next to each passage to help students with a visual description of the passage. It is hoped that students would comprehend the passage better. Colour coding is also integrated in Module 1d to highlight different sound syllables. This colour coding is also incorporated in the Year 5 English text book which students can associate with when doing the e-Xra reading module. This first cycle is illustrated in the following Figure 1.9.

Figure 1.3: Cycle 1: e-Xra reading module

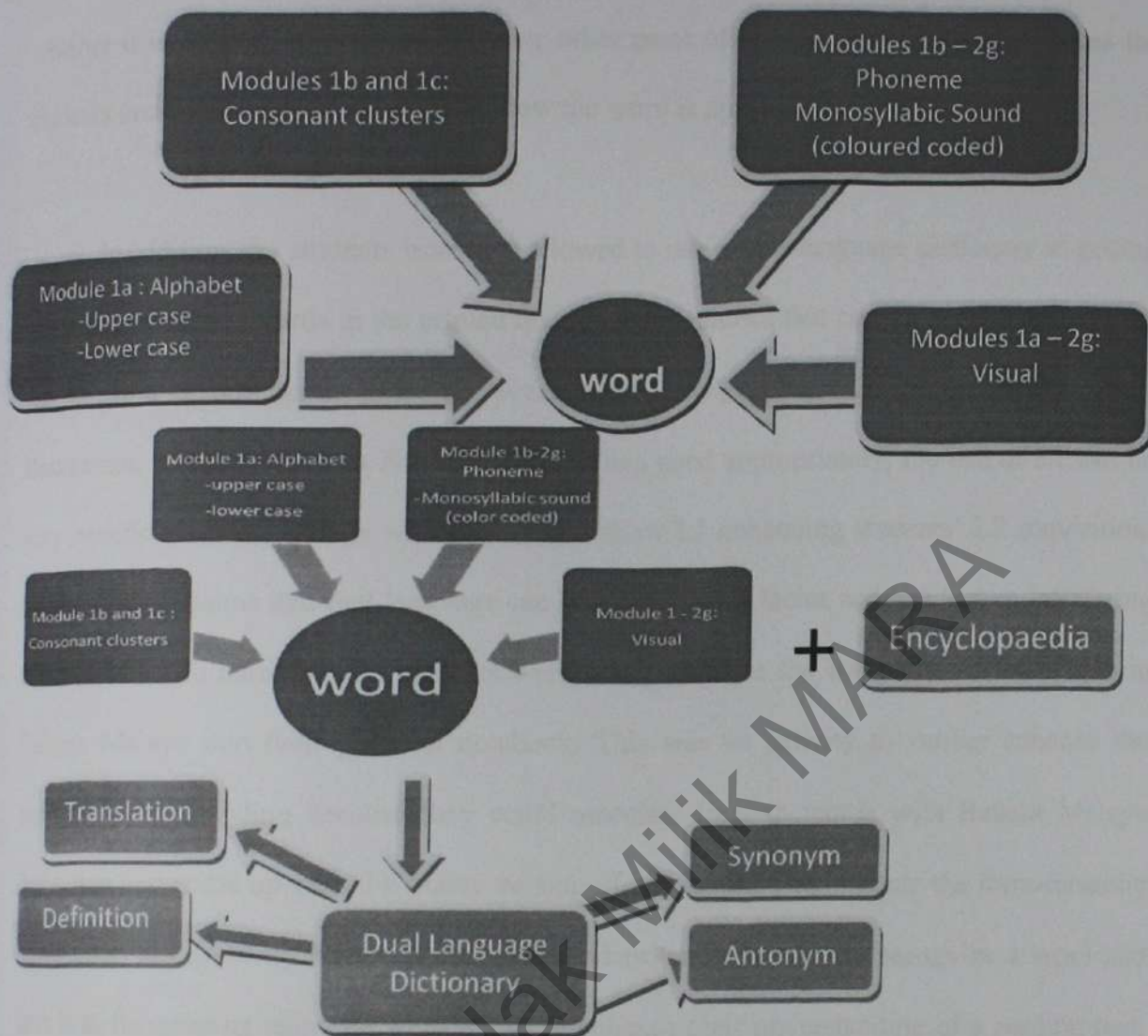


Figure 1.4: Cycle 2: The intervention process

In the second cycle where the intervention measure took place; the use of encyclopaedia with pictures and dictionary was introduced. The encyclopaedia was used to give the students a better picture of the text that they were reading. By showing the pictures of the words to the students, they were provided with a visual of what they were reading; attracting and motivating as well as enhancing their understanding of the written text. The students were able to connect the picture to the printed text and eventually comprehend the text. Meanwhile, the use of the dictionary was to help the students in getting the meanings of the new words

that they encountered. The dictionary also provided the part of speech that the word is; whether it is a noun, adverb, adjective or other parts of speech. This further enhances the students understanding of the word and how the word is applied.

In addition, the students were also allowed to use a dual-language dictionary in getting the meanings of the words in the printed text. Research shows that complete deletion of L1 in L2 situation is not appropriate (Schweers, 1999; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nation, 2003; Butzkamm, 2003) in Mustafa Nazari (2008). When used appropriately, the use of L1 can be very beneficial. This parallels with studies that show L1 enhancing students' L2 acquisition. Brown (2000) claims that first language can be a facilitating factor and not just an interfering factor in L2. In addition, the students were asked to write the meanings of the words in Bahasa Melayu into their personal notebook. This was an activity to further enhance the students' understanding because they could associate English words with Bahasa Melayu definition and come up with the Malay version of the words. This reflects the form-meaning connection discussed by Nation (2001) that students must be able to recognize a word and link it to its meaning using L1 translations to enhance their understanding of a reading text. This intervention measure was conducted for sixteen hours in eight consecutive sessions. Each session lasted for two hours.

The third instrument used was a semi structured interview with the English teacher of the class. The purpose of the interview was to get insights of the problems that the students face in reading English as a second language. According to Creswell (2005), interviews in qualitative research have both advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages are that they provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information. Compared to observations, the

interviewer also has better control over the types of information received since specific questions are asked to elicit the information. To be more specific, in this study, the researcher conducted one-on-one interview to the teacher. This is hoped to get insights of the problems that the students face as the English teacher was not hesitant and can share ideas comfortably.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

A few stages were involved in the data collection. At the first stage, a semi-structured interview was carried out with the English class teacher to get insights of the problems that the students faced in reading English as a second language. The students have faced problems in reading since they were in Year 4. Therefore, the researcher felt that it was a necessity to carry out an interview with the English class teacher whom should have known the students better.

Second, a test was administered among the students before the intervention was carried out. The test was in a form of reading passages. A few passages were selected from Year Five English text book (see appendix). Students were asked to read the passages and the researcher recorded it using audio recorder. The recordings were then transcribed. The passages were taken from the text book in order to give a reading material that the students are familiar with since the students encounter problems in reading text. After eight consecutive weeks of intervention, the same text, was given to the students. The passage was identical to the passage given earlier, before the intervention. This was to examine the enhancement of reading among the students.

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES IN DATA COLLECTION

Prior to the study, the researcher has anticipated potential issues that might arise during data collection. Also because qualitative research typically involves going to the research sites of the participants, staying a considerable time, asking detailed questions, ethical issues are likely to arise that need to be anticipated (Creswell 2005). First, the researcher went to the school and met the Deputy Headmaster of Students Academic to seek permission and approval to conduct the study. The Deputy Headmaster had to inform the parents of the students involved in the study by writing out a letter to inform them about the study. It was because the students had to undergo a new schedule throughout the eight weeks of the study.

The first stage of data collection was to interview the teacher. The researcher scheduled for an appointment with the English teacher. The equipment for the interview was to prepare such as an audiotape recorder and questions to address in the interview.

During the first day of the meeting with the participants, the researcher conveyed the message that the students were going to be the participants of a study and the researcher also informed them the purpose of the study. This was very crucial in gaining support from the students.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data that was gathered and collected was then organized. The interview with the teacher was recorded and the responses were transcribed and coded. The transcription of the interview would be converted into text data. The transcribed words were then coded. The coding process is important to select specific data to use and disregard other data that does not

specifically provide evidence for the study. The recordings of the participants of the reading passages were also transcribed and coded to examine the student enhancement in reading.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter looks into the methodology of the study specifically, namely research design, purposeful sampling, research procedure and instruments, data collection, ethical issues in data collection and data analysis.

Hak Milik MARA

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports and discusses the findings of the qualitative research. Data was collected from reading recordings that were recorded before the intervention (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-test). Informal interview was recorded with the respondents to get their insight on how they think reading in English is before and after the research was carried out. The background information of the respondents was described to give a scenario of the overall research. This is then followed by the presentations of findings and discussion according to each research question.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

This study was conducted as a part of a larger research project on community development in Kampung Hilir (pseudonym) in the southern part of Johor. The project was aimed to increase the community's well-being through education. Several activities were conducted involving

school children in three schools in the *kampung*. This research was one of the activities that was carried out to help the school children in reading in English.

4.3 RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The respondents of this study were 18 Year Five children from Sekolah Kebangsaan Gemilang (pseudonym). It was discovered that the children were not able to read well in English. It was a concern because the students are the 2010 Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) candidates. Prior to the research, the school had already conducted a reading programme for the students and the students had improved in reading in Bahasa Melayu. However, according to their English teacher, they are still very poor readers of English. Although two of the 18 students can read in English, they do not understand what they read. Thus, there was a need to seek measures to help them improve on their reading in English. This study therefore focused on this group of students; making it a Case Study in design. In addition, this study was also an attempt to find the best way to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition of the target language; in this case English. An action research methodology also seemed to be appropriate. Thus, this study was an action research case study as it was an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1997) and sought to improve a specific local issue (Creswell, 2005).

4.4.1 PRE-TEST

RQ1: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS THE STUDENTS FACE IN ENGLISH READING?

Prior to the research, the researcher assigned the students with three short passages from their Year Five English text book. The first passage consists of two sentences with 16 words, the

second passage is seven sentences long with 43 words, and the last passage is four sentences long with 36 words (see appendix). Then, the students were asked to read the given passage and their reading was recorded. It was observed that they faced a few problems in reading.

a) Pronunciation

In the given reading passages, the students were actually tested on 19 words that were highlighted in the passages. These words were colour-coded so that the students were aware of the emphasis on these words (see appendix). Based on the reading recording, 13 out of 18 students were not able to pronounce the word 'poured' correctly. This is due to the presence of suffix '-ed' in the root word 'pour'. The second word that the students were having problem with is 'chap'. This is due to the fact that the word is uncommon to the students and they were not sure of the pronunciation. Nine out of eighteen students were not able to pronounce the word 'blood'. This could be because of double consonant 'oo' in the word. Seven of the students were not able to pronounce the word 'heat'. About same number of students; five to seven of them were not able to pronounce other words on the list correctly. Table 4.1 shows the words that students pronounced correctly or not.

Student	Girl	Fool	Careful	Boil	Spill	Chap	Cap	Poured	Soup
1	X	/	X	X	X	X	X	X	/
2	/	/	/	/	/	X	/	X	/
3	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
4	X	/	/	/	X	X	X	X	/
5	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6	/	/	X	/	/	X	X	X	/
7	/	/	/	/	/	X	/	X	/
8	X	/	/	/	/	X	/	X	/
9	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	X	/
10	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	X	/
11	/	/	/	/	/	X	/	X	X
12	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
13	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
14	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
15	/	/	/	/	/	X	/	X	/
16	AB	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
17	/	/	X	X	X	X	X	/	/
18	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

b) Comprehension

Comprehension depends on knowledge. Comprehension as defined by Bernhardt (1987), is the process of relating new, or incoming information to information already stored in the memory (background knowledge). Obviously, during the process of reading, readers must not only look at words on the pages (bottom-up processing), but also activate background knowledge (top-town processing), and then build all the elements into comprehension.

Furthermore, during the pre-test, it was observed that the students were not able to comprehend the text that they read. The students said that they did not understand the words even though a picture was provided next to each passage. Since all of them speak Malay as their first language, they did not have background knowledge of English.

Therefore, most of the words are unknown to them. When asked how they felt about what they have read, the most common responses were:

Saya tak faham banyak perkataan sebab tak pernah jumpa.

(Literally-I don't understand because I have never seen the words)

Saya tak baca buku dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

(Literally-I do not read books in English)

Saya tak minat baca buku Bahasa Inggeris sebab tak faham.

(Literally-I am not interested to read because I do not understand the words)

Banyak buku Bahasa Inggeris tak ada gambar, susah nak faham.

(Literally-A lot of English books do not provide pictures making it hard to understand)

Reflection on these responses, indicate that mainly the students were not familiar with what they were reading; that they had little or no background knowledge of the written text. Due to the lack of understanding what was read, the students felt uninterested to read in English. This implies that there is a need to make meaning while reading.

4.4.2 POST-TEST

a) Pronunciation

Table 4.2. The reading test that was given after the intervention.

Student	Big	Bug	Bad	Boil	Heat	Water	Black	Bleed	Blood	Oil	Said
1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	/	/
2											
3											
4	/	x	x	/	x	/	/	x	x	/	X
5	x	x	x		x		x			X	x
6	/	x	/	X	/	/	/	/	x		/
7											
8											
9	/	/	/	/	x	/	/	x	x	/	X
10	/	/	/	/	x	/	x	x	x	/	X
11	X	x	x	/	x	x	x	/	x	X	/
12	/	x	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	X	X
13											
14	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	/	/
15											
16											
17	/	x	x	/	X	/	/	x	x	X	X
18	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	X	/	/

Taklah susah sangat nak baca dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

(Literally - The students were able to read fast because of the phonic approach that is integrated in the e-Xra module. In addition, choral reading promotes correct pronunciation among the students. This also indicates that when the students are able to comprehend the words and text, they do not find it difficult to read).

Senang nak faham sebab guna kamus.

(Literally - The students were able to understand because the use of dual language dictionary was allowed during the intervention process. The use of the dictionary led the students to be able to derive meanings in L1 and translate them to L2).

Reflecting on these responses, there was an improvement in that the students were able to read better and understand more after the intervention had been carried out. This indicates that although there are various reading modules available, there is a need to modify or adjust the teaching approach according to the students' ability and background knowledge. Teachers need to try different materials and make changes according to what works. In other words, a trial and error process has to be carried out in the attempt to identify the best approach in teaching vocabulary among ESL poor readers. These also suggest that interventions should be carried out in classroom teaching to enhance understanding.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented analysis of the students reading and their responses in the informal interview. There were 18 students involved in this study. Findings from the study revealed that generally students were able to pronounce words better and more fluent in their reading. The use of encyclopaedias, dual language dictionary as secondary materials besides e-Xra

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the brief summary of the findings, the findings and discussion of the study. The summary gives a brief account of what was carried out in this study. The findings are also discussed in relation to the literature review of the study. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for further research are provided as well as limitations of the study are explicated.

5.2 MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE FINDINGS

In this study the purpose of the study is to find out the problems faced by the rural students in reading in English. Apart from that this study aimed to explore the use of e-Xra reading module in teaching reading skill among the poor readers.

This study was in a form of action research case study. The study was conducted in a case study research design through combination methods of unstructured interview and

reading recordings in the collection of data. Eighteen year five students were selected as the respondents based on their reading inability in English.

After eight weeks of an intervention, it was observed that the students have improved in their reading, especially in pronunciation and comprehension. The use of e-Xra reading module has helped the students to learn to pronounce and comprehend text in English better. The researchers also used two secondary aids in the intervention; encyclopaedias and dual language dictionary to allow the students to have a better picture of the text that they were reading during the intervention. This is due to the fact that the respondents were poor readers of English. Although the use of e-Xra reading module was able to help the students to be better English readers they are not fluent in reading English text yet.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section attempts to present a summary of findings as discussed in the previous chapter. The summary of findings will be discussed briefly according to the research questions developed for this study. There are 2 research questions established in the introduction of this study. The summary of findings of this study will be described below.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS

This research is important especially to the English teachers, students and parents. Based on the research findings, the respondents encounter problems in English reading even though they started learning to read English as early as seven years old. The English teachers in school play a very important role in identifying the problems that the students face in English reading, encourage and guide the students to read in English. Each student should be treated

differently according to their needs. Once the problems have been identified, it is easier for the teacher to guide the students to read in English.

Furthermore, the teachers should be able to utilize different kinds of methods and approaches. They should not be afraid of making mistakes in the try and error process to help the students to read in English fluently. There are many kinds of reading materials or modules available in the market but the teachers must be aware of its usefulness and not every module suits the students. The teachers must be proactive in improvising the module so that the module is the best module used for the students.

Apart from that, the teachers must know the attitude of the students towards learning English especially reading. These students are rural area students who are hardly exposed to English environment. They might not have interest in learning English as second language. Therefore, the teachers should play their role in motivating the students to enjoy learning English. The teachers should integrate fun activities in class so that the students are motivated to learn English. The teachers should think of ways to make learning English easy.

Parents also have an important role in motivating their children to read in English. Even though they do not have knowledge or skills in teaching their children to read in English, they should support the school by encouraging the students to read in English. They support the activities that are conducted in school in helping the students to become fluent English readers. They should also provide their children with English text materials and encourage the children to read in English.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

By means of the research, it is easily figured out that the students did encounter several degree of difficulty in reading in English. Therefore, English teachers should seriously value the students' problems and search for their solutions.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some limitations of the research are acknowledged. The research was conducted in an action research design to get an insight of the problems that the students faced in reading in English. However, the shortcoming the research was only unstructured interview was carried out with the respondents. Perhaps, observations should have been carried out during class to observe the students in their English learning process, especially in reading class. This would help gather in depth information of the respondents. Such an observation would possibly have provided more insights to complement what this study has determined.

Another limitation is the duration of the research. Even though the researcher managed to carry out the intervention process in eight consecutive lesson periods, longer time should have helped to get better main outcomes of the findings. This is because the researcher was dealing with poor readers of English who have faced problems in reading about 5 years of schooling. Therefore, the researcher faced a difficult time in teaching the students to read in L2.

Apart from that is the location of the setting of the research is quite far from the research's home. Therefore, it was quite difficult for the researcher to carry out the intervention longer than eight consecutive lesson periods.

5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following suggestions are included with the aim of encouraging and enhancing further research in the areas of reading in English among ESL readers. Hopefully, the suggestions will be valuable to the current group of students who participated in the present study to find out their problems in reading in English and to explore the use of e-Xra reading module in their reading. Here are some suggestions which can make future research more reliable and purposeful.

- a. This research was conducted in one primary school in Johor. The researcher suggests that the same research to be conducted at other schools in other states; primary and secondary.
- b. This research only focuses on the problems that the students face in reading in English and the use of e-Xra reading module in the intervention process. It is hoped that in future research, the scope of the study can be enlarged with more focus on the degree of difficulty that each student faces in reading and whether e-Xra is the best solution to it.
- c. This study only focused on Year 5 students in Johor. Perhaps a research can be conducted on a group of different students using a different reading module and comparing the outcomes of the results. d. A study on the use of ICT for learning English could be carried out by using other instruments such as observation, apart from questionnaires and interview. This would further help to validate the research responses which are more likely to reflect student's use of ICT for learning English.

- d. This study only focused on what are the problems the students faced in reading. Further research should be focusing on ways to raise the students' motivation towards reading in English.
- e. For further research, the researcher would suggest that the emphasis should be given on the challenges these rural are students face in reading in English.
- f. The researcher suggests that the intervention should be carried out in a longer period of time among poor readers of ESL so that better outcomes of results could be presented.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Generally, the findings show that the students faced serious problems in English reading that made them poor readers of ESL. However, in this study, the English teacher was not able to find a solution for this scenario. The English Teacher might have not allotted specific time to assist the students in reading. Probably, with the use of reading module available in the market such as the e-Xra, it could overcome the current problems faced by the students of this research in general and other students from all over our country. It could be a possible suggestion in helping the students to improve their reading in English. However, it should be noted that there are challenges faced by the English language teachers such as time and facilities barriers that need to be taken into consideration in order to make the use of the reading module such as e-Xra effective and successful.

In conclusion, every single party has to play their role in helping the poor readers to become a better reader of ESL. For example, the school should provide facilities such as reading module to assist the students to read. Moreover, English teachers should be able to try different kinds of methods and approaches such as utilize encyclopaedias and dual language dictionary in teaching the students to read. Students who have problems in English reading should also come forward and ask for assistance from their English teacher so that the problem can be solved early and this will not impede their English learning.

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