ABSTRACT

The trainee teachers in the English option of Maktab Perguruan Batu Pahat (MPBP) face problems in the reading comprehension of texts written in English. These trainees, when they graduate, will be English teachers posted to primary schools all over the country. In order to be good English teachers, it is one of the essential requirements for them to be able to comprehend English texts. In addition, with the advent of the computer and other technological advancements in this era, there is a greater need for these readers to be able to comprehend the information they obtain from this media. The Ministry of Education is also very concerned over the deterioration of English proficiency among Malaysians.

This is the first study of this kind which deals with reading problems among English option teacher trainees from a teacher training college in Malaysia. The researcher believes that the findings of this study have significance over the teacher training English programme and hopes that the teacher development unit of the Education Ministry of Malaysia considers some of the suggestions put forward.

This is a quantitative study aimed at exploring the reading problems faced by the trainee teachers of MPBP in semester two. Data for the purpose of this study were gathered using the questionnaire and the structured interview. Forty-seven trainees were chosen to answer the questionnaire. The structured interview involved the lecturers in the English Unit of MPBP.

The researcher investigated the problems that the English option trainees faced when reading English texts in relation to the reading strategies used, their attitudes and perceptions, their socio-economic status (SES) and academic background.

The researcher had looked into a number of researches based on reading-related problems with the view of finding solutions in order to improve the level of reading proficiency. It is found that the scopes that can be studied and analysed regarding reading associated problems are very wide and the findings have been diverse. Nevertheless, the literature review in this study discusses some of the important aspects such as the importance of English, attitude studies, reading strategies, socio-economic status, the schema theory and others.

Some of the findings in this study are similar to that of other studies. Among the similarities are the influence of SES on proficiency, the employment of ineffective reading strategies, the lack of use of English and others. There are indications in this study that the socioeconomic status of most of the trainees under study is between average to low. This study has discussed the influence of socioeconomic status over the reading abilities of the teacher trainees. Most of the trainees admit to having difficulty in understanding their academic texts. There is also an indication that the trainees may be employing some ineffective reading strategies such as looking up every word that is not understood. The English language usage among the trainees was also found to be low. Although the trainees are weak in English reading proficiency, an interesting finding is that the general attitude towards English among the trainees is on a positive note. Another

finding that is of concern is that, a significant number of the trainees under study admitted to not employing any particular reading strategy when handling reading assignments.

A number of recommendations have been put forward and the possible causes of the problems have also been highlighted in relation to previous studies. Suggestions have been made on ways in which the English training programme in teacher training colleges may be improved. Among others, the suggestions include having only English major for the English option trainees with no minor studies, teaching all other subjects only in English and ensuring very stringent intake measures for English option candidates. These measures are an attempt to ensure higher levels of English proficiency among the future English teachers and consequently a better future for English in Malaysia.