

**A STUDY OF TEXT TOPICS THAT MOTIVATE
CLASSROOM READING**

by
LILY FU

A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
(MESL)

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Dedicated to my grandson

Max Alexander Lüer

whose birth on
28 August 2000
gave me that extra impetus and incentive
to complete this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

In this age of information technology, it is not enough that students know how to read, but more importantly, they must *want* to read. For without an enthusiasm for reading, students will not read on their own initiative, or read beyond their school assigned texts. This study is an attempt to find out why students do not like reading from their textbook and what they are interested in reading about so that an inventory of reading interests can be drawn up. The purpose of such an inventory is to provide some guidelines to teachers and textbook writers in the selection of content materials to teach reading.

A total of 236 Form 4 students from two schools participated in the survey. The objective was to examine whether there is any co-relation between reading interest and each of these variables, namely, setting (location), gender, stream (science, arts/commerce), and language proficiency. The findings were thus organized into nine categories: rural and urban, boys and girls, science and arts/commerce, and good, average and weak. 30 teachers also took part in the survey. The students' selection of reading interests and topics of interest was compared with the teachers' selection to find out if there was any mismatch. Finally, the students' selection was also compared with the selection of passages in the reading section of 7 Form 4 KBSM English textbooks to see how far they cater to the needs and interests of the students.

Although this study is limited in scope, the findings clearly suggest that gender and stream affect reading interests more significantly than do setting and language proficiency. Students prefer to read about topics that are relevant to their needs and interests. Although prior knowledge and cultural background help students to comprehend what they read, topic familiarity does not necessarily motivate students to read a text. The findings also reveal that teachers do not always know their students' reading interests. Perhaps, the most significant finding is the inadequacy of the textbook in motivating students to read.

It is hoped that this study will help focus attention on the need to introduce appealing materials that would motivate classroom reading. This would not only facilitate the teaching of the reading skills but also promote the reading habit among students.

ABSTRAK

Pada zaman teknologi maklumat ini, adalah tidak mencukupi bahawa para pelajar tahu membaca. Yang lebih penting adalah wujudnya satu keinginan untuk membaca dalam jiwa mereka. Tanpa keghairahan untuk membaca, pelajar-pelajar tidak akan membaca sesuatu atas inisiatif sendiri atau membaca di luar sempadan buku teks sekolah. Kajian ini adalah satu percubaan untuk mencari sebab para pelajar tidak gemar membaca dari buku teks serta menyelidik apa yang gemar dibaca oleh mereka supaya satu inventori kegemaran membaca dapat dibina. Inventori ini bertujuan memberi beberapa garis panduan kepada pengajar-pengajar dan pengarang-pengarang buku teks dari segi pilihan isi kandungan untuk mengajar pembacaan.

Sejumlah 236 pelajar Tingkatan Empat dari dua buah sekolah telah menyertai kajian ini. Ini bertujuan menyelidik sama ada terdapat apa-apa hubungan antara minat membaca dengan setiap pemboleh ubah ini, iaitu persekitaran (lokasi), jantina, aliran (sains/sastera/perdagangan), dan kefasihan bahasa. Keputusan kajian diorganisasikan kepada sembilan kategori: luar bandar dan bandar, lelaki dan perempuan, sains dan sastera/perdagangan, serta baik, sederhana dan lemah. 30 pengajar juga menyertai tinjauan tersebut. Pilihan apa yang lebih gemar dibaca dan topik-topik yang diminati oleh pelajar dibandingkan dengan pilihan pengajar untuk melihat sama ada terdapat butiran-butiran yang tidak serasi. Akhirnya, pilihan pelajar dibandingkan dengan petikan-petikan yang terkandung di bahagian pembacaan dari tujuh buah buku teks Bahasa Inggeris KBSM Tingkatan Empat agar dapat dilihat sejauh mana buku-buku tersebut memenuhi keperluan dan minat para pelajar.

Walaupun kajian ini agak terhad dari segi skopnya, keputusannya jelas menandakan bahawa jantina dan aliran lebih mempengaruhi kegemaran membaca dengan ketara jika dibandingkan dengan persekitaran dan kefasihan bahasa. Pelajar-pelajar lebih cenderung membaca topik-topik yang berkenaan dengan keperluan dan minat mereka. Walaupun ilmu pengetahuan dan latar belakang budaya membantu pelajar-pelajar memahami apa yang dibaca oleh mereka, tetapi pengetahuan tentang sesuatu topik tidak semestinya akan mendorong pelajar-pelajar untuk membaca teks tersebut. Keputusan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru kadang-kadang tidak sedar akan subjek - subjek yang menjadi minat para pelajar. Kemungkinannya, dapatan yang paling penting adalah ketidaksesuaian buku teks dari segi mendorong para pelajar untuk membaca.

Adalah diharapkan bahawa kajian ini akan membantu menumpukan fokus pada keperluan memperkenalkan bahan-bahan menarik yang dapat mendorong pembacaan dalam kelas. Ini bukan sahaja akan memudahkan pengajaran kemahiran membaca, bahkan juga akan menggalakkan tabiat membaca di kalangan pelajar-pelajar.