

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ESL TEACHERS'
READING HABITS AND THEIR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ESL TEACHERS' READING HABITS AND THEIR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

This research is carried out with the purpose of gaining more in-depth information in regards to the reading habits of 210 ESL teachers in the district of Klang, Selangor and how these habits correspond to their English language proficiency. Using the convenience sampling method and quantitative instruments such as survey questionnaire and an English language proficiency test, this research aims to achieve four research objectives. First, it intends to study the types of reading materials read by ESL teachers in Malaysia. Secondly, it aims to calculate the rates of general and extensive reading among these teachers and thirdly, the problems faced by them which prevent them from partaking in leisure reading extensively. Finally, this research hopes to find the relationship between the reading habits of ESL teachers and their English language proficiency. This is done by calculating the Pearson's R value using SPSS software. As a result, it is found that ESL teachers in Malaysian read mostly light reading materials and tend to shun heavy materials. The researcher also discovered that the rates of general and extensive reading among Malaysian ESL teachers are high and average respectively. The third finding identifies teachers' heavy workload as the most pressing problem which hinders the teachers from reading for leisure. The final finding uncovers a moderate correlation ($r = 0.677$) between ESL teachers' reading habits and their English language proficiency. This researcher hopes that the findings of this research help in upcoming studies or programmes carried out to improve ESL teachers' language proficiency in the effort to develop and improve the standards and quality of English language teaching in Malaysia.

HUBUNGAN ANTARA TABIAT MEMBACA GURU BAHASA INGGERIS DAN KEMAHIRAN BAHASA INGGERIS MEREKA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tabiat membaca dalam kalangan 210 guru ESL di daerah Klang, Selangor dan hubungannya dengan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris guru-guru tersebut. Dengan menggunakan kaedah persampelan mudah dan instrumen berbentuk kuantitatif seperti borang kajian selidik dan ujian Bahasa Inggeris, kajian ini diharap dapat menjawab empat soalan kajian. Pertama, penyelidik ingin mengenalpasti jenis bahan bacaan yang dibaca oleh guru ESL. Kedua adalah mengira kadar pembacaan umum dan luas di kalangan guru-guru tersebut dan ketiga, mengenalpasti masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru tersebut untuk meluangkan masa mereka untuk membaca. Akhir sekali, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti hubungan antara tabiat membaca guru ESL dan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris mereka. Hasil kajian pengkaji menunjukkan yang guru-guru ESL paling banyak membaca bahan bacaan Bahasa Inggeris yang ringan dan kurang membaca bahan yang lebih berat. Kajian ini juga membuktikan kadar pembacaan umum dan luas guru ESL adalah masing-masing tinggi dan sederhana. Dapatan kajian yang ketiga mengenalpasti beban tugas yang berat sebagai masalah yang paling besar dihadapi oleh guru-guru tersebut untuk membaca. Akhir sekali, kajian ini menunjukkan terdapat korelasi yang sederhana ($r = 0.677$) antara tabiat membaca guru-guru ESL dan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris mereka. Penyelidik berharap agar kajian ini akan member manfaat dalam usaha meningkatkan penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan guru-guru ESL dalam usaha untuk membangunkan standard dan kualiti pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPT	-	Cambridge Placement Test
EL	-	English Language
ESL	-	English as a Second Language
IH	-	Input Hypothesis
MoE	-	Ministry of Education

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Research on the reading habits of Malaysian English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are undeniably scarce (Daik, 2006; Tharumaraj & Noordin, 2011) while studies on how these habits relate to their English Language (EL) proficiency are non-existent. This is a sad state of affairs because it shows that the issues of Malaysian ESL teachers' attitudes towards reading and their proficiency in the target language have been neglected all this while.

Various experts have already proven that language teachers with strong reading habits exhibit better teaching competence and efficacy. Applegate & Applegate (2004) and Giles & Tunks (2019) explain that teachers who are passionate readers are more likely to use positive teaching practices which engage and excite their learners, thus improving the standards of teaching and learning.

The relationship between teachers' quality and a nation's education standard is widely agreed upon. Hanushek and Wößmann (2007), in a report for The World Bank, stresses on the importance of quality teachers in enhancing students' cognitive skills, which is the unit used to measure the quality of an education system. They further declare that priority should be given to improving the quality of teachers before equipping schools with other resources.

These findings are acknowledged by education policymakers in Malaysia. According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), one of the prerequisites for a country's successful economic growth and national development is its standard of education, and nothing else can better

forecast the future of a country than the going-ons in the country's education system. The proof to this assertion can be seen in countries with strong economic growth which is fuelled by the strong foundation in their education sectors (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007).

Nevertheless, the education system in Malaysia has found itself facing increased criticism and fiery arguments about its current standard (Chang, Sirat & Abd Razak, 2018; Menon, TheStarOnline, 18th October 2018). It is stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 that, even though the performances of Malaysian students have exhibited some progress in the past decades, it is still trailing the education systems of other countries which have found ways to propel and sustain the advancement. It is also stated in the blueprint that the results of our participation in international assessments have demonstrated that performance of Malaysian students have deteriorated “in absolute terms”.

The paragraph quoted as below paint a clear picture of the present standard of Malaysian students.

The results from PISA 2009+ (the first time Malaysia participated in this assessment were also discouraging, with Malaysia ranking in the bottom third of 74 participating countries, below the international and OECD average. Almost 60% of the 15-year-old Malaysian students who participated in PISA failed to meet the minimum proficiency level in Mathematics, while 44% and 43% did not meet the minimum proficiency levels in Reading and Science respectively.”

(National Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025, pg. E-4)

Therefore, it is of utmost importance for us to unravel the reasons for the seemingly lack of quality in the Malaysian education system, most particularly the teaching standard of English. The focus of this research is the ESL teachers who are employed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (Moe) to disseminate knowledge

on English to their students. The focus is further narrowed down to these teachers' reading habits and their link to these teachers' EL proficiency.

1.2 Background of Study

There are two issues which are discussed in this research; ESL teachers' reading habits and their EL proficiency. It is this researcher's belief that there is a relationship between ESL teachers' reading habits and their EL proficiency.

ESL teachers' quality, in this case their EL proficiency, has long been a central point of debates regarding the standard of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Malaysia. Students, parents and even employers have singled out ESL teachers as the main reason for the general decline of EL proficiency among Malaysians (TheStarOnline, December 11th, 2014, The Star, December 11th, 2014, p.8).

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that substantial amount of funds and effort has been allocated for various education policies which have been planned tirelessly by the MoE. However, like Hanushek and Wößmann (2007) stress, attention should be given to the quality and competency of ESL teachers before focusing on other resources.

In the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025, one of the eleven „shifts“ highlighted by the MoE to revolutionise the system is „Shift 4: Transform teaching into the profession of choice“. It is stated in the blueprint that studies around the world have illustrated the fact that the quality of teachers is the most essential factor in a school to ensure promising student performance (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013). Therefore, one of the measures which will be taken to implement the „shift“ is to elevate the admission requirements for the teaching profession from 2013.

Accordingly, only the top 30% of the nation's graduates will be selected to join the teaching profession. The ministry has further guaranteed that the same prerequisites will be imposed in the admission for "teachers training programmes in Public and Private Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and that the standards of the curriculum and teacher-instructors are up to par in order to obtain teachers of aspired quality. In addition to that, strict conditions will be placed upon the teacher trainees for their graduation in order to have only the best of them to enter the teaching profession.

Another „shift“ which also delved on the issue of teacher performance is Shift 2 which is to ensure the proficiency of every child in both Bahasa Malaysia and English as well to encourage them to learn an additional language. One of the steps which will be taken to warrant the above-mentioned shift is “up skilling the English teachers”. In accordance with this plan, by 2025, all the students in Malaysian national education system will have their English lessons taught by proficient teachers who meet the international requirements. This plan is to be accomplished by ascertaining that each and every one of the 61,000-strong English teaching population pass the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) “within two years” while providing those who do not with more rigorous training (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013).

The roadmap presented in Malaysian Education Blueprint will be executed in three waves from 2013 to 2025. The first wave which would be from 2013 to 2015 focused on the enhancement of the system which is already in place. One of the areas on which light was shed was the strengthening of the process of ELT. According to the roadmap constructed, the candidates of the CPT will be placed in three groups: those who have strong proficiency, those who have middling proficiency requiring

“immersive training” over one year to reach proficiency and finally, teachers with weak proficiency and who have to attend an „immersive training“ programme on a part-time basis for two years.

It is also stated in the blueprint that there is a possibility of the existence of a tiny, fourth group of teachers who may have extremely weak proficiency in the EL (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013). This was the assumption held by the ministry and other stakeholders before the 2012 CPT.

However, as it was revealed, a large majority of ESL teachers in Malaysia have unsatisfactory grasp on the language (The Star Online, 28th January 2015). Table 1.1 illustrates the outcome of the Cambridge Placement Test 2012 sat by all ESL teachers nationwide.

Table 1.1

Results of the Cambridge Placement Test 2012

BAN	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
C2	3.9 %	14.7%
C1	21.1%	36.7%
B2	42.5%	36%
B1	28.3%	11.7%
A2	4.0%	0.9%
A1	0.2%	0%

(Source : <https://www.britishcouncil.or.th/sites/default/files/dr.ranjit.pdf>)

If the results shown above are anything to go by, no more than a tiny fraction of teachers have acquired a mastery of the EL. This information sent shockwaves throughout the nation and resulted in the government grappling with ways to prevent this scenario from repeating itself. Thus, several measures were adopted to do so.

The low-scoring teachers have been compelled to attend the immersive training programme called the Pro-ELT programme, which is being conducted by the MoE with the assistance of the British Council of Malaysia. Concurrently, the British Council has stressed that one of the crucial requirements for effective teaching of the English language is a strong proficiency in it.

In 2015, the then Second Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh reported that the immersive training programme has borne fruit with 76% of 5000 teachers who have sat for the first session of the CPT have improved on their language proficiency by one band while 10% have improved by two (The Star Online, 28th January 2015). He also stated that before the end of 2015, the ministry would ensure that more than 23,000 teachers are trained in order to enhance the quality of teaching of the EL in schools.

The minister further claimed that the results of this programme may be apparent in a few years time as the whole upheaval and retraining are unprecedented in Malaysia. He had also declared that it is compulsory for Malaysian ESL teachers to obtain a C1 or C2 in the CPT before they are to be given the license to teach; a standard requirement to teach in Britain (The Star Online, 28th January 2015).

Nonetheless, one question comes to mind in relation to this: how far can the „immersive training“ help in increasing the teachers“ proficiency? Is it enough to help language teachers to attain the required grade of C1 and C2 in upcoming assessments? Isn“t the „immersive training“ a short-termed one-off solution? What about the long-term solution? The rationale of this question is the opinion of the researcher that nothing can replace a strong reading habit in the course of increasing one“s proficiency. Whether this is true or not will be uncovered as the research progresses.

Robinson, Galaczi, Docherty, King & Khalifa (2014) undertook a project called „The Cambridge Baseline Project“ (CBP) which endeavoured to appraise in a comprehensive manner “the learning, teaching and assessment of the English language in Malaysian schools from pre-school to pre-university”.

The 2013 CBP aspired to illustrate with great clarity and strong evidence on the performance of the Malaysian EL education in comparison to other high-performing education systems which will then be utilised to assist in any decision-making when enforcing the education policies crafted to accomplish the objectives set in the National Educational Blueprint. This objective, when splintered, is divided to a few specific aims.

The first would be to evaluate students from low- and high-performing schools against the yardstick of „international standards“ of EL proficiency in general and specific linguistic skills. The second specific aim, which is the most relevant to the field of teachers“ proficiency, is to measure ESL teachers against „international standards“ in terms of general and specific EL skills, pedagogical knowledge and how they put it to practice. Other listed purposes are to study the effects of various contributing factors such as motivation, geography and school categories, and to reassess the education system currently in place.

Robinson, Galaczi, Docherty, King & Khalifa (2014) also explained that this research involved 424 ESL teachers taking a Reading and Listening test while 266 took a Writing test. Furthermore, 42 teachers sat for a Speaking test with 600 taking the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT). In addition, there were observations of 78 teachers and questionnaires were filled in by 1,290 teachers. All these were done with the help from 14 Speaking Examiners, 4 Classroom Observers and a task force

consisting of Malaysian MoE personnel. As can be seen, this was a research of a huge scale which involved vast amount of time, money and effort.

After studying the outcomes of the CBP, this researcher has found much information in regards to the field of ESL teachers' proficiency in the target language. Most of the teachers who participated in the research attained CEFR Levels B1 or above. However, it is stated that a huge group of teachers did not pass the lowest requirements. It was also discovered that a majority of the teachers were the weakest when it comes to speaking. This was supported by the comments given by an observer and a Head of Panel as shown below.

'The teacher is held back by her language skills. Her poor grammar and vocabulary and control of prosodic features lead to inaccurate examples and modelling.'

(Observer)

'A lot of teachers have not mastered the language, so they are not able to deliver lessons confidently and accurately.' (Urban secondary school, Head of Panel)

(Robinson, Galaczi, Docherty, King & Khalifa, 2014, Pg. 43)

With the combination of afore-mentioned contributing factors such as motivation, geography etc, the outcome of the research by the Cambridge English Language Assessment paints a vivid picture of ESL teachers lacking the most fundamental and crucial skill needed, which is their proficiency in the English language. Nevertheless, the specific reasons for the lack of proficiency were not clearly mentioned in the research notes. Nothing was stated about the reading habits of the ESL teachers who responded to the research.

Thus, the need for a research on the effects of reading on Malaysian ESL teachers' language proficiency now is even stronger than before.

The researcher believes that there is a connection between ESL teachers' reading habits and preferences, and their proficiency in the EL classroom. Therefore, this research will either confirm or debunk the researcher's beliefs.

1.3 Rationale of Study

Although the quality of ESL teachers is necessary in ensuring quality ELT, the attention given to this issue has been scant. In Malaysia, while there are numerous researches on the reading habits of EL students (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Baharuddin et al., 2015), there is a lack of studies on the reading habits of ESL teachers in Malaysia.

Studies by Daik (2006) and Tharumaraj & Nordin (2011) have raised the issue of ESL teachers' reading habits but they do not investigate the relationship or the impact of reading habits on the teachers' EL proficiency. As highlighted earlier, even though the CPT of 2012 and CBP have highlighted the poor state of EL teachers' English language proficiency, a thorough investigation as to what may have caused this problem is yet to be carried out.

This shows that there is a huge research gap on the subject of ESL teachers' reading habits and how they are linked to their English language proficiency. Therefore, this research needs to be carried out in order to fill in the existing gap.

1.4 Statement of Problem

Datuk Shamsudin Bardan, the secretary of Malaysian Employers Federation, (TheStarOnline, December 11th, 2014) stated that the atrocious standard of the EL was mainly due to unqualified teachers. According to him, this was evident as 70% of ESL teachers in Malaysian public schools received poor results in the English language CPT. He further questioned the effectiveness of the teaching process by these low-quality EL teachers and the impact that befalls their students.

This assertion came in response to the statement by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was, at that time, the Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister, who felt “something is not right” because Malaysian students are still facing tremendous difficulties with the English Language despite learning it for years before entering universities or the workforce.

The ex-minister’s statement also elicited further response from the younger generation as well. In another report by „The Star“ (11th December 2014, p. 8), a few students in the Klang Valley put the blame squarely on their teachers who, they say, have a very pathetic stance towards the teaching of English. According to them, their ESL teachers taught English using their mother tongues and used uninteresting teaching approaches which have caused students to lose interest towards learning English.

These opinions and views are corroborated by officials from the Education Ministry. In a 2012 forum, the then deputy director-general of the ministry, Datuk Dr. Khair Mohamad Yusof disclosed that only a third of the nation’s 70, 000 ESL teachers have obtained satisfactory results in the CPT which was carried out in 2012 (The Star Online, 26th September 2012).

This saddening scenario is further seconded by two very significant non-governmental organisations, the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (Melta) and Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE). Both groups have stated that something should be done in regards with the standard of ESL teaching in Malaysia (The Star, 12th December 2014, p. 33).

As always, the government scrambled to find a solution for this shocking development. The ESL teachers who did not perform well in the CPT were sent to training programmes in order for them to improve their EL proficiency. This

programme was called the Pro-ELT course and, while there had been a positive response from the teachers, its effectiveness has been called to question (Ahmad Sukri, 2017).

In the meantime, the Malaysian government initiated a few short-term strategies. One of those efforts was the joint initiative with the US government to deploy young and bright American Fulbright scholars to join the „Native Speakers“ programme, in which they were appointed as Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETA) and posted to rural or low-performing schools to help inculcate a more conducive environment to learn English (The Star Online, 8 March 2018). This programme initially began as a state-level programme in Terengganu in 2006 and was implemented throughout the whole country beginning 2012 (The Star Online, 12 November 2017).

Besides that, a plan to hire English teachers from India, due to their assumed higher proficiency in the EL and also to overcome the shortage of local ESL teachers was also proposed. Nonetheless, the abovementioned programmes have their fair share of weaknesses.

First of all, the duration of the ETA programme was too short as the ETAs were required to serve for only ten months. Although the ETAs did an awesome job of promoting the usage of the EL among the students and even teachers as well (The Star Online, 8 March 2018), 10 months is too short a time and there has been no evidence to prove that their extremely brief stint have inspired local ESL teachers to take up reading or as a matter of fact, any action to further advance their English language proficiency.

Seeing how millions have been spent on the ETA programme nationwide (Muhammad et al., 2017), it is saddening to see that the MoE has missed the point again by focusing on the students, instead of the teachers. Questions should have arisen as to why these millions of ringgit could not be used to improve our own teachers' English language proficiency and teaching skills.

Next, the plan to hire EL teachers from India has also generated an outcry from the Malaysian public as many questioned the wisdom of using taxpayers' funds to pay foreign nationals who may not be able to teach English effectively. Furthermore, there is the question of whether these teachers from India are willing to teach in rural, far-flung schools, to where they will certainly be posted (Malaysian Digest, 23rd December 2012; Chooi, The Malay Mail, 13th September 2013; Adit, The Ant Daily, 27th October 2015; Greig, New Straits Times, 2015).

Although all these suggestions are backed with good intentions, none of them involved discussions with important stakeholders of EL teaching in Malaysia, namely the ESL teachers themselves. The MoE's teachers' professional development programmes are carried out in a top-down basis and the planning as well as the implementation of the programmes seldom involves the teachers' points of view (Ahmad Sukri, 2017).

One such programme is the Pro-ELT course, carried out for ESL teachers who did not obtain a C1 or C2 in the 2012 Cambridge Placement Test, where its online forum sessions saw very unsatisfactory participation by the teachers (Ahmad Sukri, 2017).

Therefore, it is this researcher's opinion that more study should be done to understand the reasons behind the supposedly low proficiency among the teachers. While the MoE took the first step in 2012 to gauge the teachers' English language

proficiency through the CPT, no follow-up study was done to investigate the reasons behind the supposed lack of English proficiency among Malaysian ESL teachers.

This researcher believes that, first and foremost, there is a strong correlation between the reading habits of ESL teachers and their English language proficiency. It is also this researcher's view that the reading habits of Malaysian ESL teachers have to be studied in greater depths. As highlighted earlier, these teachers need assistance beyond short-termed top-down strategies to enhance their proficiency.

This issue needs to be studied from every angle to present the correct scenario. Studying this problem from a single perspective does not serve any justice to passionate ESL teachers who might have striven hard to keep their language zeal and enthusiasm alive. These teachers might probably have the desire to read their favourite books but there is a possibility of their efforts being hampered by obstacles such as teaching workload, family commitments or sheer exhaustion.

The study carried out by Tharumaraj and Nordin (2016) on the reading habits of 65 ESL teachers in the Klang Valley and their teaching of reading skills identified the teachers' workload as the main reason for their lack of reading. The issue of teachers' workload hindering their reading habits was also highlighted in a study carried out by Daik (2006).

Apart from the above-mentioned studies, there appears to be insufficient research about Malaysian ESL teachers' reading habits and factors that influence them. This researcher is of the opinion that a bigger scale in-depth study is needed to determine the teachers' reading habits and the reasons for the lack of it. It should be identified whether the reasons are external, such as workload, or internal, such as their passion and interest towards the English language.

1.5 Objectives of Research

This research aims to achieve these following objectives.

- a) To determine the types of English reading materials read by the respondents
- b) To determine the general and extensive reading rates among the respondents.
- c) To determine the problems which prevent the respondents from reading.
- d) To determine the relationship between reading habit and English language proficiency of the respondents.

1.6 Research Questions

This research also answers these following research questions.

- a) What are the types of English reading materials read by the respondents?
- b) What is the general and extensive reading rates among the respondents?
- c) What are the problems that prevent the respondents from reading?
- d) Is there a significant relationship between the reading habit and English language proficiency of the respondents?

1.7 Hypothesis

According to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005), the hypothesis of a research can be characterised as a “tentative answer to a research problem expressed in the form of a clearly stated relation between independent („cause”) and dependent („effect”) variables” (pp. 5). In other words, research hypotheses are the assumptions or predictions a researcher makes by forecasting the link between the variables available in the setting of the research.

Since the fourth research question examines the relationship between ESL teachers’ reading habits and their English language proficiency, the variables involved are identified. The independent variable is the respondents’ reading habits

while the dependent variable is their English language proficiency. Below are the null and alternative hypotheses.

H_0 - There is no significant relationship between respondents' reading habit and their language proficiency.

H_A - There is a positive correlation between respondents' reading habit and their language proficiency

1.8 Significance of Study

This research is carried out to explore the relationship or connection between the reading habits of Malaysian ESL teachers and their language proficiency. It is also hoped that this research helps in inculcating a greater reading habit among Malaysian ESL teachers and shed light on the benefits of reading for them. Furthermore, this research uncovers the problems faced by ESL teachers in order to read, so that the relevant authorities are able to propose and implement solutions to help these teachers. In addition, this research also provides points of references to future researchers when researching on issues on concerning ESL teachers' English language proficiency.

1.9 Limitations of Research

There are several limitations of this research. First of all, though one of the objectives of this research is to identify the problems faced by the respondents to read, the quantitative methods used may not probe deeply into the issues which may crop up. It is likely that the respondents may respond to the questionnaire items with non-personal experience and general views, a scenario which can be rectified with the use of qualitative methods such as face-to-face interview sessions. However, in this research setting, due to the relatively large number of respondents involved, doing so would be not easy.

Finally, there is a lack of research on Malaysian ESL teachers' reading habits compared to students'. This problem has caused the researcher spend a considerable amount of time to find academic references to support this study.

1.10 Operational Definition

The title of this research is „Relationship between ESL Teachers' Reading Habits and their English Language Proficiency. As this research investigates a correlation between the two variables mentioned in the title, the definition of keywords in the title will be based on the elements of a causal relationship. Below are the definitions of operational terms found in the title.

1.10.1 ESL Teachers

ESL is the acronym for „English as a Second Language“. According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2017), teaching ESL is defined as “the teaching of English to people who speak a different language and who live in a country where English is the main language spoken”.

Furthermore, Nordquist (2015) described ESL as “a traditional term for the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers in an English-speaking environment”. He additionally added that ESL can be defined as “specialized approaches to language teaching designed for those whose primary language is not English”.

In accordance to the website Study.com (2016), ESL teachers provide instruction to students whose mother tongue is not English, in order to read, write and speak in English. They are also at times called ESOL teachers, with ESOL being the acronym for „English for Speakers of Other Language“.

In this study, the term „ESL teacher“ encompasses English language teachers who are Malaysian citizens, were trained in Malaysian teacher training institutions and are currently employed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to teach the English Language in Malaysian public schools.

1.10.2 Relationship

According to Trochim (2006), „relationship“ in a research is defined as “the correspondence between two variables”, and can be categorised in two ways which are “the nature of the relationship” or “the pattern of it” (Web Center for Social Research Methods, 2006).

In ascertaining a relationship between variables, it is important to note the differences between a correlational relationship and a causal relationship. Trochim (2006) defines correlational relationship as one where “two things perform in a synchronized manner” while causal relationship means one of the variables studied causes the other to form a relationship.

1.10.3 Reading Habit

Krashen (1982) in his book „The Principles and Practice of Second Language Acquisition analyses „reading“ as “extensive and concerns subject matter that the student would read in his first language for pleasure. It is completely voluntary”. He goes on to extrapolate that “pleasure reading is made comprehensible by the reader’s own selection of passages and texts, and by the rejection of reading material that is too difficult”.

According to Palani (2012), in order to form a learned society, the reading habit is a crucial. He goes on to state that one of the ways an individual’s personality is moulded and the growth of „proper thinking’ *methods* and the generating of new ideas take place is by reading.

In line with this, Chettri and Rout (2013) defines reading habit as an act of reading which when practiced continually, helps in developing creativity and the ability to think critically. They further declare that it is necessary to possess a reading habit in order to ensure the “development of personalities and mental capacities of individuals”.

Within the garrisons of this research, the term „reading habit“ may be characterised as the frequency of reading, voluntarily and extensively, of any printed or virtual or both material by Malaysian ESL teachers. The acceptance of the reading practice as a habit can only be only if it is followed constantly, whether on a daily or weekly basis.

As one of the objectives of this research is to determine the rate of general and extensive reading among teachers, it is crucial to define „extensive reading“. According to the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics (2002), „extensive reading“ is defined as “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read” (p.193). It is further explained that „extensive reading“ functions as a means to “develop good reading habits” by enhancing one’s range of vocabulary and structure while promoting a love for reading.

Compared to „intensive reading“, „extensive reading“ allows readers to read as much as they can materials of their own choice and of any difficulty level (Day & Bamford, 1998 in Nakanishi, 2014). Further explanation on the criteria of extensive reading is found in Chapter 2.

1.10.4 Language Proficiency

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Washington in the United States of America (2014) defines „language proficiency“ as an individual’s skill to employ a language for multiple reasons, which incorporate skills

such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. In their case, the parameters used to measure proficiency have been developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL).

Native speakers are people who were born speaking the target language. It is the language he grows up with and his thought processes take place in the target language. A native speaker has to be beyond fluent in the target language which is his first language and the employment of the target language has to be accurate and easy (Accredited Language, 2016).

On the other hand, a fluent speaker of the target language may not be a native speaker of the target language. However, with diligent and prolonged learning, an individual will be able to achieve a high degree of fluency with total immersion in the target language and its cultural elements (Accredited Language, 2016).

The third category of proficiency is ,proficient, which is defined as “a speaker who, while very skilled in the use of a language, uses the language with greater formality and less familiarity than a native or fluent speaker” (Accredited Language, 2016).

This research seeks to define proficiency as being fluent in the target language, in this case English. Malaysian ESL teachers should be familiar with syntax and nuances of the language and possess a very wide range of vocabulary in order to ensure quality instructions in ESL classrooms.

Going by the Pedagogy Standards For English Language Teaching (PSELT) set by the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC), an institution under the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE), language proficiency is defined as fulfilling the following three criteria; knowledge of the language, competent use of the language and model for language learners.

“Knowledge of the language” covers the ability to demonstrate an “understanding of how words operate in different contexts, the sound system, literary terms, rules of the language”, recognize “forms and functions” of various circumstances and being aware of correct registers based on the contexts they are being used in (PSELT, 2009, p.23).

Next, “competent use of the language” includes using “appropriate spoken and written grammar, a wide range of vocabulary in a variety of contexts, a variety of question forms, a range of appropriate language forms to elicit student response and appropriate language for social interaction in the classroom” (PSELT, 2009, p.23).

In line with this, proficient teachers are able to explain the grammar rules, concept and meanings according to the level taught, provide comprehensible and accurate instructions, able to articulate well to groups of students, provide suitable responses to questions, answers and statements. Furthermore, they are also skilful in pronunciation of words, phrases or sentences using the precise stress and intonation, capable of reading and exploiting a wide range of texts for various objectives as well as writing according to diverse “purposes and audiences” (PSELT, 2009, p.23).

Finally, being a “model for language learners” incorporates the teachers’ aptitude to demonstrate “competent use of the language in the four language skills in various social and professional situations”, motivate “students to acquire the language by one’s own use of language and behaviour” and model “a variety of language learning strategies” (PSELT, 2009, p.24).

1.11 Summary

If we were to achieve the status of a developed nation with an education system of world-class quality, the first step would be to spot the weaknesses of the system and remedy them as soon as possible. As established above, most of Malaysian ESL

teachers have very unsatisfactory and low proficiency in the English language. This researcher has a strong belief that it all boils down to the teachers' reading habits. In line with this, this research tries to shed light on the relationship between the reading habits of Malaysian ESL teachers and their English language proficiency as well as the problems faced by them to read.

Universiti Malaya

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to conduct a case study, a vast body of theories and data are needed to further solidify and substantiate the findings which will be analysed at the later part of the study. This chapter will consist of a theoretical framework which will discuss the theories related the reading habits of ESL teachers. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of this research will also be studied as to illustrate the quality of language proficiency of Malaysian ESL teachers in ESL classrooms and how this is influenced by their reading habits.

2.1 The Definition of Reading

In their book „Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) defined reading as a process which involves “constructing meaning from written texts” (p.7) and is an intricate skill which calls for the “coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information” (p.7).

Decades of research has outlined several rules which determine the ability to read. First, reading involves the derivation of the readers“ background knowledge to assist in the comprehension of the text. Readers with strong background knowledge about the topic being read are able to incorporate the old knowledge with the new to gain a more complete understanding of the text being read (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

.Secondly, the reading process should progress smoothly without any interruption. Fluent readers read with a great speed as they are able to recognise words and their meanings automatically whereas weak readers are forced to stop

every now and then to decode words which they may find difficult. The disruptions will cause the readers, especially young children, to lose the interest and motivation to read. Furthermore, weak readers will not be able to concentrate on the meaning of the text as it will be all lost amidst the slow and disruptive process of decoding difficult words, by the time which, the previously derived meaning will be forgotten (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

This leads to the third rule of reading, which is the „strategicness“ of the reading process. To ensure that the reading objectives are achieved, a reading text must fulfil these three conditions; the difficulty of the text must be suitable with the readers“ level, the text must be of a subject familiar to the readers and lastly, the readers must be aware of the purpose of the reading session. This also includes the ability of the readers to find solutions when there is a trouble in understanding the texts (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

Subsequently, the fourth principle of reading is that the requirement of motivation when reading. Readers who love to read require no help to become interested in reading as they already have high levels of motivation and interest towards it, but poor and weak readers, especially young children, need all the help they need to sustain their interest and motivation to read (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

According to Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985), teachers play the greatest role in maintaining their students“ interest towards reading and skilled teachers will always ensure that their reading instruction is able to keep their charges interested in reading. Moreover, the burden falls heavily on teachers due to the fact that some children may hail from troubled families with weak reading history.

Next, the mastery of the reading skill is determined by the period of time it is undertaken. Just like any other skill, it entails constant practice and considerable passion to sustain interest throughout the whole life. In short, the longer and more extensive one partakes in the reading, the more fluent reader he or she becomes (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

The ability to read is also described as a skill which requires all the other sub-skills to work in tandem and simultaneously. Therefore, one would not be able to acquire the reading ability if any of the other sub-skills such as sound discrimination or recognition of word structures are not mastered (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

Finally, a reading text is subject to many interpretations depending on the readers' background and their level of understanding. At times, the circumstances around the readers may also influence their comprehension of the texts read. Multiple reading of the same text may shed diverse understanding and analysis (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985; Wagovich, Hill & Petroski, 2015).

There are occurrences where certain details which are not apparent at the first reading, coming to the readers' attention after re-reading the text which may alter the reader's perception and understanding of the text and allow greater word retention (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985; Wagovich, Hill & Petroski, 2015).

2.2 Types of Reading

It has been widely accepted that there are four types of reading; skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading.

Skimming is defined as „reading a text quickly to get a general idea of meaning“ (Teaching English, 2017). Skimming is a skill usually used when reading newspapers, e-mails or magazines where the pages are flipped through. It also

doesn't require word to word reading as the important thing is to get the general idea of the text. On the downside, the readers' general comprehension of the text is limited as not all information is read. Because skimming is practiced to obtain only the relevant information, identifying the topic sentences is a major help in order to acquire an understanding of the text (Beale, 2017).

On the contrary, scanning is another speed reading skill but it is used to locate a particular detail in the text (TeachingEnglish, 2017). Readers always scan for details when answering comprehension questions or looking for specific information which answers questions they have in mind. For example, we scan for information when we are looking for the time or date of an event on an invitation.

When scanning, it is imperative for us to understand the structure of the text to ensure successful scanning. Readers must also know the purpose of the scanning, which in turn, will help them to identify the necessary keywords. Identification of keywords greatly assists readers to locate the information needed (Beale, 2017).

While skimming and scanning are categorised as speed-reading skills, intensive and extensive reading are the opposite. Intensive reading takes place when readers read almost every word of a text for a specific purpose (British Council, 2009). It is a slow process and requires a great amount of concentration by the readers as they analyse the text, sentence by sentence, to the last detail (Yang, Dai & Gao, 2012). Engaging in intensive reading requires a purpose or aim which can be achieved by retrieving information from the text read. For example, reading-aloud activities and other direct reading instructions are some of the strategies used for intensive reading.

However, intensive reading has its fair share of detractors who claim that it kills the joy one gets from reading. Yang, Dai & Gao (2012) criticize intensive reading as very “teacher-centred, grammar-centred and vocabulary-centred” (p.113) and involves a lot of halts and pauses as the readers try to decipher the meaning of difficult words with the help of dictionaries. Clearly, intensive reading is to be done solely for academic pursuits and not for pleasure.

In contrast to intensive reading, extensive reading is defined as the skill of “reading for information” (The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011) with the readers themselves voluntarily participating. Extensive Reading is also referred to as Graded Reading, Sustained Silent Reading (The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011), Free Voluntary Reading, Uninterrupted Silent Reading, Drop Everything and Read or Positive Outcomes While Enjoying Reading (Maley, 2010).

Day and Bamford (2002) describe extensive reading as a skill which follows these ten principles.

a) The material’s level of difficulty

Reading a text which is beyond the readers’ language competence not only discourages the readers from reading but also disrupts the smooth flow of understanding that is crucial for extensive reading. It should be noted that extensive reading is independent; free from the teachers’ guidance and instructions. Therefore, the material read has to be within the readers’ linguistic competence or the purpose of the activity will be lost. Studies have specified that, for an uninterrupted reading session, readers should be familiar with 98% of the words in the texts read. If readers are confronted with more than one unfamiliar word in every ten words, the effort will prove to be futile and stuttered (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

b) The abundance of material of wide-ranging topics

In relation to this principle, readers' level of interest is very influential in determining the success of extensive reading. In extensive reading, the readers' interest will only be sustained if the material provided is of the topic of their choice. Many reading activities in language classrooms are carried out with every student being given the same text and the assumption that they all have a high degree of interest towards the text. Unlike intensive reading, extensive reading only functions when readers are supplied with plenty of material of various topics so that they are able to read for multiple purposes (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

c) The material must be of readers' choice.

In a similar vein, a connection between the second and third principle can be seen in the aspect of readers' interest. Extensive reading allows readers to discontinue reading any material which does not gain their interest. This gives the readers the choice to choose their own reading material and in that process, push them to be more independent and responsible towards their own learning (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

d) Limitless reading

When all the three above-mentioned principles are fulfilled, it brings forth the fourth one; the extensiveness of the reading practice. The word „extensive“ itself is defined as “large in amount or scale” (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2017) with extensive reading may be described as constant voluntary reading. Consequently, readers are not set with limits on how much they should read and “the amount of time spent actually reading” (Day & Bamford, 2002). While a minimum limit could be set, students should be encouraged to read as much as they can.

e) The purpose of reading

What differentiates extensive reading from intensive reading is that the former is an endeavour of self-enjoyment and voluntary search for information while the latter is targeted for academic objectives. The requirement for total understanding of the text is less, if not, emphasised in extensive reading as the purpose of reading is attaining personal satisfaction from doing something pleasurable out of one's own volition (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

f) The incentive for reading is reading itself.

Book lovers or those who read for pleasure usually say there is no greater pleasure derived while reading than reading itself. The reading process alone, if all the afore-mentioned principles are followed, will be rewarding without the need for any other external incentives. Nevertheless, younger or beginner readers need to be helped in being aware of the rewarding experience. Hence, there are a few options which language teachers could use to promote an appreciation for the readers' self-satisfaction. Language teachers may encourage their students talk or write about any of the characters, write a review of the books or perhaps re-enact a favourite scene from the book (Day & Bamford, 2002). These tasks will further enrich the readers' knowledge and interest further without appearing very rigorous and academic.

g) Extensive reading is reading fast and fluently

Once the reading material meets the six criteria stated above, readers are able to read fluently. Extensive reading promotes learning approaches which encourage independence. As such, the use of dictionaries is discouraged so that the readers will focus on the "general meaning" of the text rather than looking up for the meaning of unfamiliar words. The speed of reading is essential in extensive reading because

pausing or slowing down one's reading pace will kill the momentum built (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

h) Reading is silent and individual

In contrast to intensive reading, extensive reading makes way for personalised individual and silent reading. As it happens with intensive reading, extensive reading doesn't require the readers to read aloud or decipher the text together in a class. The resulting period of silence actually permits the readers to build their own understanding of the text and "discovers how foreign language reading fits into their lives" (Day & Bamford, 2002).

i) Teachers as guides and facilitator

Although extensive reading stresses heavily on promoting readers' independence, there is still the need for teachers to be around as a guide and to facilitate the readers' transition throughout the reading process. In some cases, students who are trained to read intensively academic and linguistically difficult material feel unsure of what to do when given the independence to read anything interesting and within their linguistic capability. Thus, it falls upon their teachers to initiate an extensive reading session by explaining its benefits and helping students to choose enjoyable reading material which can be understood easily. Here, teachers play the multiple roles of facilitator, consultant, motivator and guide (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

j) Teachers as role models

The final principle of extensive reading revolves around the influence teachers have on their charges' reading habits. It goes without saying that, in order to promote interest towards reading among their students, the teachers themselves would have to project a positive image. Teachers themselves should possess tremendous interest

and passion by reading vociferously in the quest to promote extensive reading among their students. Reading teachers are also encouraged to set up book discussions in class in which teachers and students discuss or analyse the books read by the students. In conclusion, it is a must for language teachers to be extensive readers as well (Day & Bamford, 2002; The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

To conclude, the above-mentioned principles are useful to be referred to by language teachers when determining the ways extensive reading should be carried out in their classrooms.

2.3 Theoretical Framework - Krashen's Input Hypothesis

The link between the process of language acquisition and reading is closely related to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (IH). The Input Hypothesis is an attempt to explain the progression of learning stages in second language acquisition. To elaborate, language learners advance from present competence to the next level of language acquisition by receiving input which consists of more complex language structure.

Krashen (2009) utilises the variable i to indicate the current level of learners' competence to elucidate that in order for language learners to move to the $i + 1$ level, the learners have to be presented with input which comprises the structure which is beyond their level of existing competence.

To do that, learners have to be repeatedly exposed to "context, ...knowledge of the world,...extra-linguistic information"(Krashen, 2009, p.21), which, in other words, suggests that the IH places importance on the exposure of the learners to language structure of a higher level than the level they are at now.

One of the most important pre-requisite of IH is that language learners acquire language by understanding the message in the text rather than its form (Krashen, 1989). IH further predicts that comprehensible input as voluntary reading

has a greater effect on language development compared to formal learning-based set of instructions. Krashen (1989) also emphasises on the role of comprehensible input in the stimulation of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

In extrapolating the IH, Krashen (1989) argues that reading is a form of comprehensible input, through which the mastery of spelling and vocabulary is achieved. Voluntary reading activates the LAD and this leads to the subconscious acquisition of language or „incidental learning“. Krashen (1989) confirms this prediction by quoting Chomsky (1972), Saragi, Nation and Meister (1978) and Hafiz, Fateh and Tudor (1989) whose observations have proven the effectiveness of voluntary reading in language development.

In contrast to IH, other language learning hypotheses such as the Skill-Building Hypothesis (SBH) and the Output Hypothesis (OH) are very dependent on the conscious usage of other mental faculties to help process the input. As a result, language learners may exhibit very limited knowledge of the language and not a deep understanding of the real language. For example, SBH methods such as vocabulary drilling allow learners to know the meaning of a word but it will not provide the learners with understanding on how the word functions in different contexts.

The OH, on the other hand, predicts that language learning only takes place when the language is produced. Two similarities OH has with SBH are that, firstly, both of them involve the learning of language rules and structure and secondly, language learning takes place in a conscious mind. Therefore, it is predicted that skill-building and feedback-based output may result in the learning of certain amount of language competence. However, as language acquisition does not take place here, the competency is fairly limited.

Krashen (1989) discusses the findings made by several researchers (Cohen, 1968; Saragi, Nation and Meister, 1978; Nagy, Herman and Anderson, 1988) on in-school reading programmes and concludes that language learners perform better in vocabulary acquisition when they spend longer time reading or being read to. Krashen also agrees with Sternberg (1987) that reading is a more interesting and time-efficient method compared to deductive vocabulary instructions.

Chio (2009) mentions a few researches which related Krashen's Input Hypothesis with the reading habit and language acquisition. One of them is by Paribakht & Wesche (1999, as stated by Chio, 2009) who supported the use of reading and after-reading tasks in order to encourage „higher-level input processing“ and the process of acquiring vocabulary with the condition that the material provided is able to attract the learners' attention and of a suitable level of difficulty.

Also supporting this connection is Govindasamy (2017) who states that „comprehensible input“ needed in language learning can be acquired through the reading of literary texts. Other factors which should not be dismissed are the level of learners' motivation and their background knowledge in regards to the task performed (Chio, 2009).

2.4 Reading for Second-language Acquisition

Numerous studies have supported the relationship between voluntary reading and second- and foreign-language acquisition (Krashen, 1989; Cho and Krashen, 2019; Lee, 2019). Voluntary reading functions as a „bridge“ between the language used in academic and non-academic situations by providing readers with the knowledge and linguistic competence to comprehend the more linguistically-advanced academic texts (Cho and Krashen, 2019).

In a study by Cho and Krashen (2019), 386 Korean English Language teachers were surveyed to study the link between self-reported pleasure reading and self-reported language competence in second-language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. The findings of this study exhibit moderate yet “consistently positive” correlations between “self-reported amount of reading for fun and self-reported competence in all four language skills” (Cho and Krashen, 2019, p.233).

These findings confirmed the “Comprehension Hypothesis”, in that acquisition of a language occurs easily when reading involves materials of the readers’ own selection and when they gain an understanding of what they read (Krashen, 1989)

An interesting study by Lee (2019) presents an anecdotal evidence of second-language acquisition for an adult through voluntary or leisure reading. The subject of this study was a Taiwanese professor who admitted to having a lack of confidence when speaking in English. While she was able to read and write academic papers in English, she had trouble with oral presentations, especially when answering questions from her audience. Furthermore, her weak grammar and wrong choices of words had caused her embarrassment in front of the audience (Lee, 2019).

However, being a highly-motivated and self-driven individual, the subject of this study took the initiative to improve her English Language proficiency by reading. Initially, the subject began by reading classic literature texts of English but due to their very advanced vocabulary and sentence structure, she could not understand the message and failed to build her interest towards the text (Lee, 2019).

After a few hiccups, the subject began reading children's story books such as „The Magic Tree“ series, „Peter Pan“ and „Secret Garden“ before progressing to abridged versions of classic literature such as „A Christmas Carol“ and „Jane Eyre“. In order to gain an interest in and understanding of the story, she found audio podcasts on the internet which helped provide her with the visual input and subtitles needed to figure out the plot (Lee, 2019).

Several months later, the researcher found that the subject no longer had problems with her self-confidence when speaking in English. A month after she started reading, the subject was invited to speak at an international conference. To her delight, she found herself being able to give a speech in English with full confidence. The subject credits this to her habit of reading and listening to stories, which now she does for pleasure (Lee, 2019).

These findings of the studies above strongly support the theory that, in order to acquire a language a strong reading habit is a must and may even render formal instruction unnecessary as a tool of language learning (Krashen, 1989).

2.5 Reading for Second Language Acquisition in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the focus of research on the relationship between second-language reading and second-language acquisition is mainly on school or university students. As far as ESL teachers are concerned, the focus is largely confined to their reading habits and materials read (Daik, 2006; Tharumaraj and Noordin, 2011).

Nevertheless, student-centred correlational studies have consistently confirmed that there is a significant relationship between reading habits and language acquisition.

Lee and Wong (2017) investigate the relationship between students' reading habits, vocabulary and writing performance. In this study, 33 first-year university students were surveyed on their reading habits and tested on vocabulary as well as writing.

One of their findings illustrates a significant correlation between positive reading habits and the size of their respondents' vocabulary, which, in turn, is positively linked to their writing performance. This finding confirms the Input Hypothesis which expounds the need for a strong reading interest and practice to encourage language acquisition.

A study by Engku Ibrahim, Isarji Sarudin and Ainon Muhamad (2016) aimed at exploring the relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension of ESL learners; in this case, 129 pre-university students in a Malaysian public university. The participants of this study were tested on their reading comprehension skills and vocabulary levels.

It was found that there is a "positive and upper moderate" correlation between these two scores, and that extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition are not mutually exclusive. In order to gain a comprehension of the text read, learners need to possess a basic range of vocabulary yet extensive reading is proven to expand readers' vocabulary range and boost reading skills (Engku Ibrahim, Isarji Sarudin and Ainon Muhamad , 2016).

Next, Siti Normala Muhamad, Mohd.Nazri Latiff Azmi and Isyaku Hassan (2020) carried out a correlational study to probe the reading interest and reading comprehension skills of 351 pre-university students from certain secondary schools in Terengganu, Malaysia. The respondents were given a questionnaire to gauge their reading habits and preferences. After that, they were subjected to a pre-test on

reading comprehension, which was then followed by a reading treatment based on the KWL reading method. The final stage of the data collection saw the respondents sitting for the post-test, which was used to analyse the relationship between their reading interests and reading performance.

The findings of this study indicated that the students' most preferred reading material is books, which is then followed by newspapers, magazines and online reading materials. The researchers put forth an assumption that most of the participants read academic books instead of fiction. It was found that there is a significant relationship between the reading interests of the study's respondents and their reading performance.

The above-mentioned studies highlight the existence of significant link between second-language reading and second-language acquisition. However, the focus of research has always been on the quality of language learners and not much on language teachers. As disseminators of the target language, it is imperative for language teachers to constantly engage themselves in the process of life-long language acquisition.

2.6 Reading to Enhance Teachers' Language Proficiency

The importance of the reading habit, in general, is a much-researched subject, yet studies related to the need for non-native English language teachers to read are scarcely found.

Research conducted on native EL teachers in countries where English is spoken as the first and official language focuses on the importance of reading for their professional development and to influence their students to read (Cogan & Anderson, 1977; Cramer & Blachowicz, 1980; Applegate & Applegate, 2004), not

for the enhancement of the teachers' language competence. This might be due to the fact that language competence among English language teachers is a non-issue.

It is undeniable that the first and foremost criterion of a good language teacher is his or her indisputable language competence (Pu & Pawan, 2014; Govindasamy, 2017; Richards, 2017). Language competence is essential in language classrooms which have transitioned from the traditional, where the knowledge imparted by the teachers were seldom questioned by their learners, to the modern language classrooms in which the language learners do not only receive but also scrutinise, analyse and even criticise the knowledge conveyed (Pu & Pawan, 2014).

Not only proficiency in the target language is one of the main requirements for second- or foreign-language teachers but the language proficiency and teaching efficacy are intertwined which means a language teacher's job scope and settings necessitate the utilisation of several forms of communicative skills (Freeman, Katz, Gomez & Burns, 2015; Choi and Lee, 2016; Tsang, 2017). This has become even more significant with the proliferation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) where the teacher's full usage of the target language is a must at all times.

With the introduction of the Communicative Language Teaching, language classrooms have become more vocal with criticism and dissent becoming crucial parts of the learning process due to the fact that learners now are in charge of their own learning (Ma & Huang, 1992, as stated in Chang, 2011). This, in turn, gives the learners more power and autonomy to pave their learning paths. With more power to themselves, learners tend to be more outspoken and may likely challenge their teachers' opinions and disciplinary knowledge (Pu & Pawan, 2014).

In local Malaysian context, the current generation of students have parents who are not only well-educated but also who are not hesitant to point out the mistakes made by their children's teachers. There are cases where the teachers were publicly reprimanded for their lack of language competence (The Star Online, 12th September 2013). There is no doubt whatsoever that the said teachers would lose their self-confidence to teach and, when the matter becomes a public knowledge, they would have to endure more embarrassment and feel de-motivated to teach at all (Today Online, 26th November 2015).

When the language teachers lack self-confidence, there is a tendency for them to revert to their native language when providing classroom instructions (Richards, 2017). This scenario goes on to show that the lack of proficiency and content knowledge of English language teachers affects the overall quality of teaching (Nel & Muller, 2010; Richards, 2017). As a consequence, the whole point of teaching the target language such as the English language will be rendered useless (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008).

Furthermore, teachers who possess inadequate knowledge of the content or subject have the tendency to leave out the teaching of parts of the subject, in which they are weak (Tsui, 2012). Research has shown that English language teachers who did not have enough knowledge of the grammatical rules of the English language had the tendency to evade the teaching of English grammar. These teachers plough through their grammar lessons without providing their students the time and space to present their doubts and without maintaining eye contact with their students throughout the lesson for the fear of being questioned (Tsui, 2012).

At a period of time, it was accepted for teachers to use the Grammar-translation Approach or the Direct-translation Method which allows the teachers to revert to the learners' native language in order to explain the target language's grammatical rules (Cakir & Kafa, 2013). It resulted in the learners' possessing the extensive knowledge of the target language grammatical rules but not the high proficiency which comes with learning the target language (Nunan & Lamb, 1996).

However, around the end of the nineteenth century, this pedagogical method was criticised and alternative methods, such as the Natural Approach, which encourage the learners to apply the target language in the classroom. The teachers are discouraged from using the learners' native language to ensure comprehension of what is being taught. Instead, teachers are instructed to create an environment where the learners are compelled to use the target language naturally (Nunan & Lamb, 1996).

The issue here is, while there are researches conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques employed by language teachers in Malaysian ESL classrooms (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013; Muthusamy & Mohd. Salleh, 2017), there is a scarcity of inquiry into the teachers' level of proficiency in the target language or, in other words, their content knowledge of the subject they teach. Before they learn and master the „how“, they should learn and master the „what“ as only with the full knowledge of the subject can they explore the techniques and strategies to spread the knowledge. It is even more important that teachers are seen as specialists of the subjects which they teach.

Thus, in the milieu of this research, it is imperative for an English language teacher to master the English language and be accepted as specialists of the language. They should not only be highly effective in their pedagogical skills, which means

having the ability and initiative to take the effort to trigger the interest toward learning among their students, but they ought to, first and foremost, possess the content knowledge which will make them the point of reference should their students put forth questions in regards to the subject they teach.

One of the characteristics displayed by good language teachers is their thirst for knowledge of the language they teach and their own linguistic development. Knowing that a language is an evolving and expanding system of knowledge, they are more inclined to keep abreast with the latest development in the language. They should know the history of the language and the origins of the words spoken in that language lest their students seek the information from them.

According to the website 5MinutesEnglish.com (2013), the English language is spoken widely in around fifty countries by 375 million people. As such, there are numerous dialects, pidgins, creoles and even different spelling of words with some gaining more prominence than the original ones. Birner (2012), on the website of the Linguistic Society of America, claims that the English language has gone through many process of evolution and will continue to do so in future.

Birner (2012) further states that there are many reasons for this phenomenon with one of them being the change in the language speakers' needs. It should be borne in our minds that the agents of change in any language's evolution are the younger generation of speakers. With the birth of new technology, lifestyle and culture, teenagers and young adults are inclined to coin new words and phrases to describe the growing needs of their lives.

Additionally, with the world becoming more globalised, the English language has started adopting words of other languages or even carving new words by combining two or more languages. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect English

language teachers to be familiar with the origins and evolution of the language they teach. They have to be alert on the latest development in the language and this is particularly important due to the fact that new words are created from time to time.

With this in mind, it is the researcher's opinion that since English language teachers in Malaysia are required to communicate fully in English with their learners, it is crucial for them to be highly proficient and comfortable with the language. There is evidence that a large section of the English language teachers' population is grappling to attain the required proficiency (The Cambridge Malaysia Baseline Project, 2014). The lack of language competence in English not only will cause embarrassment as described above but also will hinder teachers' effectiveness in presenting their lessons.

This goes to highlight that a language teacher's language competence plays a big role in influencing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Thus, in order to guarantee the quality of English language teaching in Malaysian public schools, it is high time for Malaysian English teachers to take the steps in order to strengthen their language proficiency.

In Malaysia where English is mostly spoken as second or third or none at all, it can be concluded that exposure to the English language among sub-urban and rural Malaysian is very minimal if not non-existent (Richards, 2017; AL Noori, AL Shamary & Yuen, 2015). Only a small percentage of Malaysians are immersed in the language, either by reading, speaking it on a daily basis or being entertained by English movies and songs.

Thus, there is a wide gap between speakers of the English language and those who are not. It is safe to say that those who speak the language are predominantly found in urban areas while those who don't are dominant in the rural areas. Hence,

the scenario has become a social problem, which is the disparity between urban and rural community (Malaysian Digest, 2nd September 2014).

It is likely that many ESL teachers in Malaysia hail from non-English speaking background (Mohamed Ismail bin Abdul Kader, Begi & Vaseghi, 2013). With scant exposure to the environment and literature of EL, the only constant contact they would have had with the language would be during the teacher training programmes, which is definitely insufficient for them to achieve the desired fluency. Even though the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is adopted in the syllabus of the higher learning institution (Ramiza & Albion, 2013), it is highly improbable that the teacher trainees will gain a mastery of English without acquiring a strong reading habit.

The most powerful influence the reading habit has on language teachers is in regards to their language proficiency. Generally, extensive reading paves the way for improved language proficiency and this habit needs to be practised consistently to ensure the readers' thoughts are processed in English, thus gaining the familiarity with the language (Maley, 2010).

There are various components of a language which a language teacher must master. Figure 2.1 illustrates them and how they are applied in the field of modern language. We shall also see how mastery of these components is powered by a sound reading habit.

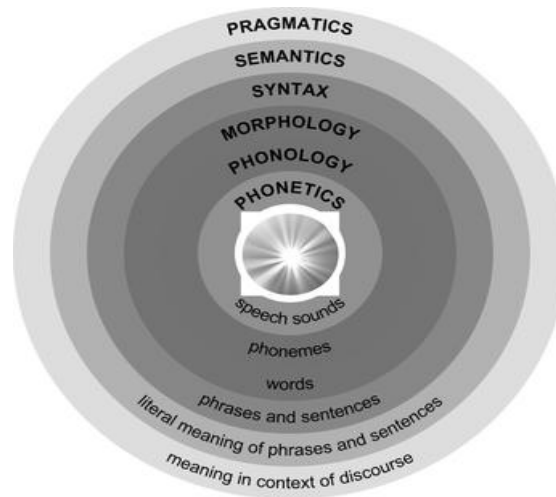


Figure 2.1 Components of Language

(Boundless.com, 2016)

2.6.1 Reading and Phonetics

According to the definition set by the British Association of Academic Phoneticians (BAAP) (2016), the field of phonetics is the “systematic study of speech and the sounds of language” and also a method used to teach learners to learn how a particular sound is produced with the mouth (British Council, 2000). Meanwhile, Nordquist (2017) explains that phonetics is a linguistic branch which studies the “sounds of speech and their production, combination, description and representation by written symbols”.

Phonetics, furthermore, is divided into three elements which are:

- a) Articulatory Phonetics – explains the production of vowels and consonants or “articulated” in a particular part of the speech organ.
- b) Acoustic Phonetics – explains the transmission process of speech sounds from the speaker’s speech organ to the ear of the listener
- c) Auditory Phonetics – explains the way sound waves in speech sounds are received and decoded by the listener’s brain and converted again into speech sounds as spoken by the speaker.

(<http://www.studyenglishtoday.net/english-phonetics.html>, 2015)

While the importance of mastering phonetics to read has been widely proven and accepted, the reversal of the roles is quite under-researched. No doubt phonetic awareness and the exposure to phonemes are crucial to ensure the mastery of the reading skill, there is a great likelihood that a strong reading habit also functions as a training ground to further enhance phonetic awareness (Krashen, 2010).

Numerous studies and articles have linked phonetics awareness to pronunciation skills (Kissling, 2013). Low pronunciation accuracy even determines a speaker's confidence to speak the target language and at times, hinder his or her academic or vocational progress.

Pronunciation is one of the most crucial aspects in language acquisition and its importance is strongly highlighted by the fact that phonics is used to initiate reading lessons among young children in pre-schools. Phonics is a teaching method which is utilised to practice the "application of speech sounds to written language in order to decode and comprehend (sic) it" (Reading Horizons, 2017) and is best described as a system or application which fragmentises written language into parts which will be easier to be decoded especially by young learners.

According to the United Kingdom's Department of Education (2013), phonics has been proven to be the best method to teach young learners to read and those who are taught through that method have shown a higher degree of accuracy and fluency in reading.

This goes to show that the roles of reading and phonetics are not only heavily dependent on each other but also seem to overlap each other in the process of gaining pronunciation accuracy. It is quite difficult to state which supersedes which but it is

clear that a strong and consistent reading habit does serve as a training ground for a reader to achieve a higher level of pronunciation accuracy (Krashen, 2010).

Thus, reading is considered one of the best methods to polish one's pronunciation accuracy. Though the Audio-Lingualism method is the thing of the past, it is imperative for English language teachers, especially those who are teaching in an EFL setting, to ensure that they have attained the desired pronunciation accuracy.

Regardless of the teaching method employed by these teachers, they still function as an imparter of the linguistic knowledge to their learners and learners, in particular those who are learning English as a foreign language, would model their speech after their teachers (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996; Jayapalan & Pillai, 2011).

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research in regards to how Malaysian ESL learners learn pronunciation. While the oft-suggested learning method for learning pronunciation are drilling, reading aloud and using a speech model, it has to be considered that English is not spoken widely by many Malaysians with certain sections of the society not being able to converse in English at all. This may lead to the assumption that ESL learners in Malaysia learn pronunciation by following the speech modelled by their teachers and the different forms of media, such as movies and songs to which they are exposed. It is liable that these channels of learning prove inadequate due to several reasons.

Firstly, even if an ESL learner's teacher conducts an English lesson in the target language without any interference from the learner's native language, the vocabulary range of the classroom talk may not be wide enough. The magnitude of this scenario is even stronger in classes for weak learners where the teachers may

feel reluctant to employ a wider range of expressions and lexicon lest that would result in digression of the lesson and long-winded explanation about the pronunciation.

Therefore, teachers, in order to save time and energy, may stick to low-level terminology with which their students are familiar, which will result in the students ending up not being exposed to new words and the ways to pronounce them (Jayapalan & Pillai, 2011). If this persists throughout the students' schooling and undergraduate years, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the students' pronunciation skills and accuracy of higher-level words will be wanting.

Another problem here is the lack of focus Malaysian ESL teachers have on the necessity of pronunciation instructions. Studies such as the one by Jayapalan & Pillai (2011) and Shak, Chang & Stephen (2016) have illustrated how ESL teachers lack a strong reason to teach pronunciation and its relevance in the Malaysian setting. Teachers are torn between the requirement to teach pronunciation according to the native speaker standard and the Malaysian standard, the latter resulting in the teachers concluding that the need for the native-speaker-like pronunciation is non-existent.

While many ESL teachers agree that „reading aloud“ is one of the frequently used methods to teach pronunciation (Jayapalan & Pillai, 2011), the regularity of the method in an ESL is not high enough to result in improvisation in the learners' pronunciation accuracy. Another step has to be taken to complement this and this is where a sustained habit of independent reading and a constant reference to the dictionary help in mastering pronunciation.

The next possible model of speech for Malaysian ESL learners would be the media. There are no doubts that learners who are exposed to consuming media of English content, such as movies and songs, learn the pronunciation as well but this raises the question of how accurate the pronunciations are.

This leaves us to reflect on the initiatives taken by Malaysian ESL teachers to expand their knowledge of how words are pronounced. While certain studies reported that ESL teachers themselves thought they ought to improve their knowledge on pronunciation accuracy and one of the ways to do that is to practice reading aloud (Jayapalan & Pillai, 2011), it is not proven that these teachers have taken the initiative to develop their pronunciation accuracy.

As stated earlier, reading, whether extensive or intensive, serves as a training ground to enhance pronunciation accuracy thanks to the heavy exposure of the speech sounds a reader obtains from a variety of texts read. Studies such as the one carried out by Gilakjani & Mohammad Reza Ahmadi (2011) stated that a research conducted by Derwng & Rossiter (2003) demonstrated how being engaged with reading tasks has assisted 30 language learners in improving their pronunciation accuracy.

Now that it is beyond doubt that a strong reading habit is needed in language teachers in order for them to acquire the desired pronunciation accuracy, it has become a matter of urgency for Malaysian ESL teachers to take all the steps to acquire a reading habit. While trainee-teachers do undergo courses on pronunciation and linguistics, they are inadequate and not as extensive as it should be (Ramesh Nair, Rajasegaran Krishnasamy & Geraldine de Mello, 2006). For that reason, it has become crucial for Malaysian ESL teachers to take matters in their own hands and polish their pronunciation accuracy through reading.

2.6.2 Reading and Phonology

Phonology is defined as “the study of how sounds are organised and used in natural languages” (Lingualinks, 2004).

Phonology is often confused with phonetics; the former is the study of the “production of all human speech sounds, regardless of language” and the latter being the analysis of the “sound patterns of a particular language” (Lingualinks, 2004). While phonetics functions as the base for phonology, phonology works as the stepping stone for further analysis of other linguistic components such as morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

For a language learner, phonological awareness is crucial in order to master reading. According to the website K12Reading.com (2016), phonological awareness is explained as the “ability to recognise that words are made up of a variety of sound units”. It is at this point a reader begins to identify the phonemes which form a word and understand how a word is formed through the combination of syllables.

A subset of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness, which is defined as the “ability to distinguish and manipulate phonemes, the smallest units of speech sounds that can carry a meaning (Bates, 2017). Though there are only 26 letters in the English alphabet, there are 44 speech sounds, a fact that which translates to the belief that the speech sounds of the English language is not straightforward as other languages are.

The teaching of phonics too is grounded on phonological awareness by which early readers utilise to comprehend how sounds and words are linked and initiate the reading process (K12Reading.com, 2016).

Like the acquisition of phonetics awareness or pronunciation accuracy, a strong reading habit is strongly believed to be the training ground for the increase in phonological awareness. Neese (2017) states that while phonemic awareness is the basis for literacy and linguistic knowledge, the ability to read and the higher level of phonemic awareness can be enhanced through a strong reading habit. As clearly seen, phonemic awareness is not only a factor for reading ability but it is also an effect of a reading habit.

As it is with the acquisition of phonetic awareness, there has been a scarcity of research which study the influence of a reading habit on phonological awareness even if it is undeniable that phonological awareness is crucial for the mastery of reading skill.

Even if phonemic awareness is largely an auditory skill and requires no print material, disregarding reading task as a tool to enhance phonemic awareness deprives language learners from becoming familiar with more sophisticated words which are not generally used in everyday conversation. Correspondingly, strong dependence on classroom interaction among young language learners with their teachers and peers is ill-advised due to inadequacy of time and possible distortion of speech sounds by their peers.

According to Adams, Foorman, Lundberg and Beeler (2017), a „direct instructional support“ is a must to ensure widespread phonemic awareness. In other words, the process of recognition of words and the syllables which form them is only wholly effective through the practice of reading.

Acquiring phonemic awareness through „direct instructional support“ is not the same as doing so through other methods such as listening or speaking as the latter do not allow a learner the time to think about how the words are formed as listeners

focus on the „meaning and force of the utterance“ of the spoken words (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg and Beeler, 2017). It is only through proper phonemic instruction that a learner is given the allowance to break the words apart to analyse them.

As „direct instructional support“ consists of teacher-directed activities such as drills and word games, these activities are plainly teacher-centred and require the learners to depend on the teachers for instruction (Rosenshine, 2012). Moreover, such activities may be well suited for the initial teaching of reading but as soon as the learners have been instilled with phonemic awareness, other tasks which allow the learner to practice their phonemic knowledge and learn independently should be carried out. One of the suitable activities here is reading.

As stated earlier, reading independently permits language learners to put the instruction and training they have received to work by analysing the sounds and connecting them to the printed letters. In one single process, language learners put to practice their background knowledge and at the same time, gain more knowledge from their independent study of words (Maley, 2010).

With most of the studies concentrating on the phonological and phonemic awareness among learners, there ought to be more research focusing on the same aspect among language teachers. The effectiveness of phonological instruction relies heavily on the efficiency of the ESL teachers (Lewis, 2008) who may be the only source of phonological instruction for young ESL learners in Malaysia, especially those who hail from the rural areas and consider English as a foreign language.

Nevertheless, a number of researches have exposed low phonology awareness and phonemic knowledge among English language teachers of, not only, Malaysia but the United States of America as well. Lewis (2008) describes a survey done by

Moats (1994) which depressingly portrays language teachers' inadequate awareness of the language structure and the confusion they had with regards to the distinct components of linguistics such as phonetics and phonology. Apparently, this problem is not limited to a particular country but quite common place.

Thus, it is crucial for Malaysian ESL teachers, in particular those who are teaching in non-urban areas, to be empowered with strong phonological awareness and knowledge on phonological instruction. Since the Malaysian Ministry of Education stresses on the use of phonics to teach reading, there should not be any excuse for ESL teachers to claim ignorance about phonology (Elya Dayana & Parilah, 2015).

However, as Elya Dayana and Parilah (2015) discovered, Malaysian ESL teachers are not equipped with the skills to teach phonology and worse, a number of them do not have an inkling about phonology or phonemic awareness. As reported, certain teachers were befuddled with the concepts of "speech sounds" and "spelling" with many of them pairing words which end with the same letters instead of sounds.

Their study has shown that ESL teachers in Malaysia, in general, are not well-versed in phonology. However, they also point out that the lack of training given to these teachers in teacher-training institutes is to be held responsible. There may have been linguistic courses provided for teacher-trainees but they are insufficient resulting in teachers entering the workforce with pitiful knowledge on phonological awareness (Elya Dayana and Parilah, 2015).

In ESL classrooms of Malaysia, phonemic awareness is inadequately emphasised with many teachers unaware of the importance of phonemic awareness for reading efficacy. Research conducted to gauge phonological awareness among ESL teachers in Malaysia has exposed the issue of linguistically incompetent

teachers who did not obtain sufficient training in phonology in teacher training institutes (Elya Dayana and Parilah, 2015).. However, the teachers themselves could not be faulted as the system is such that teachers of other majors such as Science and History are forced to teach the English language.

Naturally, if this is the scenario, it would be unwise for the teachers and teacher-trainees to depend on the training provided by their training institutes. Nor is it wise to wait for an opportunity to enrol in any professional development courses. The time has come for pre- and in-service teachers to take matters into their hands and find other ways to upgrade their knowledge on phonology. With only a few methods available to them, ESL teachers would have to choose one which will ensure that they are able to augment their phonological knowledge by themselves.

One possible effective way would be keeping themselves up to date with the latest research and studies in connection with phonological awareness and phonemic knowledge. This can be done by habitual reading of academic journals and articles which will empower teachers with phonological awareness

2.6.3 Reading and Morphology

In the field of linguistics, morphology is defined as the “mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure and how they are formed” (pg. 1 – 2, Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011).

One of the chief methods employed to analyse the process of word formation is through the study of morphemes, which are the “smallest linguistic pieces with a grammatical function” (Pg.2, Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). In other words, a morpheme is divided into two types; a „free“ morpheme which is a stand-alone or non-independent word such as „eat“, „walk“ and „go“ whereas a „bound“ morpheme is

a morpheme which must be combined with another morpheme to form a meaningful word and these include „bases“ and „affixes“ (TESOL-direct, 2015).

As exhibited in the diagram above, morphology, in layman terms, is the study of words and the acquisition process of vocabulary. According to Aronoff and Fudeman (2011), there are numerous definitions of „word“, with each being disputed as inadequate. From a linguistic perspective, a „word“ can be defined syntactically, phonologically, grammatically and lexically, with the existence of multiple rules to test its „wordhood“ (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011, page 38). However, for a simple description, we shall accept the meaning given by the Cambridge English Dictionary (2017) which defines „word“ as „a single unit of language that has meaning and can be spoken or written“.

The ability to understand a word’s „inner structure“ (Jornlin, 2015) is also recognised as morphological awareness. Further clarification by Kuo and Anderson (2006, as stated in Jornlin, 2015) who describe the term as “knowledge about the pairing of sound and meaning in a language and the word formation rules that guide the possible combination of morphemes” (page 60). In short, a reader with high level of morphological awareness will have the knowledge and ability to distinguish base words from other derivatives, affixes, inflections and other morphemes. Subsequently, they will have a wider range of vocabulary due to their ability to deduce the meaning of words and how they can be branched out through arrangement of morphemes.

The importance of morphological awareness for vocabulary acquisition is indisputable as it allows language learners to dismantle words with the purpose of understanding and engaging in wordplay and word formation (Oz, 2014). This exposes them to the writing system of the target language as learners with strong

morphological awareness are able to comprehend the functions of morphemes in shaping words. With that gained traction, language learners, in one way or the other, build the base for grammar accuracy and vocabulary expansion through the identification of inflectional and derivational morphemes respectively which is, then, linked to improved writing skills.

Though various articles and researches recommend the teaching of morphological awareness through structured direct instructional support such as explicit lessons on word formation and morphemes (Oz, 2014; Jornlin, 2015), morphological awareness can also be enhanced by acquiring a strong reading habit (Loh, 2009). As language learners increase the volume of reading texts, they are exposed to derivatives and other morphemes which are more recurrent in a written text than in a speech which may not use a “formal and academic” language (Chafe & Danielewicz, 1987, as stated in Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002, pg.149).

Again, countless studies recommend the employment of direct instructional support to instil morphological awareness (Tabatabaei & Yakhabi, 2011; Roskos, Burnstein & Sullivan, 2013) but very few have shown the link between a strong practice of reading and the enhancement of morphological awareness. However, quite a number of researches have asserted the effect of reading on vocabulary acquisition (Loh, 2009).

Butler, Urrutia, Buenger, Gonzalez, Hunt and Eisenhart (2010) identify a few researches such as the one by Biemiller and Boote (2006) which discovered that re-reading of a storybook by language learners benefitted them with higher level of word retention and greater usage of those words compared to children who have read the storybook once.

This premise is supported by Wagovich, Hill and Petroski (2015) who postulate that repeated „incidental reading“ of the same texts has helped readers to recall easily previously unfamiliar words compared to those who read different texts without any repetition. Though Biemiller and Boote (2006, as stated in Butler, Urrutia, Buenger, Gonzalez, Hunt and Eisenhart, 2010) further found out that direct instruction support through explicit word explanation by the teacher when the storybook is read produce better result in vocabulary acquisition, it cannot be denied that reading and constant reading of a text is crucial for the development of vocabulary.

This has clearly proven that not only reading is affected by morphological awareness and vocabulary expansion but this process can work in reverse too. It may seem like the „chicken or egg“ scenario, but it is indisputable that multiple reading sessions using the same text help language learners to remember words better, which in turn helps them proceed with uninterrupted reading process (Loh, 2009; Maley, 2010).

A study by Krashen in 1989 called the „The Clockwork Orange“ concluded that one’s vocabulary acquisition and expansion is encouraged through extensive reading (Harris, 2009). It exemplifies how reading a wide range of texts enhances readers’ „sight vocabulary“ and accelerates their „schemata acquisition“ and that those with complete „sight vocabulary“ have the instant recognition of words which will allow them to focus on the syntactic meaning of words (Harris, 2009, pp.113). This shows that readers who have strong morphological awareness and high vocabulary acquisition are able to graduate to the next level of reading, which is gaining syntactical knowledge.

As can be seen, while various researches and studies have been carried out to ascertain language learners' morphological awareness and vocabulary development, not many have shed the spotlight on the language teachers' morphological awareness. As teachers, their knowledge on the different types of morphemes used in word formation must be second to none. The case in point would be the level of morphological awareness among Malaysian ESL teachers (James & Garrett, 2013).

The knowledge of morphological rules and its general awareness can make or break language teachers' word usage in language classroom. In an ESL classroom, it is very important for the teachers to use both simple and advanced vocabulary correctly as ESL learners have very minimal opportunity to gain exposure to the said vocabulary outside of their classrooms. This causes them to rely on their language teachers and common language environment of their lesson (Normazidah Che Musa et al., 2012).

ESL learners often find the rules of affixes as tricky and complicated. The usage of affixes, the addition of inflections such as „s“ and so forth has always been a matter of confusion among ESL learners. A study by Nor Hashimah Jalaludin et al. (2008, as stated in Normazidah Che Musa et al., 2012) shows Malaysian ESL learners, whose first language is Malay, are extremely weak in understanding grammatical rules, especially the ones which are related to morphology and syntax. The study also corroborates with the widely-known fact that many of Malaysian ESL learners struggle with affixes and plural inflections because these rules do not exist in their native language. Add on the psychological and social reasons which do not encourage a reading habit and usage of the English language and the sole avenue left for these learners, to learn these variables, is through their ESL teachers.

Thus, teaching English in Malaysia, especially in the rural area, comes with great responsibility and linguistic expertise. This means ESL teachers must not only be equipped with the needed linguistic knowledge but also how to disseminate it as well (James & Garrett, 2013, Aro & Bjorn, 2015).

2.6.4 Reading and Syntax

Syntax is the fourth linguistic component of a language and is defined as the “study of the structure of sentences, the principles, both universal and language specific, that govern how words are assembled to yield grammatical sentences” (Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania, 2017).

Van Valin (2001, p.1) describes „syntax“ as the “branch of grammar dealing with the ways in which words, with or without appropriate inflections, are arranged to show connections of meaning within the sentence” and involves the knowledge of sentence construction and arrangement of word order to create meaningful sentences.

Many scholarly works have asserted that one’s syntactical knowledge is innate, even if it could not be expressed, which results in language learners having to learn the rules of syntax indirectly (Kim & Sells, 2007). This may ring true among learners of English as a first language, but does this claim hold water among learners who learn English as second or foreign language?

The teaching of syntax is always easier when it is taught to students who speak English as their first language or are, at least, exposed to the target language extensively on a daily basis. This provides them with the assistance they need cognitively to understand the arrangement of a sentence and its word order. However, this is not the case with students who are barely or never exposed to English and are taught through direct instructions by their English language teachers.

Point in case is the way Malaysian students, who are learning English as a second or foreign language, are taught syntax in their ESL classrooms. While it is easier for students, who speak English as their first or second language, to comprehend the structure of English syntax, it would not be so for students who are unfamiliar with the language. In the aspect of exposure to the English language, some of them are not only disadvantaged due to their family socio-economic background and lack of support from their community, but they also do not possess a satisfactory reading habit which could have been the helping hand they need to build their syntactical knowledge.

Therefore, it falls upon the English language teachers to ensure that these students are provided with adequate instruction on English syntax. As a consequence, it is necessary for the ESL teachers to possess more than adequate knowledge on English syntax. In a study to ascertain syntactical accuracy among Malaysian ESL students, Mukundan et al. (2013) pointed out that “teachers must be clear of the meanings and how to use them” (pg.7) and only through the teachers’ solid knowledge of English syntax can the learning of English syntax by the students take place.

Unarguably, reading, in particular extensive reading plays a major role in developing the syntax of a language learner. Since reading and writing skills are inter-connected (Dean, 2008), avid readers would make effective writers as they are ingrained with the various sentence arrangements. It should be noted that this is a continuous process which requires the learners to progress from simple sentence structures to more complicated ones (Loh, 2009; Maley, 2010).

In his study into the need for extensive reading in the learning of academic writing, Bachiri (2016) experimented with the implementation of extensive reading among undergraduates in an English academic writing course. The experimental research was participated by ten undergraduates, six males and four females, who were all first-year English Studies majors which ensure that the input received on English language is constant.

The author further reasoned out that first year students were selected as they attend composition classes, thus making their writing experience more authentic which lends reliability to the research. A more detailed and extensive description of this research can be seen in the latter parts of this chapter. Bachiri (2016) observed that his respondents showed impressive progress, after a period of extensive reading, by readily using more complex sentence structures and connectors to write a vocabulary-rich and grammatically-accurate piece of academic writing. This goes to prove that gaining syntactic knowledge is heavily dependent on how extensive a reading practice is. Extensive reading is extremely effective in language learning that it should be made a criterion for the selection of language teacher trainees.

It is disappointing and sad that the issue of language teachers' syntactical knowledge still arises. Even though syntactical knowledge helps language teachers in planning their lessons, choosing the appropriate material and identifying complex structures with which their students may face difficulties, there have been claims that the current generation of newly-graduated language teachers lack detailed knowledge of syntax (Moats, 1994, as stated in Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005).

If that is the situation among native English speaking teachers, it is not hard to imagine the scenario in Malaysia, where probably many of the ESL teachers speak English as their second language. However, there is a scarcity of research carried out to investigate the syntactical knowledge of Malaysian ESL teachers.

The diversity of the Malaysian society allows its people to be exposed to and speak the diverse languages spoken in Malaysia. There is a section of Malaysians who think of English as their first language and though they may speak it with a Malaysian slang and borrowed words from other languages of Malaysia, they have a great exposure to the different structures of English sentences. On the other hand, there is a section which is exposed to English only as a second or foreign language and there is a likelihood that many ESL teachers in Malaysia hail from this section.

Now, it has been widely proven fact that syntactical knowledge is crucial for reading comprehension but very little has been done to study the effects of a reading habit on the development of syntactical knowledge. In fact, the development of syntactical knowledge has, mostly, been described as a process which depends on direct instructional support by the English language teachers in English classrooms (Morvay, 2012). This may seem like an over-dependence on formal instruction which may seem insufficient to gain adequate syntactical knowledge.

This goes to show that the effectiveness of independent reading to develop one's syntax has been terribly underestimated. A regular reading habit not only helps to introduce unknown sentence structures but also leads to readers learning the text by heart, especially when the same texts are given multiple readings. Once readers are ingrained with the sentence structures memorised, they tend to utilise their newly developed syntactical knowledge. Only then direct instructional support plays a huge role.

2.6.5 Reading and Semantics

Traditionally, semantics, in the field of language study, is defined as “the study of meaning (and related notions) in languages” and, in the study of logic, is defined as “the study of linguistic reference or denotation and truth conditions in languages” (Akmaijan, Demers, Farmer & Harnish, 1990, p. 193)

A more recent definition of semantics, according to Laduslaw (2012), is a study of “how each language provides words and idioms for fundamental concepts and ideas (lexical semantics), how the parts of a sentence are integrated into the basis for understanding its meaning (compositional semantics) and how our assessment of what someone means on a particular occasion depends not only on what is actually said but also on aspects of the context of its saying and assessment of the information”.

Semantics of a language is studied by using two approaches; „lexical semantics“ and „compositional semantics“. Lexical semantics or „word rank“ (Finch, 2000) is defined as the study of “meaning of individual expressions (and the relations they bear to one another) (Department of Linguistic of Stanford University, 2015). Lexical semanticists investigate how individual words in a language are related to each other and ponder on their „sense“ which means the “meaning which a word has by virtue of its place in the linguistic system” (Finch, 2000). The concept is „sense“ is analysed through the study of synonyms, antonyms, polysemys, homonyms and hyponyms.

Compositional semantics, meanwhile, deals with the “truth value of linguistic expressions” (Finch, 2000). It is a study of how individual meanings of words are combined to form a meaningful sentence (Department of Linguistic of Stanford University, 2015) and the aspect of „truth“ is divided into two; synthetic and

analytical (Finch, 2000). Synthetic truth is a sentence which correctly represents occurrences of the real life. For instance, the sentence „dogs bark“ is synthetically true; it requires the readers to have the knowledge that dogs do bark and if the word „dog“ is replaced with „cat“, then, to know that the statement is synthetically false. On the other hand, analytic truth is a statement that is true when “it follows from the meaning relations within the sentence, regardless of what the situation in the world might be” (Finch, 2000, pg. 147). This description fits non-literal use of language such as idioms and proverbs, where the phrase or sentence is analysed metaphorically.

The study of semantics is vast and deep that it can be said that the explanation above is just a drop in a vast ocean. However, for the sake of brevity and in line with this research, the focus of the literature in this section will be on the influence a reading habit has on developing semantic knowledge.

Knowledge of semantics is necessary when learning a language as to ensure the meaning derived from a sentence is accurate. Here, the context of the sentence has to be taken in for consideration due to the fact that a sentence may have both literal and figurative meaning. A person with strong semantic knowledge will be able to read a sentence and derive its indirect meaning should it has one. Certain words such as „drunk“, „play“ or „water“ may function as different word categories in different contents and contexts. As it is clear to see, it requires a language learner to have the knowledge on semantics to precisely deduce the meaning of each word according to its context. (Laduslaw, 2012).

Due to its function as the base knowledge of learning a language, semantics, like other components of a language, is generally taught to young learners. Thus, researches and studies concerning the development of semantic knowledge, in this

context, through reading are mostly carried out with pre-school students (Steele, Willoughby & Mills, 2013; Wagovich, Hill & Petroski, 2015).

Wagovich, Hill & Petroski (2015), incidentally, carried out a study on the improvement of syntactic and semantic „partial word knowledge“ through repeated readings of stories which are inserted with words new to the young respondents. In this research, it is found that syntactic and semantic knowledge are interconnected because syntactic knowledge is the knowledge of word category and semantics knowledge is the knowledge of the word’s meaning within or without the context. This research narrowed its focus on extensive reading or, as it is labelled in this research, „incidental reading“.

The findings of the study have illustrated tremendous acquisition and retention of words when young readers are exposed to multiple readings of the same stories, while also developing deductive skills to surmise meanings of nonsense words inserted for the purpose of the research by using their linguistic knowledge already acquired.

Advancing further, the same principles can be applied to adults such as teachers. It is an indisputable fact that ESL teachers’ semantics knowledge must be up to par in line with striving for the highest quality of teaching. With the English language, like any other language, ever expanding and advancing, meanings of words, phrases and sentences can be direct or indirect.

While linguistics courses in teacher education programmes are crucial for the development of language teachers’ semantic knowledge, never mind how limited they are (Snow, Griffin and Burns, 2005), it still falls upon the teachers to gain advanced linguistics knowledge throughout the course of their professional careers.

According to Snow, Griffin and Burns (2005), the importance of possessing semantic knowledge among language teachers comes to light when they need to extrapolate to their students the different meanings one particular word has. For instance, they may need to elucidate how adjectives are gradable; different words having the same general meaning but can be used in different contexts such as „happy“ and „jubilant“.

One of the parts of language learning which requires semantic knowledge is figures of speech such as proverbs, idioms and metaphors. The English language, for example, is rife with words and phrases with non-literal meanings, especially in its written form and less so in its spoken form. Idiomatic expressions such as “to kick the bucket” have non-literal meanings which are far removed from their literal meanings.

Consequently, an English language teacher not only has to know the meaning of the expressions but also has to explain its origin and how it can be translated to its figurative meaning (Snow, Griffin and Burns, 2005). Therefore, it is of the utmost magnitude for English language teachers to master semantics of the target language taught. This is especially profound in ESL settings where there is a huge likelihood that the students have to comprehend these culturally-different expressions and relate them to their own cultural experience

This leads us to one of the issues of this research; whether Malaysian ESL teachers are equipped with semantics knowledge. In Malaysia, the teaching of semantics is largely focused on modal auxiliary verbs and semantic mapping as a pre-writing technique with the attention on the problems faced by the students in learning these aspects of semantics and the suitability of the teaching material used (Jana Mathialagan, 2001; Jayakaran Mukundan & Khojaste, 2011).

Like other language components, semantics knowledge is required among the language teachers in order to assess the teaching materials' strong points and flaws as well as find ways to improve the said material to aid their teaching process (Jayakaran Mukundan & Khojaste, 2011). In addition to that, they should be able to explain the semantical differences between the multiple varieties of English language used in Malaysia (AL Noori, AL Shamy & Yuen, 2015) which means they have to function as a repository of semantics knowledge.

2.6.6 Reading and Pragmatics

Pragmatics is thought to be the final component of linguistics and is defined as a study of "how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation" (Liu, 2004) such as a conversation or other authentic real-life situations. Pragmatics knowledge helps language learners, or anyone for that matter, to understand the contextual and situational meanings of sentences or phrases and respond to them appropriately.

In other words, to understand the question "Can you close the door?", one has to comprehend the questioner's intention and know that it is an indirect speech act (Finch, 2000). Inadequate pragmatics knowledge will result in the responder with erroneous understanding that the questioner is asking about the state of his physical capability to close the said door whereas a person with sufficient pragmatics knowledge would immediately comprehend the meaning of the polite request, which is to close the door.

Even tougher is the understanding of 'implicatures' which is defined as "an indirect or implicit speech act" (Nordquist, 2016). Mature language users, with the incorporation of a little psychological knowledge, would understand the implied meaning of an implicature. They must have the realisation that natural logic, as

opposed to formal logic, in a language will require the deduction of implied meanings to gain the understanding of what is not stated (Finch, 2000).

Since the acquisition of pragmatics knowledge entails an advanced awareness of discourse and situational or contextual meanings of language, it is indisputable that only participation in a sophisticated and complex linguistic interaction help in developing one's knowledge of pragmatics. That interaction is reading. This is somehow a paradox; incomprehensible because while one needs pragmatics knowledge to process a text read, it is reading which helps to build one's pragmatics knowledge. It can be said that reading and pragmatics awareness are mutually inclusive, where one promotes the other (Finch, 2000).

One may argue that there are other forms of interactions, such as oral language and direct instructions, which may be useful in enhancing pragmatics knowledge. However, nothing surpasses reading in its efficiency as pragmatics features are more commonly used in written texts which are set in a particular context and situation. There are more opportunities for language learners to dissect a written text and analyse its pragmatics features due to its permanence and repeatability as opposed to oral language which is fleeting and a one-off occurrence (Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005).

That said, the responsibility to be equipped with pragmatics knowledge does not only fall upon the learners' shoulders but also the teachers' as well. There is a strong argument for language teachers to ensure that their knowledge base is adequate and covers not only the knowledge of the target language but more than that.

Besides knowledge of the target language, there are three other domains espoused by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) which are “knowledge of the psychology of reading and reading development, knowledge of and ability to implement validated instructional practices competently and reflectively and ability to assess children using research-based tools and strategies (Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005, pp.56).

Nevertheless, it is this researcher’s belief that knowledge of the target language should be the first and foremost requirement to be an effective language teacher. Only when this is achieved then the others can be attained.

2.7 Language Proficiency of ESL Teachers

One of the obstacles faced when improving the quality of English teachers in developing countries is to enhance their English language proficiency (Freeman, Katz, Gomez & Burns, 2015; Choi & Lee, 2016). It is undeniable that to fulfil the criteria of a satisfactory English language teacher, one has to be fully proficient in English (Braine, 2010; Llurda, 2005 as stated in Choi & Lee, 2016; Richards, 2017).

Freeman et al (2015) further explain that learners of the target language will be immersed in an authentic environment if the teacher speaks the target language in the classroom. They further supported this point with the fact that implementation of education policies in Chile, Korea, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam which are based on the argument that the teachers’ enhanced language proficiency will lead to greater classroom learning, which in turn will lead to better learning process on the students’ part.

According to Richards, Conway, Roskvist and Harvey (2012), language proficiency is one of the elements in teachers’ subject or content knowledge, which, in turn, is a crucial part of an effective teaching process. Language proficiency

becomes an issue due to the scenario where many developing countries are adopting English as their language of business and education. Therefore, a successful system of teaching and learning English is imperative and, with that, the language proficiency of the countries' English language teachers, who are generally non-native speakers of English, has to be up to par.

2.7.1 Language Proficiency of ESL Teachers: Foreign Context

As discovered by Reves and Medgyes (1994, as stated in Eslami and Fatahi, 2008) in their survey of 216 EFL teachers from different countries, both native and non-native speakers, more than 80% of the non-native English speaking teachers, divulged that they face problems with certain aspects of the target language such as vocabulary, pronunciation and even writing. It is not difficult to assume that these teachers would revert to the usage of their learners' mother tongue in order to carry out their lessons and to sustain their learners' motivation level.

This occurrence is confirmed by a research done by Rabbidge and Chappell (2014) which highlighted cases of Korean English teachers who face reasonable amount of stress due to the introduction of TETE (Teaching English Through English) policy which enforces a complete non-employment of the learners' native language; in this case, Korean, during the teaching of the target language, English, a practice many non-native English teachers are prone to.

The problem is exacerbated by the finding that many Korean English teachers have abandoned the enforcement of the policy by continuing to teach English with the aid of the Korean language (Kang, 2008; Lui, Baek & Han, 2004; Shin, 2012 as stated in Rabbidge & Chappel, 2014).

Though this has been attributed to the teachers' effort in maintaining the levels of learners' motivation and ensuring that the classroom instructions are understood while controlling the students' classroom discipline, Rabbidge and Chappell name a few researches (Carless, 2004; Shin, 2012 as stated in Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014) which lay the blame on the language proficiency of the non-native English teachers.

2.7.2 Language Proficiency of ESL Teachers in Malaysia

As highlighted in Chapter 1, most of Malaysian ESL teachers have middling to weak English proficiency. According to then Education Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, only 37% of English language teachers in Malaysia have achieved C1 and C2 levels in the 2012 Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) carried out in 2012 (TheStarOnline, 24th January 2014).

A study by Bipinchandra, Parilah and Juhaida (2014) on 90 non-optionist ESL teachers in Melaka, who had undergone a 12-day proficiency course, found that the teachers' English language proficiency seemed to have decreased at the end of the proficiency course. This scenario attributed to their heavy teaching workload which has not permitted them to practise the course modules and "upgrade their own levels of proficiency" (p.110)

The MOE has begun to be concerned about the English language proficiency of ESL teachers in Malaysia. In 2012, the ministry published a set of criteria focusing on the teaching of the English language called the „Pedagogy Standards for English Language Teaching“ (PSELT) which serves as an instrument to measure the standard of English language teaching among at various career stages (Yeow, 2012 as stated in Napsiah Kepol, 2017).

The importance of English language proficiency among EL teachers is also highlighted in the 2014 annual report of Malaysian Education Blueprint. According to the report, ESL teachers face an obstacle in the application of differentiated teaching strategies in their classrooms due to their students' various levels of English language proficiencies (MoE, 2015). ESL teachers play the dual role of "mainstream English language teacher and a remedial teacher" (p.22, MoE, 2015), thus requiring them to be proficient enough to correct their students' errors.

The lack of English language proficiency among ESL teachers has had tremendous ramifications on national education policies. Napsiah Kepol (2017), in her analysis of the strategies of the Mermartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI) policy, points out that teachers' weak English language proficiency is one of the reasons which has led to the cancellation of an earlier policy called "Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris" (PPSMI), which required Science and Mathematics to be taught in English.

This goes to show Malaysian ESL teachers have a lot of catching up to do in order to reach the international standards of English language teaching. It is time for a drastic action taken to create a change in the quality of ESL teachers in Malaysia. Perhaps we should start with their reading habits.

2.8 How ESL Teachers Maintain Their EL Proficiency

Language teachers' attitudes towards maintaining their target language proficiency determine their level of language attrition (Wlosowicz, 2017; Nugroho, 2018)

Language attrition is defined as the "situation where a speaker (of a first language or a later learned second or foreign language) can no longer do something she/he had previously been able to do, and this loss of proficiency is not caused by a deterioration of the brain due to age, illness or injury, but by a change in linguistic

behaviour due to a severance of the contact with the community in which the language is spoken” (Schmid, 2008: p.10).

EL attrition among non-native EL teachers has been of a particular concern due to their limited contact to the target language in comparison to native EL teachers. Non-native EL teachers who teach students of lower proficiency have to employ simpler language structures in their classrooms to ensure their students’ comprehension. This situation is further compounded by the cultural and linguistic settings, in which these teachers live as the interference of their first language may cause further attrition.

To thwart the decline of EL proficiency among ESL and EFL teachers, various methods have been recommended by education experts and authorities. These include voluntary extensive reading, participating in professional development programmes, watching or listening to EL programmes and conversing with native or non-native speakers of English. Nevertheless, the implementation of these programmes is heavily dependent on the initiative of the respective countries’ education authorities and the teachers themselves.

Education authorities, in general, tend to implement programmes to develop teachers’ EL proficiency by collaborating with organisations such as the British Council and Cambridge English Learning Centre.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in 2012, the Malaysian MoE, in collaboration with Cambridge English Learning Centre, began assessing the EL proficiency of around 70,000 ESL teachers working in state primary and secondary schools. When it was revealed that most of the teachers had the proficiency of B1 and below, the ministry took steps to rectify the situation by working with British Council to conduct the Pro-

ELT course for these teachers (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014).

The Pro-ELT course was conducted for duration of three months in 2014 and involved 10, 502 ESL teachers from all over Malaysia. Its objective was to improve these teachers' EL proficiency by one band level based on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). At the end of the course, 4, 579 teachers were required to sit for the Aptis test and the results were encouraging. Of the total, 2,244 teachers showed advancement in the EL proficiency by moving up one band while 166 teachers did better by moving up two proficiency levels. Out of 591 teachers who scored a B1 in the CPT, 519 moved to B2 according to the results of the Aptis test (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014).

To maintain the quality of Malaysian ESL teachers in years to come, the MoE have set stringent criteria for the enrolment of teacher trainees in teacher training institutes. In line with this rule, teacher trainees will be selected among the top 30% among the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) candidates or those who score at least 5As in the examination. For candidates aspiring to join the Malaysian EL teaching force, they would need to obtain a Grade A in the EL subject in SPM. Finally, before being posted to schools to teach, Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) will have to score at least a Band C of the CEFR (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014).

The next strategy devised by the ministry for ESL teachers to develop themselves professionally and improve their teaching competency was to launch and distribute the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Plan to all head of schools. In order to improve general teachers' professional quality, the plan recommended activities such as "coaching and mentoring, innovation project,

knowledge discourse and benchmarking” (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014; p.28).

In an effort to sustain teachers’ quality in school, several activities were put into action by the Ministry. First, an induction course called the New Teacher Development Programme was carried out to assist beginner teachers to fit into their teaching role. Secondly, low-performing teachers were compelled to participate in the Competency Development Course to push up the standard of their competency to the minimum level set by the ministry. Other professional development activities include the Competency Development Course by Grade, a voluntary course for teachers and e-Guru videos which could help teachers to improve their teaching and learning sessions. (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014)

To measure teachers’ competency, the ministry has also designed the Unified Instrument in 2014. With that instrument, teachers will be gauged according to their “teaching competencies” and efforts taken to develop their students’ learning outcomes. Teachers whose performances are not up to par will be provided support such as counselling and professional development programmes. If they continue to show lack of improvement and perform below the minimum requirement, they will be instructed to exit the teaching force (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report, 2014)

. In Myanmar, its education authorities collaborated with British Council-Myanmar and Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) to carry out a programme called the English for Education College Trainers (EfECT) to improve EL proficiency of state teacher educators from August 2014 until August 2016.

This project was partially funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and involved approximately 2200 teacher educators from 24 Education colleges and universities. The first year of this project focused on developing the teachers' EL proficiency with prominence given to speaking and listening skills as well as grammar.

As the outcomes demonstrate, this project turned out to be a great success with 97% of the teachers exhibited an improvement in their EL proficiency which was measured by the British Council's Aptis test. Three quarters of the teachers improved by a minimum of 1 CEFR level (British Council, 2020).

The similarities between the EL proficiency development programmes carried out in Malaysia and Myanmar are that, first, they were based on a top-down model, where the education authorities had only taken into thought the general factors of ESL teachers' low proficiency in EL. Secondly, both programmes involved short-term strategies to enhance ESL teachers' language proficiency which might not have been effective in remedying language attrition among them.

As an alternative, education authorities, in this case, of Malaysia should implement programmes based on the bottom-up model by targeting Malaysian ESL teachers' attitude towards improving their EL proficiency and by extension, their reading habits. More research should also be done on how ESL teachers sustain their EL proficiency and arrest EL attrition.

A study by Zulkornain, Che Mat, Mohamed, Halim and Razawi (2020) on EL attrition among ESL teachers who taught in Kelantan, an east-coast state in Peninsular Malaysia, described how EL proficiency among these teachers had deteriorated due to lack of contact with the target language.

These teachers had minimal contact with English due to various reasons with the chief reason being the need to be accepted by the general populace of the school, who spoke only the Kelantanese dialect. Attempts to speak in English were viewed with disdain and contempt because of the strong Kelantanese cultural identity among the people there.

This situation had led to EL attrition among the ESL teachers interviewed for this study. However, this study did not focus on other steps taken by the respondents to improve their EL proficiency. It was not stated whether the respondents read EL materials or attended any language development courses. On that thought, it was mentioned that the respondents received no support from the state and district education authorities to use EL in everyday practices.

Having a negative attitude towards sustaining their EL proficiency is not only confined to Malaysian ESL teachers. A survey carried out by Nugroho (2018) on 32 Indonesian EL teachers found that even though these teachers agreed that they need to take steps to improve their EL proficiency, in reality they did not due to various reasons. They were aware of the many methods for professional development such as participating in a language proficiency course, becoming a member of English teachers associations, presenting papers at English-speaking conferences or seminars, reading academic or non-academic English materials or joining online courses.

However, these teachers did not feel obligated to partake in any of these activities as the Indonesian government's education policies have assigned teachers' professional development as the teachers' own responsibility. Of the 32 respondents surveyed, 6 were interviewed and from that 6, only 1 stated that he had participated in an international teaching seminar. Thus, it can be seen that most of these teachers showed a negative attitude towards maintaining their EL proficiency.

A somewhat similar situation could be seen in Thailand, another one of Malaysia's neighbours. A study by Noom-ura (2013) highlighted the poor quality of non-native EL teachers there and their dependence on the authorities to develop their teaching competence. It was also stated that professional development programmes for these teachers were designed by using the top-down model as the teachers were not invited to provide input in regards to their teaching needs. Thus, it was felt these programmes were ineffective in improving the teachers' quality, in particular their EL proficiency.

As an answer, the Language Institute of Thammasat University (LITU), on the request by a high school, ran a course to train EL teachers on Advanced Reading-Writing and Essay Writing. This course was based on a bottom-up model where the teachers themselves made an analysis of their weaknesses and the kind of training to fulfil those needs. Noom-ura (2013) also pointed out that the MoE of Thailand, in a effort to support EL teachers, had set up 88 English Resource and Instruction Centres (ERIC) in various education hubs all over Thailand.

With this in mind, Noom-ura (2013) has raised several valid questions. Firstly, are these initiatives enough to improve ESL teachers' quality? Secondly, do these teachers have the resources to participate in this kind of programmes? Does this kind of programmes encourage teachers to be dependent on the authorities in order to develop their competency?

On the other hand, there are studies which have exhibited contrasting findings. Wlosowicz (2017) studied the occurrence of EL attrition among 39 non-native Polish EL teachers and the steps they took to maintain the EL proficiency. It was found that these teachers' EL proficiency has decreased due to "contact with learners' errors" (p.91) and lack of more complex linguistic structures in the

classroom. However, these teachers were aware of their weaknesses and took the several initiatives to arrest their EL attrition.

31 teachers stated that they read English materials such as books, online articles, newspapers and magazines while 35 watched English films. 12 teachers did exercises from textbooks for advanced learners. 29 spoke English while travelling abroad and 18 mentioned that they spoke English with native or non-native foreigners who speak English. Other methods which were stated are speaking English with fellow Poles, keeping up a correspondence with English-speaking foreigner and native speakers, chatting online with them and listening to the BBC radio.

In this case, the teachers exhibited a positive attitude towards the accuracy of language as they knew the importance of language maintenance. It is noted that a majority of them chose to read to boost their EL proficiency. Their positive attitude towards improving their EL proficiency may be attributed to the support by their employers and cultural settings.

The studies mentioned above illustrate relationship between EL teachers' attitude towards developing the language competence and the steps taken to arrest the decline in their EL proficiency. These studies also highlight these teachers' awareness of the important role reading plays in enhancing teachers' language proficiency and offsetting language attrition.

2.9 Reading Habits of ESL Teachers

Malaysians, in general, are not voracious readers. According to the National Library of Malaysia director-general Datuk Nafisah Ahmad, while the literacy rate in Malaysia has risen to 94.64% as reported by a recent report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), more has to be done to

improve the reading habits of Malaysians, who read merely 15 books annually on average (New Straits Times, May 5th 2017).

The lack of a strong reading habit is also prevalent among Malaysian ESL teachers as proven by Daik (2006) and Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011).

Daik (2006), in his study on ESL teachers reading habits, proved that while most of the 118 ESL teachers studied did read academic and non-academic material, most of them spent only a few hours a week to read. He further concluded that most of his respondents have poor reading habits.

In a similar vein, Tharumaraj and Noordin (2016), in their study on ESL teachers' reading habits and the strategies used in the teaching of reading skills, concluded that 60% of the respondents partook in leisure reading "almost every day or every other day" but they read mostly newspapers and magazines.

English Language teachers in other South East Asian nations such as Singapore are also deemed to have weak reading habits (Kwek, Albright & Kramer-Dahl, 2007). In spite of acknowledging the importance of reading for the own benefit, Singaporean English Language teachers choose their reading materials for "functional purposes rather than recreational purposes" (Kwek, Albright & Kramer-Dahl, 2007; p.76).

A study on the reading beliefs and habits of 101 ESL teachers who are enrolled in post-graduate programmes in Hong Kong by Chen (n.d) also revealed a low rate of pleasure reading among them, with 79% of them spending less than two hours daily to read. The results of this study further uncovered inconsistent beliefs among the respondents regarding their reading habits. When stating their purpose of reading, 71.3% said they read for pleasure while approximately the same number

read to prepare for their courses. Chen (n.d) finds this contradictory as both are mutually exclusive purposes.

A study on 92 Turkish teachers revealed that while 65% of them thought of themselves as regular readers, only 2% of these teachers spend 2 hours daily to read. Furthermore, just 30% read more than 21 books in a year or 2 books in month on average (Aç kay, 2017).

Studies conducted among American teachers have demonstrated both and negative results. In her doctoral thesis, Donaldson (2016) scrutinizes the “reading histories and habits” of 158 Texan English language teachers and further affirmed the fact that these English teachers think of themselves as readers, find reading a pleasurable activity and love discussing about their reading experience.

On the other hand, Burgess, Sargent, Smith, Hill & Morrison (2011) concluded that American teachers are not spending adequate time for recreational reading, with more than a fifth of the respondents not reading at least 1 book per month. Similarly, McKool and Gespass (2009) also discovered that more than 63% of the teachers they studied do not partake in recreational reading at all. Several other studies have further concurred that there is a worrying levels of aliteracy among American in-service teachers (Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitt, 2008; Giles and Tunks, 2019).

All these studies illustrate the fact that the lack of strong reading habits among EL teachers is a matter of grave concern. Therefore, it is imperative for the reasons causing this conundrum to be identified so that effective steps can be taken to solve it.

2.10 Factors Influencing Malaysian ESL Teachers' Reading Habit

The development of the reading habit, in general, is a thoroughly researched field with various experts pointing out to multiple contributing factors (Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). Compared to the development of reading skills, the development of the reading habit is more multifarious and involves awareness on the psychological and sociological settings which influence the readers' psyches.

In order to identify the reasons which influence Malaysian ESL teachers' reading habits, it is vital to take into consideration all the internal and external factors which induce this scenario. Studies have shown that internal factors such as the teachers' attitude and motivation towards reading and external factors such as their workload have played major roles in determining ESL teachers' reading habits.

The subsequent paragraphs will discuss the factors which influence the reading habits of Malaysian ESL teachers.

2.10.1 Workload of Malaysian ESL Teachers

Teachers' workload has been a major issue for a long time, with many young teachers quitting the profession after just a short stint (R.Ramesh Rao & Rohana Jani, 2011; The Malay Mail Online, September 19, 2016). Relevant authorities such as the National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) have, then and again, voiced out the dissatisfaction of teachers while the Malaysian Ministry of Education has verbally responded to this issue many a time and has put forward many suggestions in their effort to address it (NUTP, 2012)

Nonetheless, matters have remained the same or probably become worse, with teachers still complaining of being bogged down with teaching and non-teaching duties (Norashid & Hamzah, 2014; MYNEWSHUB, 2016). These duties

are not only confined to the curricular aspect but also cover co-curricular and administrative aspects. In this part, the workload of teachers is analysed according to these three aspects.

First of all, let us take a look at the curricular duties shouldered by an academic teacher. Curricular duties include preparing for the lessons, carrying out the lessons, assessing the students' performance, marking students' work, preparing the examination questions, marking the students' examination scripts, identifying students who are weak or with learning problems and managing the classroom discipline during lessons (Nurul Shukraini Abdul Azizi, 2015).

While the ones mentioned above are the regular academic duties of an academic teacher, it is important to note that the teachers' workload differs according to the sizes of classes which themselves vary according to the sizes of the schools. Schools with smaller student population tend to have small-sized classes, which greatly alleviate the teachers' burden and workload. However, the same cannot be said for heavily populated schools such as the ones located in towns or cities with big population.

For example, there are certain schools in the district of Klang, Selangor with the student population exceeding 3000 students. There is even a secondary school in the outskirts of Klang with around 4600 students (BH Online, 8 Januari 2018). With population this size, one can only assume the size of the classes are huge too. There have been reports about teachers having to teach classes with 50 students or more (Utusan Online, 15th September 2000).

Teachers in this type of schools would have their work cut out for them as they would have the gruelling job of marking their students' books (subjects like the English language alone may use 3 – 4 exercise books) and examination scripts. It is

not difficult to imagine the stress faced by these teachers if they are assigned four or five classes to teach. This does not include the fact that students' examination marks have to be keyed in on paper and online.

Furthermore, following the implementation of the School-Based Assessment or „Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah“ (PBS) and the subsequent uproar over the added burden on teachers to key in the assessment scores online, all teachers are required to store the scores in an offline module (Norashid Bin Othman & Hamzah Bin Md. Omar, 2014). All these peripheral tasks take away precious time which can be used by the teachers perform their core duties such as preparing materials for their lessons or enhancing their professional competence.

With everything being online these days, teachers, especially class or form teachers are required to key in various such as their students' profiles, attendance, co-curricular involvement, dental records and other assorted information related to the class they hold. Their duties do not stop there but would also encompass tasks such as preparing minutes for meetings, proposals and reports for any school programmes conducted, preparing certificates for their students and a host of other jobs which are wholly unrelated to the teaching profession. It is easy to see why teachers are constantly stressed out and many have suffered from burn out or incurable ailments (New Straits Times, 23rd June 2016).

A few studies (Daik, 2006; Tharumaraj & Noordin, 2011) have demonstrated that ESL teachers' workload has a profound influence on their reading habits. This situation is not only unique to Malaysia but also in advanced nations such as the United Kingdom. An article published by The Guardian UK has exposed what many English Language teachers across the world have known for a long time; that English

Language teachers' workload is prohibiting them from partaking in leisure reading (The Guardian International Edition, 20th May 2017).

In the Malaysian context, researches by Daik (2006) and Tharumaraj and Nooreen Noordin (2011) have highlighted teaching workload as the primary reason for ESL teachers' lack of reading. However, this matter was not explored further in detail in their papers. More in-depth researches have to be conducted as to scrutinize the type of workload passed to the teachers, whether these tasks fall within their job scopes and how much stronger their reading habits would be without these unnecessary, marginal jobs.

2.10.2 Teachers' Access to Reading Materials

Reading experts have advocated the importance of providing an access to an extensive choice of reading material since young. Like all skills, reading is built on practice and to practise, readers need to have a full access to a wide range of reading material at all times (Henri, Warning & Leung, 2007; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008; Doiron, 2011).

Dreher (2003) emphasises the magnitude of providing teachers with access to reading materials. Just like how young learners build a reading habit by having access to various types of reading materials, teachers would also benefit from being constantly exposed to reading material of professional and non-professional content (Dreher, 2003).

To do so, Dreher (2003) suggests various ways to help teachers to access reading materials readily. A few of the ideas are setting up book clubs for teachers, gazetting a section in the library for teachers and inculcating a book exchange practice. Dreher (2003) also points out that many American schools have allocated time for teachers to carry out „Drop Everything And Read“ (DEAR) sessions.

In Malaysian, however, this matter has not been discussed or studied on. The relevant authorities focused only on students' reading programmes (Ratnawati, Zainurin, Ismail & Noor Lide, 2013; Husaini et al., 2012) but none of the attention is given to teachers' reading programmes. It is probably assumed that as independent adults, ESL teachers ought to find ways to gain access to reading materials.

Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) have demonstrated that the teachers themselves lack the initiative to get their hands on reading materials. They also revealed that 30% of the teachers interviewed spent only RM25 a month to purchase their reading materials. They further claimed that none of the teachers spent more than RM100 on reading materials even though the Malaysian government provides annual tax relief of up to RM1000 for reading materials.

This state of affairs is not unique to Malaysia alone. Hassen (2016), in her study of 54 Somalian high-school teachers, claims that these teachers did not subscribe to any publications, academic or non-academic. They also did not belong to any book clubs and rarely borrowed books from libraries.

Just like other readers, teachers, too, ought to be given access to reading material and, not forgetting, the time to make use of the access. It is crucial that the relevant parties make one of the extensive reading programmes such as „Drop Everything and Read“ (DEAR) as a main part of the teachers' self-development agenda.

2.11 Conceptual Framework

Jabareen (2009) defines conceptual framework as “a network of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” (p.51). It consists of concepts which are mutually sustained, able to express the individual scenario and foundations for the resulting philosophy.

Regoniel (2015) states that a conceptual framework is the “researcher’s understanding of how the particular variables in his study connect with each other”. He further extrapolates that before drawing up the conceptual framework, it is crucial to identify and isolate the variables involved in this research.

This study looks into the rates of general and extensive reading habits of ESL teachers in Malaysia and how they are related to their English Language proficiency. The idea espoused here is that the quality of English Language teaching in Malaysia is heavily dependent on the quality of the ESL teachers working in that system. Thus, based on Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, it is theorised that to master English and help with life-long language acquisition, ESL teachers need to have a well-practiced reading habit.

To illustrate, in order to achieve competence in English, ESL teachers need to have deep knowledge of the language’s components. They ought to possess an extensive and deep understanding of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics of English. When the teachers are well-equipped with knowledge on these language components, their professional efficacy is boosted which results in them being more confident about their English Language proficiency. These scenarios become the foundation for a higher standard of ELT..

The conceptual framework also presents the factors which influence Malaysian ESL teachers’ reading habit. These teachers face problems in nurturing a reading habit due to their heavy teaching workload and the lack of access to reading materials. As a result of the lack of exposure, their EL proficiency is weakened affecting the teachers’ confidence levels and quality of their lessons. The conceptual framework of this research is exhibited in Figure 2.2.

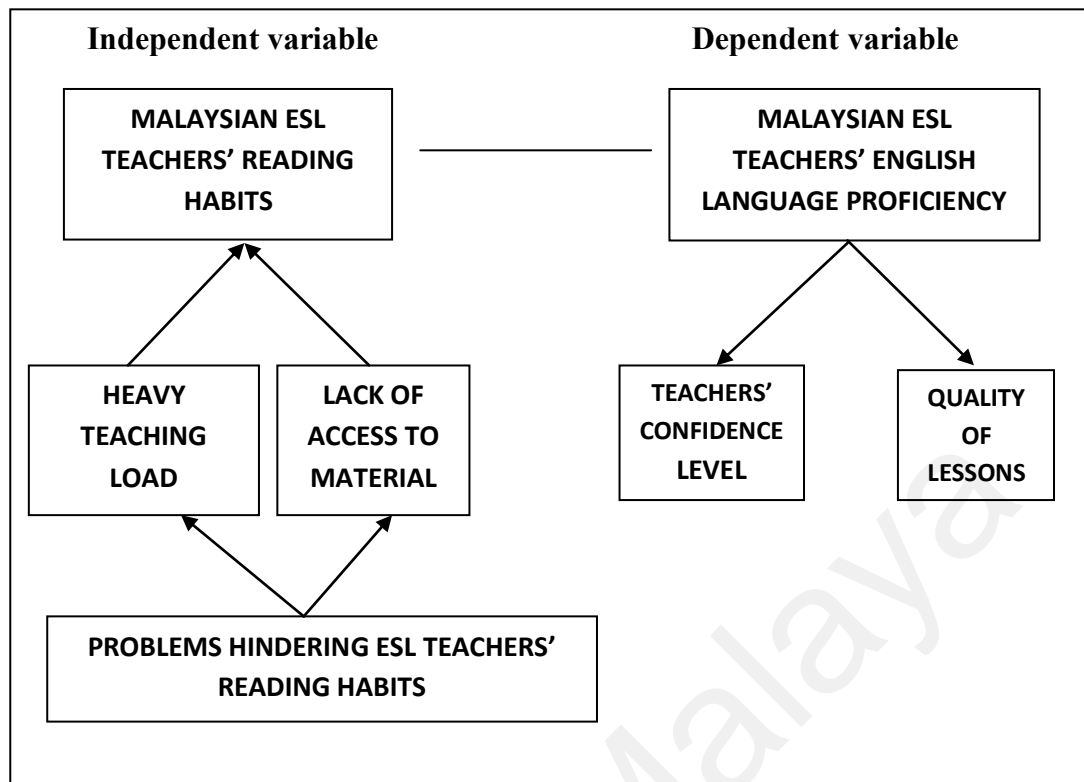


Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework for the Relationship between ESL Reading Habits and Their English Language Proficiency

2.12 Summary

In this chapter, clear and conclusive evidence of the theories and concepts involved in this research have been presented. Seeing that this research is an exploratory type, various key concepts connected to the reading habits of ESL teachers have been presented. These concepts, such as the advantages or effects of extensive reading on language learning, have been dissected according to every linguistic component. Besides, some of the factors or reasons for Malaysian ESL teachers' lack of reading habit are also probed and exposed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter maps out the research design and methodology employed to carry out this research. The focus of this chapter is on the methodologies or research designs this research is based on, details of the research's respondents, instruments used in gathering the data and approaches taken for data analysis.

According to Hopkins (2000), if the objective of a study is to determine the relationship between two variables, the occurrence of potential biases can be lessened if there is a „high participation rate“. As this research aims to study the relationship between ESL teachers' reading habits and their English language proficiency, the sample size has to be adequately large to reduce any probable errors. Thus, it is opined that the most appropriate research design for this research is the quantitative design.

Therefore, it is concluded that, first, this researcher needs to determine the English language proficiency levels of the respondents and establish the fact that it is the lack of a strong reading habit which has led to this whole scenario.

3.1 Research Design

As this research studies the relationship between the respondents' reading habits and their level of English language proficiency, it is classified as a correlational research. Martella, Nelson, Morgan and Marchand-Martella (2013) define correlational research as “a particular way of collecting and analysing data to discover relationships between or among variables and, depending on the data analysis procedures used, the causes for a pattern of behaviour” (pp.208).

As mentioned above, there are variables in this research which need to be identified. Wills (2017) declares that there are three types of variables which are dependent, independent and controlled. The design of this research involves two variables with the respondents' reading habits as the independent one and their English language proficiency levels as the dependent one. On the other hand, from what is concluded by Martella et al. (2013), the two variables in a correlational research are the „predictor“ variable and „criterion“ variable which are equivalent to the above-mentioned independent and dependent variables respectively.

The design of this research, in line with the research problems, calls for the usage of quantitative methods. According to Muijs (2004), a quantitative research is defined as “collecting numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon” (pp.2). Given that this research studies the relationship between two variables; the respondents' reading habits and their language proficiency, this research can be classified as correlational research.

In seeking the percentage of respondents who are readers, this researcher requested the respondents to fill in a questionnaire which provided the data for tabulation.

Subsequently, the questionnaire was also used to investigate the factors which affect the respondents' reading frequency and motivation. All these steps point towards a quantitative design and this research certainly entails the usage of the SPSS programme in order to process the data.

Finally, the third research question necessitates quantitative data analysis as it aimed to analyse the language proficiency of the respondents. To do that, the respondents were given a proficiency test.

3.2 Population

From a research perspective, the term „population“ is described as the group to which researchers generalise their research findings (Muijs, 2004, Johnson & Christensen, 2004). In other words, a „population“ is the entire community from which a section is chosen to be the sampling of the research.

In this research, the population or „set of all elements“ encompasses the ESL teachers who are teaching the English language in national secondary schools in the very old and historical district of Klang, which is located in the small state of Selangor which is situated on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia. Its history goes back to almost 2,000 years ago and it is one of the oldest districts in Malaysia (Pejabat Daerah/Tanah Klang, 2016).

Klang is also known as the royal district of Selangor as it is where the Sultan of Selangor officially resides (Majlis Perbandaran Klang, 2017). The district of Klang, since it used to be the capital of Selangor, is an economic hub with many major industries setting up their bases there (Majlis Perbandaran Klang, 2017). Furthermore, its multi-ethnic population makes it a popular tourist attraction with exotic and colourful places such as Jalan Tengku Kelana and Carey Island (Pejabat Tanah/Daerah Klang, 2017).

There are a total of 39 public secondary schools in the district of Klang (Selangor State Education Department, 2018). This number includes 30 co-educational schools of which 2 are Chinese-medium schools, 4 schools for girls, 3 Islamic schools, 1 Islamic college and 1 vocational college (Selangor State Education Department, 2018). This huge number is in line with the size of the district and its population.

The details of the population were obtained from the Klang district education office (PPD Klang) via direct over-the-counter communication. According to the PPD Klang, a total of 456 English language teachers are teaching in 39 national secondary schools in Klang ($N = 456$). The population is diverse and cuts across all religious and ethnic groups. Table 3.1 illustrates the number of ESL teachers teaching in secondary schools in the Klang district according to gender and ethnicity.

Table 3.1

English Language Teachers in Secondary Schools in Klang

Ethnicity	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Malay	18	205	223
Chinese	3	46	49
Indian	21	148	169
Sikh	1	4	5
Sabah Bumiputera	0	3	3
Sarawak Bumiputera	0	3	3
Others	0	4	4
Total	43	413	456

As can be seen in Table 3.1, female teachers form the majority of the ESL teachers in Klang secondary schools. Gender wise, male teachers shape 9.45% of the total population, while, according to ethnicity, Malay teachers form the majority with 48.9%, with ethnic Indians forming 37.1%, ethnic Chinese 10.7%, Sikhs 1.1%, Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputeras forming 0.7% each and other races forming 0.8%.

3.3 Sampling

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), sampling is defined as “the process of drawing a sample from a population” (p.197) and by sampling, a researcher studies the “characteristics of a subset...selected from a larger group...” (p.197). When the research is done, the findings are used to make generalisations about the whole population.

In determining the sample size for this research, there are a few things which need to be considered such as the size of the population and the high probability of sampling error.

As mentioned above, the population of ESL teachers in secondary schools in the district of Klang is numbered at 456. If we refer to Krejcie and Morgan (Johnson & Christensen, 2004: 218), it can be determined that the size of the sample is 210 teachers (refer Appendix, p.180).

With the sample size decided, this researcher has decided that the most suitable sampling method would be convenience sampling as the sample is chosen according to their accessibility, with no limitations to other variables such as age, gender and professional qualification.

3.4 Instruments of Research

Given that this research is based on the quantitative design, the following instruments are used.

- a) Questionnaire
- b) Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) (LPATE)

3.4.1 Questionnaire

One of the main instruments used in this research was a questionnaire which surveyed the respondents’ reading habits and the factors which influenced them.

According to Muijs (2004), written questionnaires is arguably the most popular type of instrument as they are very commonly used and the respondents are able to take their time to fill them up without pressure. However, the drawbacks of using questionnaires include possible unsatisfactory response rate and extra workload for the researcher when analysing the responses.

Nevertheless, written questionnaire is the best instrument to be applied in the course of gathering data for this research. Several factors lead to this conclusion, namely the large size of the sampling, the sensitivity of the topic which necessitates respondents' anonymity and the need for convenience to deliberate on the answers.

The questionnaire for this study was designed with reference to two other questionnaires. One was designed by Pandian (1997) while the other was designed by Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011).

Pandian (1997) had conducted a study to gauge the reading habits of undergraduates across faculties in USM and the questionnaire was one of the instruments of his research. The questionnaire is available in print in his book „Reading in Malaysia“ (Pandian, 1997)

Pandian's questionnaire is divided to seven sections; the respondents' biodata, their socio-economic status, factors related to their reading habits, factors related to reading facilities at home, factors related to reading facilities in school, attitudes towards reading and attitudes towards language. Most of the items in this questionnaire are close-ended with a few open-ended items. This questionnaire was piloted and validated before being administered on 800 respondents, which constituted 10% of the undergraduate population of the university.

On the other hand, the questionnaire designed by Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) was used to study the link between ESL teachers' reading habits and the strategies used to teach reading skills. The questionnaire consists of four sections with the first one gathering information about the demography of the respondents. The second part investigates the respondents' reading habits while the third part uncovers their personal reading strategies. The last part of the questionnaire looks into the employment of reading strategies by the respondents in the classrooms.

Of the four parts, only the second part is related to this research and thus, is the only one referred to. In this part, the respondents are first required to specify their favourite leisure activity before stating their reading preferences. Next, the respondents are asked to state the frequency of reading the materials as well as their opinion on whether reading is a pleasure or obligation. Unfortunately, factors which influence respondents' reading habits were not studied through this questionnaire but instead were uncovered through interview sessions with five respondents.

It is opined that these questionnaires are suitable to be used as a reference due to the fact it has been validated and tested. However, full adoption of the questionnaires is unlikely as some of the items are irrelevant to the research questions of the current study. Thus, the questionnaire utilised for the current research would require a separate validity and reliability test.

Besides referring to the older questionnaires, feedback from this researcher's supervisors also proved to be essential in designing this research's questionnaire. Due to the quantitative nature of this research, the items in the questionnaire must match the research questions and be focused in obtaining the data needed. In addition, the items had to be designed by keeping the respondents in mind. The items

have to be designed in ways which do not offend their sensitivities and uncritical of their reading habits.

This questionnaire consists of 2 sections; Section A and B. Section B, in turn, is divided into 2 parts; Part 1 and 2.

Section A of the questionnaire aims to illustrate the demography of the respondents. It consists of items of six variables which are (1) the respondents' age; (2) gender; (3) professional qualification; (4) length of teaching experience; (5) Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) result and (6) the type of school they teach in.

This is followed by Section B which seeks to uncover the respondents' reading habits and the problems they face in building a reading habit. This section is divided to three parts. The first one is a list of 13 types of English reading materials and the respondents have to tick the frequency of reading each of the materials.

The reading materials listed are (1) newspaper; (2) magazine; (3) tabloid; (4) novel; (5) short story; (6) non-fiction books; (7) encyclopaedia; (8) online blog; (9) social media posts; (10) websites; (11) e-books; (12) audio books and (13) comics. These are drawn together with frequencies such as „daily“, „5 days“, „3 days“, „1 day“ and „none“. A blank space is provided for the respondents to state other reading materials which they probably read and how often the material is read.

The second section intends to draw attention to the strength of the respondents' reading habits. The above-mentioned items are designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of regularity and prevalence of the reading habit among the respondents.

The first 8 variables in part 1 of Section B ask the respondents if they read English material (14) only during school holidays; (15) only on the weekends; (16) less than one hour a day; (17) more than one hour a day; (18) during mealtimes; (19)

while waiting; (20) when travelling and (21) before bedtime. The next three items question the frequency of the respondents' visits to a library with item (22) every week; (23) every month and (24) rarely.

The next variables are (25) subscription to English magazines; (26) purchase of material from bookstores; (27) function of smart-phone as material source and (28) online purchase of reading material. The three subsequent variables are related to the number of English reading materials possessed by the respondents, with (29) less than 50; (30) more than 50 and (31) none.

The next 9 variables are associated to the respondents' passion and engagement towards reading. These variables are (32) feeling relaxed when reading; (33) feeling bored and restless when reading; (34) spending a day without reading; (35) staying awake to finish a book; (36) being called a bookworm; (37) reading to relieve stress; (38) reading as escapism; (39) living as a character in the story and (40) preference of reading to other activity.

The final part of Section B revolves around the problems faced by the respondents in trying to read. The potential problems fall under three categories namely school, accessibility of material and personal. The variables listed under the first category, which is school, are (41) bringing home school work; (42) exhaustion due to heavy teaching timetable; (43) school programmes on weekends; (44) lack of encouragement to read from employers; (45) lack of demand by the job for reading and (46) lack of programmes encouraging teachers to read.

The second category is the accessibility of reading material which lists the variables as (47) regular purchase of English reading material; (48) lack of reading material in teachers' room; (49) outdated and uninteresting material in school library;

(50) lack of affordability to buy reading material and (51) lack of access to internet connection.

The final category is personal factor, where personal problems which are probably faced by teachers are listed. The variables are (52) family commitments; (53) preference for social media; (54) preference for television programmes and (55) short attention span. As can be seen, the problems listed in the questionnaire are limited due to lack of supporting evidence. Therefore, at the end of the questionnaire, space is provided for the respondents to write other additional problem or obstacles they might be facing in their efforts to read.

The questionnaire is five-pages long with 7 close-ended questions in Section A, 13 multiple choice items, 42 items with a Likert-scale measurement and 1 open-ended question in Section B. It is relatively short and can be answered in ten to fifteen minutes. The items of the Likert-scale measurement are written in short and straightforward sentences with simple vocabulary. As a result, the respondents will not feel taxed and burdened with a lengthy and complicated questionnaire.

With the questionnaire drafted, it is sent to this researcher's supervisors for the final editing. After that, the questionnaire is validated by experts in the field of English Language Education, after which a pilot test is carried out in order to gain the questionnaire's reliability and more suggestion on how to perfect the instrument.

3.4.2 Language Proficiency Test

The second instrument of this research is an English language proficiency test set by the Hong Kong Education Bureau to assess the proficiency of ESL teachers. Designed in the form of a handbook, the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) (LPATE) is set in 2011 as a replacement for the 2007 test edition.

The LPATE is chosen as an instrument for this research for several reasons. First, this test is easily available online, complete with its answers and marking scheme. Furthermore, the items of this assessment are connected to most of the language skills required for linguistic competency. This researcher has tried looking for other tests from countries where English is taught as a second language but to no avail. The closest choice we have would be a language proficiency test of Singapore, considering the fact that both Malaysia and Singapore have shared histories and are somewhat similar in their culture.

The Singaporean Ministry of Education does conduct English language proficiency test for aspiring teachers there. Nevertheless, the test consists of two parts which are listening and writing (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2017), both tests which would be difficult to administer to 210 respondents of this research compared to a reading assessment. Furthermore, since a part of this research involves the reading habits of ESL teachers, it would be more apt to administer a reading assessment.

Therefore, this researcher is of the opinion that the best move is to choose another test from another country where English is spoken as a second language and where the language test comprises of a reading assessment. Hong Kong fits the criterion as many of its citizens, 46% in fact, speak English as a second language (The Telegraph, 24th February 2012). Furthermore, Hong Kong public schools are, by law, required to both native and non-native speakers of the English Language to teach the language (Ma, 2012).

More importantly, the LPATE includes a reading test which tests the respondents' understanding of the texts and the range of their vocabulary. It is also the opinion of the researcher that the objectivity of a reading assessment reduces any

researcher's bias while evaluating the test responses. As a result, grading of the test is done with minimal error.

The LPATE is divided to five assessment papers; Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and Classroom Language Assessment. According to the LPATE Handbook, a candidate is required to attain Level 3 and above for the Reading assessment in order to be deemed to have a satisfactory level of English language proficiency.

The Reading assessment is divided to three parts where each part consists of a reading text and a set of questions and should be answered within 1 ½ hours. There are 45 questions in the form of open-ended short answers, sentence-completion, filling in the blanks, table or diagram completion, multiple choice and true-false questions.

The Reading assessment encompasses three texts, which may come in a wide variety of forms such as „narratives, arguments, descriptions, dialogues and explanations“ (LPATE Handbook, 2011, pp. 4). It is further stated that the texts selected are usually read by English language teachers for the purpose of teaching and professional development. Every question is allocated one or more marks, which are duly stated below the questions, where the candidates need to write their answers.

The candidates would have to answer these questions with words retrieved from the passage or their own words “except where explicitly stated” (p.5, LPATE Handbook, 2011). The candidates are not required to provide answers in “complete sentences” as long as the answers are complete and the message gets across. The questions aim to investigate the candidates’ general and specific comprehension of the passage which results in subjective questions which necessitate individual opinions and assumptions

The chosen Reading assessment is a part of the sample assessment provided in the handbook. Three reading passages of different themes are provided. The first one is an environmental themed article titled „The Gigabyte Guzzlers“ retrieved from „The Economist Newspaper Limited“. The text is followed by 17 questions of a wide variety ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended questions. These questions carry 1 mark each, bringing in a total of 17 marks. One of the questions is shown in Figure 3.1.

<p>Passage A</p> <p>9. What does the word „generation“ (line 18) imply about servers?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 mark)</p>

Figure 3.1 Reading Comprehension Item in the LPATE

Next, the second passage is about the birth rate of Chinese babies which is based on a social issue of how surging Chinese birth rates in 2007 affect its government. For this passage, there are 11 questions which carry 12 marks all together. The last section includes the third passage which explains bullying in the perspective of a teacher, and a set of 17 questions which carry 25 marks. In conclusion, the Reading assessment which will be used for this research carries a total of 54 marks.

As for the evaluation of the candidates“ proficiency, a table of score which corresponds with the candidates“ proficiency level is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Candidates Scores and Corresponding Proficiency Levels

Proficiency Level	Marks (out of a total of 54)
5	44 marks or above
4	38 – 43 marks
3	24 – 37 marks
2	17 – 23 marks
1	16 marks or below

(Source : The LPATE Handbook, 2011)

Before the LPATE test is adopted for this study, it is important to be gain the consent of the Hong Kong Education Bureau as they hold the ownership of the assessment. An e-mail requesting their permission was sent, after which a reply was received within a week, granting the employment of the instrument.

In granting permission for the researcher to use the LPATE reading assessment, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority has set a list of requirements which need to be followed. First and foremost, the usage of the LPATE is only for educational and non-profit making purpose. Secondly, a different application must be submitted if the LPATE were to be used for a different purpose other than the one stated.

Next, it is also stated that the permission is not extended to any third party copyright material included in the assessment. Finally, the researcher agrees to share the results of the study with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority for academic purposes. It must be noted that the reading assessment is administered in its original form without any amendment.

It is important to note that each reading, writing, listening and speaking assessment is provided with its own score table together with the proficiency levels. Nonetheless, it is advantageous to test the reliability of the reading assessment scores as a stand-alone test. For this, a pilot test is done on 30 ESL teachers of varying levels of proficiency. Their answers are marked according to the scheme provided, after which their scores are matched with their proficiency levels.

3.5 Validity of Questionnaire

According to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005), an instrument's validity is defined as "the degree to which a question measures what it was intended to measure (and not something else)" (p.76). Obtaining the validity of an instrument is essential to ensure that the responses to the instrument reflect the answers for the research questions. For this research, steps are taken to obtain the validity of both the questionnaire and language proficiency test.

As soon as the questionnaire is approved by this researcher's supervisor, it is sent to several individuals who are recognised experts in the field of English Language Education to be validated. Not only that, this questionnaire is also sent to two experienced English Language teachers, who have been teaching the English language for more than thirty years in public secondary schools. Additional suggestions and recommendations were also received from the senior English language teachers before it is sent to the selected academicians to be further validated.

The questionnaire is first sent to a Professor who is currently the Dean at the Faculty of Language Studies and Communication Studies in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Previously, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Language Studies in University Sains Malaysia (USM), Pulau Pinang, where he had lectured for years. He

is recognised nationwide for his extensive research in the field of teaching and learning of English, with a focus on applied linguistics, second language acquisition and pedagogics. He validated the questionnaire after a few amendments were made.

The second expert who validated the questionnaire is a senior lecturer at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. With research interests including assessment, action research, pedagogy, teacher education, reflective practice, higher education and school-based assessment, she has a number of research projects and publications under her name.

These experts are chosen for their extensive knowledge and experience in the field of English Language Teaching. This guarantees validation of the instrument in the most professional sense.

Numerous corrections were made with the suggestions and feedback from these experts. At an earlier stage, the questionnaire was designed online by using Google Forms. Though it was quite effortless to design different types of items online, there are a few issues with the font size and line spacing. When the questionnaire was printed, its layout was not eye-pleasing, with the font being too small and the space between the lines being too narrow. Following the advice of the researcher's supervisor, the questionnaire was designed using Microsoft Word.

Then, there were problems with the arrangement of the items. At first, all the items of the questionnaire were arranged haphazardly which makes it look awfully disorganised. Some items are designed as open-ended question when they should be close ended. The items were also not laid out according to the sequence of the research problems. Suffice to say, the researcher received a lot of criticism and suggestions for the first draft.

For instance, the initial questionnaire contained items such as the one below:

1. Do you enjoy reading in English?

Yes No

Figure 3.2 Pre-revision Questionnaire Item

As can be seen in Figure 3.2, the questionnaire item shown above seemed rather broad, vague and confusing. The comments this researcher received were that the pleasure derived from reading is a broad subject, and items intending to study it must be more specific and try to encompass every single angle of the issue. Thus, the next step taken was to build items which fulfil these criteria. The new and improvised version is seen in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.3

Post-revision Questionnaire Item

ESL TEACHERS' READING PASSION		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Items						
31	I feel relaxed when I read English material.					
32	I feel bored and restless when I have to read English material.					
33	I am able to spend a day without reading English material.					
34	I usually stay awake a whole night to complete reading an English novel					

Table 3.3, (continue)

		ESL TEACHERS' READING PASSION				
	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
35	I have been called a bookworm.					
36	Reading helps me to relieve stress.					
37	Reading makes me forget my problems.					
38	When I read, I live as a character in the text I'm reading					
39	I prefer reading to other leisure activities.					

In addition, according to the experts consulted, the earlier questionnaire included many irrelevant items, which were also quite vague and subjective. To remedy this, the researcher separated the items according to their categories and removed any irrelevant items. In order to simplify the process of data analysis, efforts were taken to place most of the items in the form of Likert scale. Items related to the demography of respondents were designed as close-ended questions while the rest of the items use the Likert scale.

Further suggestions have seen categorisation of the problems according to different factors such as school, accessibility of material and personal. Items related to the respondents' choice of English reading materials were detached from the Likert scale and converted to a table form of close-ended questions. The final changes were made to the questionnaire by parting the items on reading material preferences from the other items. Therefore, Section B of the questionnaire consists of, first, a table of English reading materials together columns of weekly frequencies for the respondents to mark. This is then followed by the items in the Likert scale.

In the end, the final outcome owes a lot to the above-mentioned validators, whose valuable corrections, suggestions and opinions are much appreciated.

3.6 Pilot Test

In order to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot-test needs to be done. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), a pilot test is a „cardinal rule“ (p.177) which must be carried out in any research and the optimal number of people for a pilot test is from five to ten people. An instrument needs to undergo a pilot test in order to “find out how the survey instrument works under realistic conditions” (Martella et al, 2013, p.265)

For the pilot test, the research selected 30 respondents from the population to pilot test the questionnaire. These teachers were the colleagues and friends of this researcher, which simplified the process of gathering feedback and further discussion. The participants of the pilot test were also encouraged to provide comments and criticisms as well as highlight the parts of the questionnaire which needed rectification and improvement.

Once the pilot tests were carried out, the responses for each item were entered in a data set of IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor. Subsequent to the data processing, the reliability scores of the instruments were determined. All the feedback, comments and criticisms obtained during the pilot test were analysed and referred to when the questionnaire was edited further. Finally, with the last edition, the questionnaire and reading assessment were ready to be used as a research instrument.

3.7 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability is defined as “the consistency of a measure of a concept (Bryman, 2012, p.169). In ascertaining the strength of the measuring instrument, three factors ought to be taken into consideration. The factors are instruments’ stability, internal reliability and inter-observer consistency (Bryman, 2012).

For the questionnaire of this research, only its internal reliability was tested as testing its stability requires the „test-retest“ method over a longer period of time which the researcher does not have. Similarly, its inter-observer consistency was not tested as well due to its irrelevance to this research. Therefore, only the internal reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained by the „split-half“ method.

The most commonly used test of internal reliability is a value known as “Cronbach’s alpha”, which, in essence, “calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients (Bryman, 2012, p.170). This value ranges from 0 to 1, and while the value 0.80 is widely accepted as the yardstick, a minimum value of 0.6 is allowed (Bryman, 2012).

As stated above, the second part of the questionnaire investigates the strength of ESL teachers’ reading habits. However, reading habits can be very subjective and difficult to measure. Therefore, the questionnaire items related to the respondents’ reading habits were placed in three groups; the first being „ESL teachers’ strength of reading“, the second being „ESL teachers’ reading passion“ and the last one being „Problems affecting ESL teachers’ reading habits“.

These groups were further divided to subgroups of positive and negative reading habits, after which the reliability for items belonging to each subgroup is assessed. It is worth mentioning that the reliability for the items related to the factors of respondents’ reading habits was also calculated in similar way.

As soon as the pilot test was carried out, the responses from the questionnaire were inserted into the SPSS data spreadsheet.

First and foremost, the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient for items related to positive or strong reading habit was obtained. The variables inserted were items numbered (17) - (23), (25) - (28), (30), (32), (35) – (40). The Alpha-Cronbach coefficient derived was 0.843.

This was followed by the computation of the reliability of items in the negative or weak reading habits subgroup. The items selected were items (14), (15), (16), (24), (29), (31) and (33) for which the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient is 0.77.

The final step was the calculation of the reliability of items related to the problems faced by ESL teachers. The items are (41) – (55) and the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient was 0.73. Overall, the Alpha-Cronbach coefficients were satisfactory and the questionnaire was accepted as a reliable instrument. All tabulated values can be seen in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Reliability of Questionnaire by Item Category

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF ITEMS	ALPHA VALUE
ESL Teachers' Positive Reading Habits	19	.843
ESL Teachers' Negative Reading Habits	7	.770
Problems Faced by ESL Teachers to Read	15	.730
Average		.781

3.8 Procedure of the Study

After obtaining the approval from the faculty, the researcher submitted the proposal and instruments to the Malaysian Ministry of Education to gain an official approval to carry out the case study in selected schools. Next, the researcher submitted the documents and letter bearing the ministry's approval to the Selangor State Education Department to obtain its approval. As soon as the approval is received, the researcher entered the selected schools and met the schools' principals to seek their permission to conduct the case study.

After gaining permission from the principals, the respondents were gathered in a conference room where they were given a brief introduction of the topic of the research. The respondents were also informed that their participation in this research is on a voluntary basis. After a verbal consent was gained, the respondents were given a consent form, which they needed to sign to signal their willingness to be participants of the research.

After that, the process of data collection began with the questionnaires being distributed to the respondents. After the questionnaires were collected, the respondents were given the ninety-minute reading assessment to be answered. Overall, data collection in each school was expected to be accomplished within two hours. This process took a few weeks to complete and was carried out until a satisfactory response rate is obtained.

It may seem easier to gather the responses through post and so forth, but there is a possibility of an unsatisfactory response rate if it is done that way. It is widely known that many English language teachers are burdened with tremendous workload in school, which will probably cause them to ignore the questionnaires. This would increase the risk of a non-response bias, which can be reduced if the response rate is

high (Fincham, 2008). Therefore, meeting the teachers in person and distributing the questionnaire certainly ensured that the number of respondents matches the targeted sample size, other than showing the effort and earnestness of the researcher in procuring the data.

As mentioned, the process of data collection was done through direct meeting with the respondents. The researcher had taken the measure to gather the responses in person as the reading assessment needed to be administered as well. The reading assessment was carried out with available respondents in each school in a formal examination setting. Using other ways of data collection such as by mail did not guarantee authentic responses from the participants of the test. This might have resulted in erroneous data which might have led to incorrect conclusions.

There were a few issues or problems faced by the researcher in the midst of this research. First, in order to carry out the research, the principals of the schools where the respondents were teaching had to be notified. A formal letter requesting their permission had to be submitted a few days before the day of the survey. Besides that, discussions with the heads of language department and heads of English language panel were conducted to facilitate the arrangement of time and place for the survey.

One more thing the researcher had to cope with was the reluctance of the respondents to participate in the survey carried out. With all the heavy workload given to teachers these days, the lack of enthusiasm of the said respondents towards answering the ninety-minute language proficiency test was understandable. Thus, the survey was only carried out with the express consent of the respondents who were allowed to exercise their right not to participate in the survey.

3.9 Data Analysis

Next, the data or findings obtained were analysed before the conclusions were derived. First, the data from the questionnaires were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics V21 software and tabulated in the sequence of the research questions.

According to Kent (2015), the first thing which should be done before analysing the responses obtained is to check the „usability“ of the returned questionnaires. These questionnaires have to be checked carefully for any items which are left unanswered. If the number of items unanswered is too large to be ignored, the questionnaire must be discarded. Similarly, if returned questionnaires have lost any of the pages or do not fulfil a response set check; which means a respondent may have blindly ticked the same scale for every question, they are considered unusable.

After the questionnaires had passed logical check, the data gathered were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The types of analyses used were univariate, which was used to analyse the problems encountered by ESL teachers to read, and bivariate, which was applied when investigating the relationship between ESL teachers“ reading habits and the scores for the reading assessment given.

Univariate analysis is described as an “analysis of one variable at a time” (Bryman, 2012, p.337). This method of analysis is usually presented in the forms of frequency tables and diagrams. In the settings of this research, the analysis of the problems faced by ESL teachers to read is presented in frequency tables and diagrams such as bar charts (Bryman, 2012).

Bivariate analysis, on the other hand, is the analysis of two variables as to investigate the relationship between them (Bryman, 2012). There are a few methods of bivariate analysis, among which the calculation of Pearson's r is chosen as the method of analysis. According to Bryman (2012), the most suitable analytical method is chosen by the types of variables involved and since the variables involved in this research are both interval, the fitting method is the calculation of Pearson's r .

According to Bryman (2012), Pearson's r is defined as a "method for examining relationships between interval/ratio variables" (p.341). This type of measurement is characterised by three attributes. First, the value of the coefficient will "almost certainly" fall between 0 (non-existent relationship) and 1 (perfect relationship). Secondly, the relationship between two variables is stronger if the coefficient is closer to one and vice-versa. The final trait of Pearson's r is that the value of the coefficient is either positive or negative, which signals the "direction of a relationship" (p.342).

Tolmie, Muijs and McAteer (2011), in their extrapolation of Pearson's r , state that this correlation coefficient is used when analysing two "continuous" variables (p.89). The formula for the computation of the Pearson's r coefficient is shown as below.

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

- N = number of pairs of scores
- $\sum xy$ = sum of the products of paired scores
- $\sum x$ = sum of x scores
- $\sum y$ = sum of y scores
- $\sum x^2$ = sum of squared x scores
- $\sum y^2$ = sum of squared y scores

(Source: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/pearson-correlation-coefficient-formula-example-significance.html>, 2018)

Next, the answers for the proficiency test were marked by the researcher with the answer scheme provided (Refer Appendix 2). Subsequently, the respondents' marks were keyed in a dataset which was opened with SPSS. This is followed by a bivariate analysis of the mean value of each respondent's reading rate and their respective language proficiency test score. Finally, the significance of the relationship between the respondents' reading habits and their English language proficiency was analysed and established.

The methods used for data analysis according to the research questions are listed in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Summary of Data Analysis Methods

Research Question	Type of Analysis	Instrument of Measure
1	Percentage of ESL Teachers with Strong Reading Habits	Frequency, Percentage, mean & standard deviation
2	Problems Faced by ESL Teachers to Read	Frequency, Percentage, mean & standard deviation
3	The Relationship between ESL Teachers Reading Habits and Their Language Proficiency	Pearson's R

3.10 Presentation of Data

The next step was to present the data obtained through the instruments of research. The responses for each item were tabulated and analysed. First, the demography of the respondents were examined, with their age and gender presented in percentages. Next, the levels of their professional qualifications were tabled from the highest qualification to the lowest.

This was followed by a tabulation of the respondents' English language teaching experience, after which their Cambridge Placement Test results were presented. Finally, the data related to the categories of the respondents' schools, whether urban, suburban and rural, and their students' proficiency levels in accordance to the classes they teach were presented. All these data were illustrated in the form of tables and diagrams.

The presentation of data attained through Section B of the questionnaire was split into two parts. The first part detailed the types of English reading materials read by the respondents and the frequency of reading them in a week. The second part, due to its length, was presented item by item which, in turn, were partitioned according to the category of variables.

To illustrate further, the first category of variables in the second part of the questionnaire was in relation to the amount of time spent by respondents on reading and the strength of their reading habit. The second category of variables was in connection with the reading frequency of the respondents, while the third category encompassed variables regarding the respondents' passion for reading. These variables were then analysed bivariately with the respondents' language proficiency test scores, after which the results were presented in the form of scatter diagrams.

The final category of variables dealt with the problems faced by the respondents in trying to engage in extensive reading. These problems, on the other hand, were divided into three groups; school, accessibility of materials and personal factors. The data mentioned above were tabulated and presented in the forms of tables and diagrams as well.

3.11 Summary

As a conclusion, this chapter has covered every step and procedure carried out in the course of this research. The research design, sampling methods, instruments and data analysis methods are thoroughly discussed and extrapolated so that all the steps taken by the researcher to carry out the research. Furthermore, the issues and problems faced in the midst of the study are also detailed in this chapter. Subsequent chapters will examine the analysis of the data and findings derived from the analysis.

Universiti Malaysia

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the answers for the research questions of this study. The results will be presented in the sequence of the questions:

- a) What are the types of English reading materials read by the respondents?
- b) What is the general and extensive reading rates among the respondents?
- c) What are the problems preventing the respondents from reading?
- d) Is there a significant relationship between the reading habit and EL proficiency of the respondents?

It is also included here a detailed presentation and analysis of the data gathered through the instruments used in this research, which were a questionnaire and an English language proficiency test. The responses to these instruments were analysed using the SPSS software. The data are presented in the form of tables with frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation as the units measured.

4.1 Data Normality

The level of data normality for the respondents' responses was analysed as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1

Normality of Respondents' Demography

	AGE	GENDER	HPQ	ELTE	CPTR	SCHOOL	B.M	C.M	D.M	E.M	Test Score Mean
Skewness	.393	-2.173	2.034	-.055	-.858	-2.686	-.682	-0.49	.115	.37	-.208
Std. Error of Skewness	.168	.168	.168	.168	.168	.168	.168	0.168	.168	.168	.168
Kurtosis	-.656	2.747	3.527	-1.393	.786	5.264	1.568	-0.257	-1.012	-.571	-.694
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.334	.334	.334	.334	.334	.334	.334	0.334	.334	.334	.334

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the skewness values of the variables and the test scores are between -2.0 and +2.0 except for the gender and highest professional qualification whereas, the kurtosis values of the variables and test scores are in between -7.0 and +7.0. From this, it can be concluded that the data collected are normal and can be analysed parametrically.

4.2 Demography of Respondents

The researcher surveyed 210 ESL teachers who were teaching in secondary schools in the Klang district. The analysis of the demography can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Respondents' Demography

Free Variables	Category	Frequency (Total)	Percentage (%)
Age	25 – 30 years old	21	10.0
	31 – 40 years old	105	50.0
	41 – 50 years old	49	23.3
	51 – 60 years old	35	16.7
Gender	Male	28	13.3
	Female	182	86.7
Highest Professional Qualification	Diploma in Education (TESL)	28	13.3
	Bachelor of Education (TESL)	140	66.7
	Bachelor of English Language and Linguistics	7	3.3
	Masters of Education (TESL)	14	6.7
	Masters in Arts (Linguistics)	7	3.3
	Masters of English Language Studies	0	0.0
	Others	14	6.7
	Less than 5 years	35	16.6
English Language Teaching Experience	5 – 10 years	65	31.0
	11 – 20 years	35	16.7
	More than 20 years	75	35.7
Cambridge Placement Test Result	A1	7	3.3
	A2	7	3.3
	B1	7	3.3
	B2	28	13.3
	C1	77	36.7
	C2	35	16.7
School Category	Not Available	49	23.3
	Urban	21	10.0
	Suburban	189	90.0
	Rural	0	0.0

Analysis of the respondents' demography showed that the respondents who were between the ages of 31 and 40 years old formed the biggest percentage at 50%. The majority of the respondents were female at 86.7% (182). This was proportional to the population of ESL teachers in Klang's secondary schools.

Next, respondents with a Bachelor of Education (TESL) qualification shaped the biggest group (140, 66.7%). It is important to note that 14 respondents possessed qualifications outside the field of TESL, Linguistics and English Language Studies. Meanwhile, teachers who had been teaching for more than 20 years formed the majority of the respondents (75, 35.7%).

Next, more than a third of the respondents had scored a C1 for the Cambridge Placement Test (77, 36.7%) which was carried out in 2012. It was also observed that 90% of them were teaching in suburban schools while a third of them taught English to students with high proficiency in the language.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

In this research, descriptive analysis was used in order to analyse data which involve the values of mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency of response to the questionnaire items. After the data were processed, the findings exhibited values which were categorised according to the five categories outlined by the Educational Planning and Research Division of Malaysian Ministry of Education (2006). The objective of this endeavour is to illustrate the level and interpretation of the average mean scores as seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Average Score and Mean Interpretation

Average Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.89	Very low
1.90 – 2.69	Low
2.70 – 3.49	Average
3.50 – 4.29	High
4.30 – 5.00	Very high

4.4 Analysis of Findings**4.4.1 Research Question 1 :**

What are the types of reading materials read most frequently by ESL teachers?

This section is related to respondents' preferences of reading material and the frequency of these materials being read.

Table 4.4

ESL Teachers' Choice of English Reading Material (In a Week)

ESL TEACHERS' CHOICE OF ENGLISH READING MATERIAL (IN A WEEK)								
NUM	READING MATERIAL	NONE	1 DAY	3 DAYS	5 DAYS	DAILY	M	SD
1	NEWSPAPER	56 (26.7%)	28 (13.3%)	35 (16.7%)	28 (13.3%)	63 (30.0%)	3.07	1.59
2	MAGAZINES	77 (36.7%)	63 (30.0%)	49 (23.3%)	21 (10.0%)	0	2.07	1.00
3	TABLOIDS	112 (53.3%)	56 (26.7%)	21 (10.0%)	7 (3.3%)	14 (6.7%)	1.83	1.16
4	NOVELS	105 (50.0%)	42 (20.0%)	35 (16.7%)	14 (6.7%)	14 (6.7%)	2.00	1.24
5	SHORT STORIES	84 (40.0%)	49 (23.3%)	28 (13.3%)	21 (10.0%)	28 (13.3%)	2.33	1.43
6	NON-FICTION BOOKS	105 (50.0%)	63 (30.0%)	28 (13.3%)	7 (3.3%)	7 (3.3%)	1.80	1.02

Table 4.3, (continue)

ESL TEACHERS' CHOICE OF ENGLISH READING MATERIAL (IN A WEEK)								
NUM	READING MATERIAL	NONE	1 DAY	3 DAYS	5 DAYS	DAILY	M	SD
7	ENCYCLOPAEDIA	105 (50.0%)	42 (20.0%)	35 (16.7%)	0	28 (13.3%)	2.07	1.37
8	BLOGS	28 (13.3%)	35 (16.7%)	42 (20.0%)	21 (10.0%)	84 (40.0%)	3.47	1.48
9	SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS	7 (3.3%)	28 (13.3%)	21 (10.0%)	7 (3.3%)	147 (70.0%)	4.23	1.26
10	WEBSITES	0	49 (23.3%)	28 (13.3%)	14 (6.7%)	119 (56.7%)	3.97	1.28
11	E-BOOKS	133 (63.3%)	28 (13.3%)	14 (6.7%)	21 (10.0%)	14 (6.7%)	1.83	1.30
12	AUDIO BOOKS	168 (80.0%)	28 (13.3%)	0	7 (3.3%)	7 (3.3%)	1.37	0.91
13	COMICS	154 (73.3%)	21 (10.0%)	7 (3.3%)	21 (10.0%)	7 (3.3%)	1.60	1.15
	Average						2.43	1.25

In regards to materials which were read more than 3 days a week, it could be seen that social media posts were the most widely-read material (175, 73.3) by the respondents. This was followed by websites (161, 76.7) as the second-most read material among the respondents while at the third rank was blogs (147, 70.0). The least read material was audio book (14, 6.6).

The average mean score obtained was 2.43 (SD 1.25), which was interpreted as „low“ according to the scale in Table 4.3. The average mean score was calculated by using the formula below.

$$\text{Average mean score} = \frac{\text{Sum of Mean Scores}}{13}$$

The value of the average mean score showed that the materials read by ESL teachers in Malaysia were limited and not varied. Separate reading of the mean values also leads to the conclusion that social media post, websites, online blogs and

newspapers were the most preferred reading materials and read most frequently by ESL teachers.

4.4.2 Research question 2 :

What are the rates of general and extensive reading among ESL teachers?

Findings for the second research question were obtained by analysing the responses to the items related to positive reading habits in the questionnaire. Table 4.5 exhibits the data retrieved.

Table 4.5

Respondents' Responses to Items Related to Positive Reading Habits

Num	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	D
1	I read English materials for more than one hour a day.	0 (0.0%)	56 (26.7%)	28 (13.3%)	84 (40.0%)	42 (20.0%)	3.53	1.09
2	I read English materials when having meals alone.	28 (13.3%)	42 (20.0%)	42 (20.0%)	77 (36.7%)	21 (10.0%)	3.10	1.22
3	I read English materials while waiting.	0 (0.0%)	21 (10.0%)	42 (20.0%)	112 (53.3%)	35 (16.7%)	3.77	0.85
4	I read English materials when travelling.	28 (13.3%)	42 (20.0%)	42 (20.0%)	91 (43.3%)	14 (6.7%)	3.17	1.13
5	I read English materials before going to bed.	7 (3.3%)	42 (20.0%)	42 (20.0%)	77 (36.7%)	42 (20.0%)	3.50	1.12
6	I go to the library to read and borrow books every week.	56 (26.7%)	112 (53.3%)	35 (16.7%)	7 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1.97	0.75
7	I subscribe to English language magazines.	42 (20.0%)	91 (43.3%)	35 (16.7%)	35 (16.7%)	7 (3.3%)	2.40	1.09
8	I always buy English reading materials from the bookstores.	28 (13.3%)	42 (20.0%)	28 (13.3%)	63 (30.0%)	49 (23.3%)	3.30	1.37

Table 4.5, (continue)

Num	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	D
9	I use my smartphone to read English materials more than other functions.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	42 (20.0%)	84 (40.0%)	84 (40.0%)	4.20	0.75
10	I always buy English reading material online.	49 (23.3%)	84 (40.0%)	35 (16.7%)	28 (13.3%)	14 (6.7%)	2.40	1.17
11	I have more than 50 English reading materials at home.	14 (6.7%)	21 (10.0%)	21 (10.0%)	70 (33.3%)	84 (40.0%)	3.90	1.22
12	I feel relaxed when I read English materials.	0 (0.0%)	7 (3.3%)	42 (20.0%)	70 (33.3%)	91 (43.3%)	4.17	0.86
13	I usually stay awake a whole night to complete reading an English novel.	42 (20.0%)	91 (43.3%)	21 (10.0%)	21 (10.0%)	35 (16.7%)	2.60	1.36
14	I have been called a bookworm.	21 (10.0%)	105 (50.0%)	7 (3.3%)	42 (20.0%)	35 (16.7%)	2.83	1.32
15	Reading helps me to relieve stress.	0 (0.0%)	14 (6.7%)	28 (3.3%)	126 (60.0%)	42 (20.0%)	3.93	0.77
16	Reading makes me forget my problems	0 (0.0%)	21 (10.0%)	35 (16.7%)	98 (46.7%)	56 (26.7%)	3.90	0.91
17	When I read, I live as a character in the text I'm reading.	7 (3.3%)	56 (26.7%)	35 (16.7%)	70 (33.3%)	42 (20.0%)	3.40	1.17
18	I prefer reading to other social activities.	14 (6.7%)	49 (23.3%)	63 (30.0%)	49 (23.3%)	35 (16.7%)	3.20	1.17
	Average						3.29	1.07

As shown in Table 4.5, the respondents reacted positively to only 8 out of 18 items which are related to positive reading habits. The highest mean score was for ninth item (Mean 4.20, SD 0.75) to which the respondents agreed that they use their smartphones to read English materials more than any other functions. For this item,

168 respondents agreed (80.0%) while the remaining 42 (20.0%) maintained a neutral stance.

The second highest mean score was for item 15 (Mean 3.93, SD 0.77) which asked the respondents if reading helped them to relieve stress. 168 respondents (80.0%) concurred with that statement while 28 of them (3.3%) were unsure. On the other hand, 14 respondents (6.7%) disagreed.

At the third place were mean scores 3.90 for 2 items; items 11 (Mean 3.90, SD 1.22) and 16 (Mean 3.90, SD 0.91). Item 11 asks the respondents if they have more than 50 reading materials at home. 35 respondents (16.7%) disagreed while 154 (73.3%) agreed. 21 (10.0%) maintained a neutral position.

Next, item 16 investigated if reading helped the respondents to forget their problems. 21 respondents (10.0%) disagreed while 35 (16.7%) of them were unsure. However, a whopping 73.4% (154) affirmed the reading did help them to forget their problems.

The lowest mean score was for item 6 (Mean 1.97, SD 0.75) which asked the respondents if they went to the library to read and borrowed books every week. Most of them (168, 80.0%) disagreed with the statement whereas 7 (3.3%) agreed. 35 respondents (16.7%) were unsure about it.

The second lowest mean score was for item 7 (Mean 2.40, SD 1.09) and item 10 (Mean 2.40, SD 1.17). The former questioned the respondents if they subscribed to English language magazines. More than half (133, 63.3%) disagreed while 42 (20.0%) agreed. 35 respondents (16.7%) were neutral.

For item 10 (Mean 2.40, SD 1.17), more than half (132, 63.3%) stated that they did not always buy English reading material online. 35 (16.7%) were unsure and 42 (20.0%) respondents stated that they did buy English reading materials online.

To surmise, the average mean score is 3.29, which was interpreted as average value.

The subsequent analysis is of the responses to questionnaire items which were related to the negative reading habits. Table 4.6 exhibits the data distribution.

Table 4.6

Respondents' Responses to Items Related to Negative Reading Habits

Num	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
1	I read English materials only during school holidays.	42 (20.0%)	98 (46.7%)	28 (13.3%)	42 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.33	1.01
2	I read English materials only on the weekends.	42 (20.0%)	105 (50.0)	21 (10.0%)	42 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.30	1.01
3	I read English materials for less than one hour a day.	14 (6.7%)	119 (56.7%)	21 (10.0)	49 (23.3%)	7 (3.3%)	2.60	1.02
4	I go to the library to read or borrow books every month.	42 (20.0%)	91 (43.3%)	21 (10.0%)	56 (26.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2.43	1.09
5	I rarely go to the library to read and borrow books.	42 (20.0%)	35 (16.7%)	28 (13.3%)	91 (43.3%)	14 (6.7%)	3.00	1.29
6	I have less than 50 English reading materials at home.	63 (30.0%)	63 (30.0%)	28 (13.3%)	42 (20.0%)	14 (6.7%)	2.43	1.29
7	I do not have any English reading material at home.	154 (73.3%)	49 (23.3%)	7 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1.30	0.53
8	I feel bored and restless when I have to read English materials.	77 (36.7%)	91 (43.3%)	35 (16.7%)	7 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1.87	0.81
9	I am able to spend a day without reading English materials.	35 (16.7%)	70 (33.3%)	56 (26.7%)	42 (20.0%)	7 (3.3%)	2.60	1.09
Average							2.32	1.02

As illustrated in Table 4.6, the highest mean score was for item 5 (Mean 3.0, SD 1.29) which asked if the respondents rarely go to the library to read and borrow books. 77 respondents (36.7%) disagreed with that statement while exactly half of them (105, 50.0%) agreed. 28 respondents or 13.3% were unsure.

The second-highest mean score was for item 3 (Mean 2.60, SD 1.02) and item 9 (Mean 2.60, SD 1.09). The former was about ESL teachers spending less than an hour to read English materials, to which more than half (133, 63.4%) of the respondents disagreed. A smaller number agreed (56, 26.6%) whereas 21 (10.0%) were neutral.

Item 9 was associated with the ability of the respondents to spend a day without reading any English materials. Exactly half of the respondents (105, 50.0%) disagreed with that statement. On the contrary, almost a quarter (49, 23.3%) agreed while more than quarter (56, 26.7%) stayed neutral.

The lowest mean score was for item 7, which enquired the respondents if they did not have any English reading materials at home. Almost all of them (203, 96.6%) disagreed with 7 (3.3%) staying on the fence.

In summary, the average mean score for the items related to negative reading habits was low, at $M = 2.32$.

4.4.3 Research Question 3 :

What are the problems preventing the respondents from reading?

The findings regarding the problems faced by the respondents to partake in reading are exhibited in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Problems Affecting ESL Teachers' Reading Habits

Num	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	D
1	The time I could use to read at home is used for school work such as marking students' work.	21 (10.0%)	14 (6.7%)	35 (16.7%)	119 (56.7%)	21 (10.0%)	3.50	1.09
2	I am always too exhausted to read at home due to a heavy teaching timetable.	7 (3.3%)	28 (13.3%)	35 (16.7%)	112 (53.3%)	28 (13.3%)	3.60	0.99
3	Many of my weekends are spent on school programmes.	21 (10.0%)	21 (10.0%)	49 (23.3%)	105 (50.0%)	14 (6.7%)	3.33	1.08
4	I do not receive any encouragement to read English material from my employers.	28 (13.3%)	56 (26.7%)	63 (30.0%)	42 (20.0%)	21 (10.0%)	2.87	1.18
5	My job does not demand extensive reading of non-academic English material.	49 (23.3%)	49 (23.3%)	56 (26.7%)	56 (26.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2.57	1.12
6	There is a lack of programmes to encourage ESL teachers to read English material.	14 (6.7%)	35 (16.7%)	70 (33.3%)	70 (33.3%)	21 (10.0%)	3.23	1.06
7	There aren't any bookstores which sell quality reading material in my residential area.	56 (26.7%)	119 (56.7%)	21 (10.0%)	7 (3.3%)	7 (3.3%)	2.00	0.90
8	There is a lack of English reading materials in the teachers' room.	21 (10.0%)	35 (16.7%)	28 (13.3%)	63 (30.0%)	63 (30.0%)	3.53	1.34
9	English reading materials in my school library are outdated and uninteresting.	7 (3.3%)	70 (33.3%)	14 (6.7%)	77 (36.7%)	42 (20.0%)	3.37	1.23
10	The English reading materials I'd like to buy are too expensive.	0 (0.0%)	42 (20.0%)	49 (23.3%)	70 (33.3%)	49 (23.3%)	3.60	1.05

11	I do not have access to strong internet connection to read online English material.	70 (33.3%)	91 (43.3%)	21 (10.0%)	14 (6.7%)	14 (6.7%)	2.10	1.14
12	My family commitments prevent me from reading English materials.	35 (16.7%)	91 (43.3%)	35 (16.7%)	42 (20.0%)	7 (3.3%)	2.50	1.09
13	My social media interactions occupy most of my time.	63 (30.0%)	49 (23.3%)	56 (26.7%)	35 (16.7%)	7 (3.3%)	2.40	1.17
14	I prefer watching television programmes to reading.	35 (16.7%)	42 (20.0%)	49 (23.3%)	84 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.87	1.12
15	I have a short attention span which causes me to lose interest in what I read.	49 (23.3%)	56 (26.7%)	42 (20.0%)	63 (30.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.57	1.15
Average							2.94	.11

Table 4.7 shows that the highest mean score was 3.60, which was obtained for items 2 (SD 0.99) and 10 (SD 1.05). Item 2 questioned if the respondents were too exhausted to read at home due to a heavy teaching timetable. 35 respondents (16.6%) disagreed while the same number was unsure. However, most of them (140, 66.6%) concurred with the statement.

The next item with a similar mean score was item 10, which asked if the English reading materials the respondents would like to buy were too expensive. More than half of the respondents (119, 56.6%) agreed while 42 (20.0%) disagreed. 49 (23.3%) were neutral.

The third highest mean score was 3.53, for item 8. This item referred to the lack of English reading materials in the teachers' room at schools. 56 respondents (26.7%) felt that there was adequate reading materials in their room whereas 126

(60.0%) of them had a differing opinion. The rest of them (28, 13.3%) maintained a neutral stance.

The lowest mean score was for item 7, which was about the absence of bookstores which sold quality reading materials in the respondents' residential areas. Most of them (175, 83.4%) opposed this statement although a small number (14, 6.6%) agreed with it. Meanwhile, 21 (10.0%) were neutral.

Overall, the average mean score was 2.94 (SD 1.11) and, based on the mean interpretation scale, is categorised as average.

4.4.4 Research Question 4

What is the relationship between ESL teachers' reading habits and their English language proficiency?

To ascertain the relationship between the respondents' reading habits and their English language proficiency, a bivariate analysis was carried out. The null and alternative hypotheses for this research question are as below.

H_0 - There is no significant relationship between respondents' reading habit and their language proficiency.

H_A - There is a positive correlation between respondents' reading habit and their language proficiency.

The respondents' answers in the LPATE were marked according to the marking scheme provided in the test handbook. Next, the scores for the language proficiency test administered are compiled and categorised. Table 4.8 shows the distribution of the respondents' scores.

Table 4.8

Analysis of Respondents' Scores and Bands

PROFICIENCY LEVEL	SCORE (Total marks = 54)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
5	44 marks or above	23	10.95
4	38 – 43 marks	64	30.48
3	24 – 37 marks	83	39.52
2	17 – 23 marks	27	12.86
1	16 marks or below	13	6.19

Table 4.8 shows the analysis of the respondents' scores and the matching bands. 23 respondents (10.95%) achieved Band 5, which is the highest band, by scoring 44 marks and above. Next, 64 respondents or 30.48% received marks in the range of 38 -43, for which they were accorded Band 4. Then, 83 respondents or 39.52% were accorded Band 3 for getting scores between 24 and 37 marks, whereas 27 respondents obtained marks from 17 to 23, thus achieving a Band 2. Finally, 13 respondents scored 16 marks and below, which places them in the Band 1 level of proficiency.

Analysis of the respondents' answers according to each part of the Reading paper also shows that the respondents were able to answer correctly questions which require straightforward answers from the text. They seemed to have faced problems in answering questions which demand them to find the implied meaning of phrases and sentences as well as to derive a conclusion from a paragraph.

For the first text, there were 17 questions; 1 respondent managed to answer all the questions correctly while 3 respondents got 15 questions correct. Similarly, 3 respondents answered 13 questions correctly and 24 respondents answered 12

questions correctly. 36 respondents managed to get 10 questions correct whereas 52 respondents got 9 questions correctly answered. 41 respondents answered 8 questions correctly while 20 answered 6 correctly. 15 answered 5 questions correctly and another 15 got only 3 questions correct.

For the second text, there were 11 questions; no respondents managed to answer all the questions correctly while 10 respondents got 10 questions correct. Similarly, 25 respondents answered 9 questions correctly and 27 respondents answered 8 questions correctly. 38 respondents managed to get 6 questions correct whereas 42 respondents got 5 questions correctly answered. 40 respondents answered 4 questions correctly while 18 answered 3 correctly. 5 answered 2 questions correctly and 5 got only 1 question correct.

For the third text, there were 17 questions; 3 respondents managed to answer all the questions correctly while 7 respondents got 14 questions correct. Similarly, 23 respondents answered 12 questions correctly and 29 respondents answered 10 questions correctly. 33 respondents managed to get 9 questions correct whereas 44 respondents got 7 questions correctly answered. 42 respondents answered 6 questions correctly while 15 answered 5 correctly. 5 answered 3 questions correctly and 2 got only 1 question correct.

To find the relationship between the positive reading habits and the English language proficiency of the respondents, a bivariate analysis was conducted. Before that, the respondent's scores were entered into the data set of the SPSS. From the analysis, it can be deduced that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.677$, $n = 210$, $p = 0$. Based on the correlation interpretation scale, the correlation is moderate.

Table 4.9

Analysis of Pearson R value

		Correlations	
		c_mean	testscores
c_mean	Pearson Correlation	1	.677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	210	210
Testscores	Pearson Correlation	.677**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	210	210

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A correlation of 0.677 confirms that there is a moderately strong relationship between ESL teachers' reading habits and their English language proficiency. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis H_A is accepted.

4.5 Summary

To recap, the findings of this research show that ESL teachers in Malaysia tend to read very light materials and avoid more demanding ones. Furthermore, it is uncovered in this chapter that the rate of extensive reading among ESL teachers is average to moderately high. On another note, the biggest problem faced by these teachers to read is their heavy workload. Finally, there is a moderate correlation between ESL teachers' reading habits and their English language proficiency.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, the findings of this research are discussed and summarised based on the analysis done in Chapter 4. This chapter also includes discussions about the strengths and weaknesses uncovered throughout the duration of this research, as well as its implications on the field of ESL teaching in Malaysia.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research aims to study the strength of reading habits among Malaysian ESL teachers and whether it corresponds with their English language proficiency. The sample used in this research is 210 ESL teachers teaching in the district of Klang in Selangor, which represents half of the district ESL teachers' population. The instruments used are a questionnaire and an English language proficiency test.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Research Question 1 :

What are the types of English reading materials read by the respondents?

Based on the data analysed, it was observed that the three most popular reading materials among ESL teachers were online reading materials such as social media posts (175, 83.3), websites (161, 76.7) and blogs (14, 6.6).

This differed with the outcome of a research done by Tharumaraj and Nordin (2011) where the top three preferred reading materials among the 65 respondents were newspaper (19.1%), magazines (15.2%) and websites (14.6%). As can be seen, there is a difference in the category of materials read in both researches. The

preferred materials in the former were all online or digital materials whereas in the latter, most of the materials of choice were print materials.

The possible explanation for this scenario is the nine-year gap between both researches. That time frame had seen the widespread use of smartphones in everyday lives of Malaysians. This had led to online reading materials being readily accessible to every section of the society. In addition, the advent of social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp have created a new lifestyle, influenced the type of content read and replaced books as popular reading materials (Adu-Sarkodee, Asante & Akussah, 2015; Obaidullah & Rahman, 2018).

Yet, there is a similarity between both the researches; the three most favoured materials by ESL teachers were all light materials. This research uncovered the fact that heavy reading materials such as novels (14, 6.7%), short stories (28, 13.3%) and non-fiction books (7, 3.3%) were read daily only by a minority of the teachers

Likewise, the findings of research by Tharumaraj and Nordin (2011) also showed that heavy reading materials like novels (10.5%) and fiction (8.2%) were not very popular among ESL teachers. It is the same case with non-fiction materials which were only read by 6% of the respondents.

All these only confirmed the assumption that most of Malaysian ESL teachers read only light materials which might not be intellectually-taxing or require a lot of their attention (Gan, 2002). It is also possible that these teachers favoured light reading materials such as social media posts or newspapers to obtain information or be updated with the latest issues.

The trend discussed above is a reflection of the reading habits of the Malaysian population in general and the types of materials read. As stated by the then Minister of Education, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (The Star, 19 April 2009),

Malaysians had a preference towards light reading materials such as newspapers and magazines and tended to shun heavy reading materials such as books, fiction or non-fiction. He further stressed that more emphasis should be placed on reading heavy materials such as books.

This phenomenon is not unique to Malaysia as proven by a study by Manohar (2016) on 1305 Arts and Science College teachers in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. These teachers belonged to various teaching disciplines such as Humanities, Social Sciences and Professional. The findings of this study found that both male and female teachers preferred reading newspapers, followed by subject-related books and journals. Novels or fiction were ranked the lowest among their preferences (Manohar, 2016)

In regards to digital reading habits, several scholars (Liu, 2005; Lee and Wong, 2017; Kovač and van der Weel, 2018) have argued that reading social media posts does not constitute as extensive reading.

Liu (2005), while studying digital reading of adults aged between 30 and 45 years old, pointed out that „screen-based reading“ involved more “browsing and scanning, keyword spotting, one-time reading, non-linear reading“ as well as selective reading, and results in decreased “in-depth reading, concentrated reading” and sustained attention.

Lee and Wong (2017), in their study of reading habits of Malaysian university students, pointed out that surfing the net or reading social media posts might not be considered as „deep reading“ due to the various distractions in the form of advertisements and multiple apps being used at the same time. These distractions are known as „clickbaits“ which disrupt the process of continuous reading with abrupt

popping of links and headlines by pulling readers' attention away from the online text they reading.

Kovač and van der Weel (2018) pointed out that reading texts generated on social media was not thought as extensive reading as the internet is a „fast-paced medium“, which leads to readers preferring shorter texts. They further argued that shorter texts are inherently non-complex and do not contain a wide range of vocabulary. As a result, readers, being very used to short and simple texts, develops an aversion towards longer and more complex texts.

As a result, readers with tendencies to read short texts and eschew long-form texts may be unable to comprehend more complex ideas and linguistic structures. These readers may also lose an exposure to a wide range of vocabulary, which may not be found in social media posts in general.

In line with this, we have to accept that reading on social media should not be accepted as extensive reading and, in fact, it has been acknowledged by various experts that social media usage, especially among the younger generation, has led to the decline of reading as a leisure activity among the youth today (Adu – Sarkodee, Asante & Akussah, 2015; Kovač & van der Weel, 2018).

In conclusion, it can be summarised that the types of reading materials read by Malaysian ESL teachers belong to the category of light material. Furthermore, online reading materials seem to have gained more popularity than print reading materials.

5.2.2 Research Question 2 :

What is the general and extensive reading rates among the respondents?

Based on the analysis of the items related to positive and negative reading habits, the conclusion derived was that the rates of general and extensive reading among Malaysian ESL teachers were high and average respectively.

The analyses of general and extensive reading habits were based on the frequency of reading and types of materials read. Analyses have shown that while the respondents spent a lot of time reading, the effect was curtailed by the range of materials read.

In connection to items related to positive reading habit (Mean 3.29, SD 1.07), the rate of extensive reading among the respondents was considered as average. The analysis of the items showed that 10 items had scored a high mean (> 3.50) while 4 items had scored an average ($3.50 > \text{mean} > 2.70$) and low means (< 2.70) respectively.

Therefore, it could be concluded that Malaysian ESL teachers strongly agree that they always read English materials for more than one hour a day and while waiting. They also usually read English materials before going to bed and it was also proven that they used their smartphones to read English materials more than other functions.

The analysis further showed that ESL teachers in Malaysia possessed more than 50 reading materials at home. Furthermore, it could be agreed upon that they definitely felt relaxed when they read English materials and reading helped them to relieve stress. Correspondingly, ESL teachers strongly believe that reading was a form of escapism as it helped them to forget their problems.

Next, the respondents also moderately agreed that they read English reading materials when having meals alone and while travelling. They also agreed that, at an average degree, they have always bought English reading materials from bookstores and that their strong reading habits had resulted in them being called a „book-worm“. Moreover, they moderately agreed that when they read, they lived as the character in the text they are reading. Finally, the respondents fairly concurred that they preferred reading to other social activities.

On the contrary, the respondents did admit that they did not go to the library to read and borrow books every week nor did they subscribe to any English language magazines. Furthermore, it could be seen that purchasing reading materials online was not as widespread among ESL teachers as it should be. Also, the fact that more than half of the respondents acknowledged that they did not stay awake a whole night to complete reading an English novel also showed the lack of a vociferous reading habit among Malaysian ESL teachers.

However, analysis of the questionnaire items related to negative reading habits also disclosed the fact that ESL teachers did not shun reading altogether. Based on the items with the three lowest mean scores, we could generalise that most of them did have English reading materials at home, did not feel bored and restless when they had to read English materials and did not read English materials only during school holidays.

Nevertheless, it is worrying to see that the respondents' reading habits were not strong enough to fulfil the criteria of extensive and enthusiastic readers. This is based on the above-mentioned analysis which presented the fact that the respondents agreed that they rarely went to the library to read and borrow books, read English

materials for less than one hour a day and were able to spend a day without reading any English materials.

The analysis of types of reading materials preferred by the respondents also depicted a serious disinterest and indifference towards heavier and more demanding reading material such as novels, short stories and non-fiction books. Only 28 respondents or 13.4% of the respondents read novels at least 5 days in a week whereas merely 23.3% read short stories as frequently.

In contrast, a whopping 50% did not read novels at any time in a week while nearly half at 40% did not read short stories at all. This trend continued with non-fiction books and encyclopaedia which were not read by 50% of the respondents in a week.

Nonetheless, analysis of their reading materials had revealed that Malaysian ESL teachers' reading habits did not fulfil the criteria of extensive reading, which requires reading a wide range of materials. Overall, it was clear to see that while the data analysis exhibited a high frequency of reading among Malaysian ESL teachers, the types of reading materials read by them should also be taken into consideration. There is a consensus among reading experts that extensive reading should involve heavier and more demanding materials like novels or short stories rather than social media posts, websites or newspapers.

This finding conformed to the one by Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) who found that ESL teachers in Malaysia „do read“ but not extensively and certainly not as much as “watching television or movies.” The ones who did read stated that they chose their materials which had “interesting titles and topics” as well as ones which help increase their knowledge and develop language skills.

Tharumaraj and Noordin's findings are similar to the findings of a research by Giles and Tunks (2019) who uncovered an inclination towards aliteracy among 24 teachers who were enrolled as graduate students in a south-eastern American university. Even here, the respondents admitted that watching movies was the most preferred leisure-type activities as compared to reading literature for pleasure, which was ranked at 8th spot.

A study by Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitt (2008) also illustrated the growing problem of aliteracy among 788 inservice and prospective literacy and special education teachers in New York. The findings show less than half of the respondents that is only 47% identified themselves as "enthusiastic to highly enthusiastic readers" while 17% admitted that they did not find reading enjoyable. The rest of the respondents indicated that they only read "if and when they had time". On the whole, the researchers discovered that reading was not viewed with strong passion and enthusiasm by these teachers.

Going by the discussion above, it is safe to summarise that the rates of reading among ESL teachers in Malaysia are between average to high, with only light materials being mostly read.

5.2.3 Research Question 3 :

What are the problems preventing the respondents from reading?

From the analysis of questionnaire items regarding the problems faced by the respondents to read, it could be generalised that the biggest problem the teachers faced was their workload. Three items related to teachers' workload scored mean values of average to high.

The respondents agreed that the time they could use to read at home was used school work such as marking students' work. They further concurred that they were always too exhausted to read at home due to a heavy teaching timetable and that many of their weekends were spent on school programmes.

This finding is supported by researches by Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) and Sanjan anak Daik (2006) who listed teachers' workload as one of the reasons for their non-reading. The former posits that because of their workload, ESL teachers simply don't have the time to indulge in reading.

Several studies (R.Ramesh Rao & Rohana Jani, 2011; The Malay Mail Online, September 19, 2016) have been done to substantiate the claim that Malaysian teachers, in general, are laden with tasks and duties which consumed a lot of valuable time; time which could be spent on reading. Teachers in Malaysian public schools are known to shoulder various responsibilities, besides teaching, such as invigilating examinations, filling online and offline data, managing the schools' sick rooms and even repairing the schools' amenities.

Further exacerbating the situation is the critical shortage of teachers of certain subject majors, such as the English language, which has caused the ones in service to be bogged down with teaching periods more than they should have. It is quite uncommon to see ESL teachers in certain schools with more than 28 teaching periods which means these teachers are given more than four classes to teach. The additional periods also bring with them more books and, when an examination is over, more answer scripts to mark.

Hence, it comes as no surprise that Malaysian ESL teachers found it difficult to allocate time to read. As supported by the findings of this research, teachers' workload has resulted in exhaustion and serious lack of time. Even during the school

holidays, job-related tasks such as marking examination scripts seem to follow the teachers everywhere they go.

As discussed in Chapter 2, this situation is not unique to Malaysia as even in other countries, language teachers are unable to read due to their heavy workload. An article by Secret Teacher for The Guardian International Edition dated 20th May 2017 claims that English language teachers in the UK were also bogged down with school work which prohibits them from reading.

In contrast, Giles and Tunks (2019), in their research on elementary teachers enrolled for postgraduate courses in the University of South Alabama, claimed that „lack of time“ was not the chief reason for aliteracy among their subjects and nor was distraction by social media. Instead, the researchers stressed that „lack of motivation“ might have played a big role in their subjects“ aliteracy. It was possible that lack of motivation is directly connected to the issue of lack of time. Experts do agree that motivated readers would somehow manage to find the time to read. Therefore, in the context of this research, there is a possibility of the respondents feeling unmotivated enough to allocate a little time to read.

The next problem faced by the respondents was the lack of access to print reading materials. The respondents, in common, agreed that there was a lack of English reading materials in the teachers“ room and that the English reading materials in their school library were outdated and uninteresting. The respondents also seemed to be in agreement that the English reading materials they would like to buy were too expensive.

On the other hand, the respondents do admit that they had a strong access to online reading material. Most of them disagreed that they did not have strong internet connection to read online English reading materials. Besides, they also disagreed that

there weren't any bookstores which sell quality reading materials in their residential areas.

These findings indicated that, even though ESL teachers' access to reading materials in school was limited, they were definitely able to acquire their reading materials by going online or to the nearest book store.

Teachers' access to reading materials for leisure reading is not a widely researched topic. In Malaysian context, only one study, by Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011), was found to analyse teachers' sources of reading materials. In their study, they found that most of the ESL teachers they studied acquired their reading material "at the bookshop". In connection to this, no research has been found to analyse teachers' access to reading materials while at work.

To summarise, the biggest obstacle hindering Malaysian ESL teachers from reading was their workload, such as marking books and packed teaching timetables has caused exhaustion and reduced the time they have to read. Furthermore, there is a worrying lack of interesting and up-to-date English reading materials for teachers to read.

5.2.4 Research Question 4 :

Is there a significant relationship between the reading habit and EL proficiency of the respondents?

The finding for the fourth research question showed that there was a moderate correlation between ESL teachers' reading habits and their EL proficiency. Therefore, the null hypothesis posited in Chapter 1 was accepted.

This finding seemed to affirm Krashen's Input Hypothesis; in that, a consistent reading habit is necessary for language development, in particularly second language development. According to Krashen, (1989), if the IH is accepted,

then it is also accepted that language acquisition occurs in tandem with the amount of comprehensible input received.

The IH also proposes the formula of $i + l$, where i is the comprehensible input language learners receive when they read to enhance their pre-existing linguistic competence which is represented by the variable l . Therefore, according to the IH, progressive language acquisition takes place when readers are exposed to linguistic levels a little higher than their current levels.

Various studies (Janopoulos, 1986; Bachiri, 2015; Lee & Wong, 2017) presenting a strong relationship between an extensive reading habit and development of language skills serve as the concrete proof that reading is crucial in order to attain language proficiency. This is a point which must be accepted by ESL teachers in particular and the acceptance would be an important first step in the process of upgrading their quality as English teachers.

Since this research employed the reading paper of the LPATE to measure ESL teachers' EL proficiency, it would be reasonable to set the discussion here to the relationship between reading habits and reading proficiency. Reading proficiency is the end result of strengthening four major skills of reading which are decoding, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Out these four, two; vocabulary and comprehension shall be discussed with the support of the responses to the LPATE.

Analysis of responses to the reading test had uncovered a lack of understanding of certain phrases among the respondents. For example, the second question for the first text asked the closest meaning to the phrase „to fret about“, for which the correct answer was „to occupy their minds“. Only 57 (27.4%) respondents answered correctly. However, more respondents at 124 (59.04%) managed to answer correctly the fourth question, which asked for the meaning of the word „frugal“.

These two examples were among many which illustrate the unsatisfactory vocabulary knowledge of the respondents of this research. It shows that there is a very significant relationship between a strong passion towards reading and wide vocabulary range. This assertion is supported by a few researches carried out in both local and foreign contexts.

A research by Lee and Wong (2017), on 33 undergraduates in a Malaysian university attempted to explore the relationship between their reading habits and vocabulary range along with their writing skills. The instruments used here were a vocabulary test, a reading survey and a writing task.

It was found that the lack of reading habit among them had resulted in them not acquiring the vocabulary range which university students should possess. They further discovered that while there was a significant correlation between positive reading habits and the undergraduates' range of vocabulary, no significant relationship between the respondents' reading habits and their writing performance was found.

Guo (2012), in her study on the use of authentic reading material for extensive reading to promote English proficiency, conducted an experimental research with 50 Chinese college students by asking them to read a set of 10 online reading materials for a duration of three months. The respondents were also surveyed on their reading habits and made to answer an English proficiency test. The findings of this research demonstrated that the group which received the treatment achieved high scores for questions related to vocabulary.

Individual analyses of responses to the LPATE also reveal the problems the respondents faced with text comprehension. For instance, 154 (73.33%) respondents were not able to explain the connection between the word „generation“ (Question 9,

Text 1) and the context of the text read. Questions which discussed more complex concepts such as irony and explaining certain expressions were only answered correctly by 16 (7.61%) respondents.

The connection between a strong reading habit and reading comprehension skills are widely researched and that there is a significant relationship between these two variables is a generally accepted conclusion. Reading comprehension broadly covers an understanding and knowledge of phonetic, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Kirby, 2007). Thus, only through deep and immersive reading can one gain the understanding and mastery of these linguistic components.

The finding of this research proves that voluntary extensive reading offers language learners with the comprehensible input they need because of several reasons. First, readers are able to choose reading materials of their own interest, which helps in sustaining readers' motivation and interest to read. As explained by Day and Bamford (2002), if readers are compelled to read materials not of their interest, they may lose their motivation and concentration to read all together.

Secondly, through voluntary extensive reading, readers are able to choose materials within their own linguistic competence. The texts read have to be comprehensible and should not impede reading speed and fluency. Krashen (1989) expounds that the IH is based on the assumption that language acquisition takes place if the message in a reading text is understood.

In the case of ESL teachers, extensive reading functions as a means to sustain the language they had acquired.

5.3 Implication of Study

This study has several implications on the field of ESL teaching in Malaysia. First, it is able to ignite a discussion about multiple issues such as the attitudes of Malaysian ESL teachers towards reading and their English language proficiency. It is hoped that this study serves as an eye-opener for all stakeholders related to the field of ESL teaching in Malaysia, namely the Ministry of Education, school principals and the teachers themselves, so that solutions can be put forward and implemented in order to produce ESL teachers with the right attitude.

This research may provide information to the MoE which shoulders a big responsibility in employing ESL teachers who are passionate readers. The findings of this research will help with the implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of ESL teachers in Malaysia. Furthermore, the results of this research are further evidence that the TESL graduates chosen to teach in public schools must have good attitudes towards learning English and, by extension, a strong passion towards reading.

The ministry should understand that passion for reading is built over many years and not at the moment one becomes a teacher. One of the implications of this research may be the application of a standard reading-habit evaluation instrument by teacher-training institutions when interviewing applicants for teacher training programmes. Through that instrument, interviewers could look for the signs of an impassioned reader. Perhaps, the curriculum at teacher training institutes should include reading programmes which force the undergraduates to read, not just academic materials, but also literary materials.

The third finding of this research has a strong implication on the reading programmes carried out by the ministry. In order to instil a reading habit among students, measures need to be taken to encourage the teachers read, especially ESL teachers. This research provides proof that various factors are hindering ESL teachers from reading, particularly factors which are work related.

Therefore, this finding may help create awareness among the ministry and other relevant authorities to remove obstacles which stop teachers from reading. This is to ensure that the teachers are able to sustain their passion towards reading even when they are confronted with the realities of the job. It is the ministry's responsibility to reduce teachers' workload, which is the main reason why ESL teachers could not find the time to read, as proven by this research.

Apart from that, the ministry could ensure that ESL teachers in Malaysia have lesser teaching periods and number of classes to teach. A suggestion for the ministry is make sure that the number of students in each class does not exceed the optimal figure. Another effect of this research is the possibility of the ministry to reduce the duties and tasks which are not related to teaching so that the teachers would have more time to read and therefore, are able to develop their language competency and upskill themselves. Perhaps, this finding may lead to the ministry allocating funds to carry out reading programmes during working hours which would serve as in-service training sessions.

While it is the ministry's responsibility to gazette the policies and programmes, the effectiveness of their implementation depends on the school principals. They have the responsibility to ensure that programmes are carried out effectively, with active participation of the teachers.

As this research points out, ESL teachers do not get adequate support and encouragement to read. With this discovery, there are odds that measures might be taken to rectify this situation. School heads, with the assistance of panel heads, should take the effort to provide a conducive environment for the teachers to read by reducing their job burden and removing pointless tasks. The number of meetings or additional classes could be reduced to allow the teachers more time to read. The number of non-academic school programmes could be curtailed so that teachers would not feel burdened with tasks totally unrelated to their jobs.

Additionally, this research also found that teachers lack access to reading materials in school. This finding may become a reason for school administrators to encourage ESL teachers to read by making sure that teachers have the access to a wide-range of English reading materials in their staff rooms. Perhaps, certain amount of funds could be allocated to the English panel to subscribe magazines or journals or even buy novels and short stories. Perhaps, a reading corner, with access to various types of reading materials, could be set up for the teachers so that teachers would find materials within their hands reach

The largest implication of this research is on Malaysian ESL teachers themselves. The findings here serve as an eye-opener for ESL teachers who, as one of the biggest stakeholders, could take it upon themselves to read widely. Through this research, they would realise that reading is extremely beneficial for their linguistic development and keep in mind of the importance of linguistic competence for them as English language teachers. They would also learn that by developing their language proficiency, they would also develop their self-confidence to instruct the students on more complex and advanced levels of English

A minor implication of this research is the discovery that a standardised instrument to measure ESL teachers' language proficiency does not exist in Malaysia. This statement is also supported by a recent directive by the Education Ministry to administer the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) on all EL teachers in Malaysia (New Straits Times, May 10, 2019) to gauge the English language proficiency of every EL teacher teaching in Malaysian public schools.

This leads to the conclusion that Malaysian EL teachers are not tested on their EL proficiency at a regular interval. By having a testing instrument, administering it and making it a prerequisite to obtain a pass in order to teach English in Malaysia, the ministry would set the precedent to produce more qualified EL teachers and thus, higher quality of ELT for the next generation of Malaysians.

Therefore, the education ministry has to take the initiative to build an effective and internationally-recognised testing instrument to be administered on pre- or in-service ESL teachers. The instrument could also be used in future researches in connection to EL teachers' language proficiency.

5.4 Limitations of Research

This research has been a great learning process for the researcher who, at the end of every phase, uncovers something new to learn. Although tremendous amount of hard work and serious thought has been put into this study, it still has its share of limitations and weaknesses.

Firstly, while a quantitative research design is the most suitable method for this research due to the first and second research questions, the probe into the problems faced by EL teachers to read may require a qualitative approach such as interview sessions as face-to-face contact is deemed as a warmer approach. This will allow the respondents to open up about their problems and a deeper understanding of

the issues which hinder them from reading can be attained. In comparison, quantitative methods such as survey questionnaires may lack that personal touch seen in qualitative methods.

Secondly, there is an uncertainty about the strength of the link between the two variables tested. As of now, no other local research has studied the link between the reading habits of ESL teachers in Malaysian secondary schools and their relationship to their language proficiency. The closest we have are the ones carried out are by Daik (2006) who studied only one variable which is ESL teachers' reading habits and Tharumaraj and Nooreen Noordin (2011) who investigated ESL teachers' reading habits and their teaching strategies for reading skills.

Certain foreign researches (Adebayo, 2009; Hassen, 2016) studied only the reading habits of English language teachers without any link to other variables such as their English language proficiency. Other researchers such as Tsang (2017), conversely studied the link between the Hong Kong's both native and non-native English Language teachers' English language proficiency and their teaching effectiveness.

Therefore, without any literature to support the relationship between these two variables, it would be more helpful to have a larger sample size which will reduce any sampling error.

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, there is an absence of a testing instrument to measure Malaysian EL teachers' language proficiency. Hence, for the purpose of this study, the reading paper of an English language proficiency test from Hong Kong called the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) (LPATE) had to be administered on the respondents of this study.

There are several reasons which have led to the conclusion that this instrument is slightly unsuitable in the milieu of this research. First, the LPATE consists of four papers which are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing and to administer the whole set would be impossible due to the lack of time and manpower. As a consequence, the researcher had no choice but to choose only one of the papers to be used as an instrument.

Even then, many respondents expressed their resentment and frustration to answer the reading test. They pointed out that the test was too difficult and time-consuming. As a result, they had answered questions lackadaisically and their answers may not reflect their true understanding of the texts. Some even confessed to skip several questions, leaving them blank.

However, the researcher found it hard to dismiss the respondents' complaints as, being a teacher herself, she understands the difficulty of finding the time to answer the test. Moreover, a few respondents seemed to have lost their interest midway and submitted half-completed answer scripts. Nevertheless, due to the lack of options, this researcher had no choice but to use the LPATE.

5.5 Recommendation for Future Research

Future researchers on this topic are recommended to design or adapt a simpler and shorter testing instrument to study the English language proficiency of EL teachers. The tests may possibly consist of not more than three pages and be focused on vocabulary or grammatical aspects. The questions set should be in the form of multiple-choice instead of a combination of different question formats, which makes grading them much easier and less time-consuming.

Thirdly, the respondents of this research teach in urban or semi-urban schools in Klang, Selangor as the researcher did not have access to schools in the interiors of the district. Consequently, the findings of this research are made based on a population which is not diverse enough.

Apart from that, it is recommended that future studies to focus on the experimental effect of reading programmes for teachers. The effectiveness of several reading programmes such as DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) could be analysed with inclusion of a pre- and post-test as well as a treatment. Further studies could also focus on the reading habits of EL teachers and their impact on classroom instructions.

5.6 Summary

As highlighted in this dissertation, it is highly necessary for actions to be taken to promote a more extensive reading habit among EL teachers in Malaysia. By that, the burden to do so should not fall squarely on the teachers but also on all the policy makers and enforcers of the Malaysian education system.

First and foremost, the Ministry of Education has to take the steps to ensure that EL teachers' workloads are reduced so that the freed up time can be used for leisure reading. This can be done by hiring teacher assistants, a long overdue proposal, who would take over non-teaching duties from teachers. With more time in hand and less exhaustion, it is more likely for EL teachers to read more challenging materials extensively.

Secondly, reading programmes for teachers should be carried out during working hours instead of out. Currently, teachers are required to key in online about the reading materials read in a year which may result in data inaccuracy. Teachers

may key in due to pressure from the school administrators who would pester them for the data, so that their scores would meet their demands.

In comparison, an in-house reading programme would be more efficient in encouraging EL teachers to read. The ministry could implement nationwide reading programmes, such as Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) or Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) for EL teachers to read during working hours.

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