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Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



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**USING SONGS IN THE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION
AMONG FORM ONE STUDENTS IN SEKOLAH
MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN AGAMA
NIBONG TEBAL P.PINANG**

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**A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty of Languages in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Education**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the writing in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

Date : 12 APRIL 2004

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Al-fatihah.



This study attempts to investigate the use of songs in teaching reading comprehension among the form one students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Nibong Tebal Seberang Prai Selatan.

The subjects in the sample were the form one students selected based on their monthly English test results. These students were divided into two groups. The first group is called the Traditional Method Group (TMG) and the second group is called Using Song Group (USG). Each group consists of fifteen High English Proficiency (HEP) students and fifteen Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students.

The TMG students were taught using the traditional method whilst the USG students were taught using a song. Both groups were taught the same reading comprehension using lyric from the song entitled 'I Believe I Can Fly'. The TMG was first asked to read the lyrics of the song. Next, they were asked to answer ten comprehension questions. The USG also followed the same procedure. The difference was only the use of the song, which was played after the reading of the lyric.

The USG students were then asked to sing while the song was being played a few times. Subsequently they were asked to answer the comprehension questions. The scores from both groups were taken as the data for analysis. This study supports the hypothesis that students who were taught using songs will be able to increase their score in reading comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method and LEP students in USG who were taught using songs will be able to improve their scores in reading comprehension exercises as compared to LEP students in TMG.



ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan lagu dalam mengajar bacaan kefahaman Bahasa Inggeris untuk pelajar-pelajar tingkatan satu di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Nibong Tebal, Seberang Prai Selatan.

Pelajar-pelajar tingkatan satu disekolah ini telah dipilih sebagai sampel kajian berdasarkan keputusan ujian bulanan Bahasa Inggeris. Pelajar-pelajar ini telah dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan iaitu kumpulan yang menggunakan kaedah pengajaran tradisional (TMG) dan kumpulan yang menggunakan lagu dalam pengajaran (USG). Setiap kumpulan mengandungi 15 orang pelajar yang mempunyai kemahiran tinggi dalam Bahasa Inggeris (HEP) dan 15 orang pelajar yang mempunyai kemahiran terhad dalam Bahasa Inggeris (LEP).

Kumpulan TMG diajar menggunakan kaedah tradisional manakala kumpulan USG diajar bacaan kefahaman menggunakan lirik lagu 'I Believe I Can Fly'. Kumpulan TMG disuruh membaca lirik lagu. Kemudian mereka diminta menjawab 10 soalan kefahaman. Kumpulan USG juga mengikut prosedur yang sama kecuali lagu dimainkan selepas sahaja mereka habis membaca lirik lagu. Pelajar-pelajar diminta menyanyi mengikut irama lagu beberapa kali. Mereka kemudiannya menjawab 10 soalan kefahaman. Jawapan yang diperiksa telah dianalisa.

Kajian ini menyokong hipotesis bahawa skor pelajar-pelajar USG meningkat berbanding pelajar-pelajar TMG. Skor pelajar-pelajar LEP dalam kumpulan USG turut meningkat berbanding pelajar-pelajar LEP dalam kumpulan TMG.

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF GRAPHS	viii

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background of the study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	3
1.3	Purpose of the Study	7
1.4	Research Questions	7
1.5	Research Hypothesis	8
1.6	Significance of the Study	8
1.7	Definition	9

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Teaching procedure using music and songs	14
2.3	Other aspects of music and songs	19
2.4	Related Researches	24
2.5	Affective Reasons	25
2.6	Cognitive Reasons	26
2.7	Linguistic Reasons	27

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Research Design	29

05-4506832	pustaka.upsi.edu.my	Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah	PustakaTBainun	ptbupsi
3.3	Sample and Sampling Procedures	.....	30	
3.4	Research Instruments	.....	31	
3.5	Data Collection Procedures	.....	32	
3.6	Data Analysis Procedures	.....	33	
3.7	Limitations of the Study	.....	33	
CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS				
4.1	Introduction	.....	35	
4.2	Results	.....	36	
CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION				
5.1	Introduction	.....	53	
5.2	Conclusions	.....	54	
5.3	Implications of the Study	.....	58	
5.4	Recommendation	.....	58	
5.5	Recommendation for further research	.....	59	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				60
APPENDICES				
1.	Song Lyric	.....	65	
2.	Reading Comprehension Exercise	.....	67	
3.	Lesson Plan for the Traditional Method Group (TMG)	.....	69	
4.	Lesson Plan for the Using Song Group (USG)	.....	71	

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
Table 4.1	Reading Comprehension Exercises T-test Result for TMG and USG Students	37
Table 4.2	Reading Comprehension Exercises T-test Result for TMG (LEP) Students and USG (LEP) Students	38
Table 4.3	Reading Comprehension Exercises T-test Result for TMG (HEP) Students and USG (HEP) Students	39
Table 4.4	Comparison of Overall Percentage in the Reading Comprehension Exercises Scores among HEP (TMG) Students and HEP (USG) Students	46
Table 4.5	Comparison of Overall Percentage in the Reading Comprehension Exercises Scores among LEP (TMG) Students and LEP (USG) Students	47
Table 4.6	Statistic Tabulation of Correct Answers in Reading Comprehension Exercises obtained by Students of TMG and USG	49

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph		Page
Graph 4.1	Reading Comprehension Exercises Score in the TMG for the High English Proficiency (HEP) Students	40
Graph 4.2	Reading Comprehension Exercises Score in the TMG for the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students	41
Graph 4.3	Reading Comprehension Exercises Score in the USG for the High English Proficiency (HEP) Students	42
Graph 4.4	Reading Comprehension Exercises Score in the USG for the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students	43
Graph 4.5	Comparison of Reading Comprehension Exercises Score Percentage between the HEP (TMG) Students and the HEP (USG) Students	44
Graph 4.6	Comparison of Reading Comprehension Exercises Score Percentage between the LEP (TMG) Students and the LEP (USG) Students	45



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Teaching English Language as a Second Language to the Malay students in a rural area school is not an easy task. Students often find English a difficult subject to learn especially when given comprehension exercises. Therefore, the researcher would like to conduct a study on the use of songs to teach reading comprehension. The combination of songs and reading comprehension can be a powerful tool when used to teach English in class. Students closely identify with media since the majority of the students watch television, listen to music, and sing songs themselves.

The English Language Curriculum Specification for Form One (2003) stated that the use of sounds, music and movement in activities will be especially beneficial to learners with learning styles toward musical and kinesthetic intelligences.

Dr Noor Azmi Ibrahim (1998) as cited in the Music Curriculum Specification, Ministry of Education stated that music is taught at the lower and upper level in the secondary school as a continuation of the primary school syllabus. The objective of





music education is to develop students' creativity and to widen students' aesthetic value.

In Islam, music is one of the best ways to educate the followers to worship Allah. Most of the songs are called “nasyid”. These nasyids are praises to Allah and contain advice to become good Muslims. Music and songs also have been used widely in other religions when worshipping their gods. The Hindus sing songs when praying in the temples, the Christians use songs when carolling in churches and on Christmas day while the Buddhist use music for meditation.



Even in many culture in Malaysia, music is played to denote certain occasion is taking place. For example; the funeral band is played when a Chinese died. The Malays especially those from the East Coast of Malaysia have some special songs like the song ‘Ulek Mayang’ to cure sickness during the olden days. The Orang Asli also sing songs like the song ‘Sewang’ to cure sickness. Thus, the researcher believes that music and songs have some kind of influence on our minds and soul as stated by Shaharom Tm Sulaiman (1997), *“One of the sub-branch in art which has great influence in a Man's life is the art of music. According to the Islamic Preachers, music could develop our souls to be good, calm and tranquil”*.



Based on all the given aspects, the researcher believes that the use of song in teaching reading comprehension will promote English Language to the Malay students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Nibong Tebal Seberang Prai Selatan.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Malay students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Nibong Tebal Seberang Prai Selatan often find answering comprehension text as a difficult task. They also find learning reading comprehension a boring lesson. Students are not motivated to read and understand because most teachers used the traditional method or the talk and chalk method. This method will only require students to read and then the teacher will write the questions on the blackboard and students will answer the questions given in their exercise books. The same method is used over and over again during reading comprehension lesson. Thus, students feel bored and demotivated to learn reading comprehension.

Several studies about teaching reading strategies have been performed. Strategic reading involves the use of cues to decode the message of the written word. Reading the words of a composition is one thing, but comprehension is the vital point for the reader. Reading the words is of no benefit if the students could not comprehend what is being read.

Armbruster, Echols, & Brown, 1983; Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981; Flavell & Wellman, 1977 and Masters, Mori, and Mori (1993) as cited by Brian (1999) state that *"the metacognitive process involved in gaining meaning from the act of reading requires knowledge from not only of four basic variables but also of the way in which they relate to one another to produce learning."* The four variables stated by Masters, Mori, & Mori (1993) which are important to reading comprehension for the teacher and the student to follow include:

- Text--the aspects of the material to be read which will determine the memorization, and later retrieval (e.g. vocabulary difficulty, sentence structure, writing style).
- Task--the reason for reading (for fun, an examination, to answer questions at the end of a chapter).
- Strategies--the activities the learner uses to commit the information to memory and recall it later. Two strategies include fix-up strategies (strategies employed by the learner to avoid comprehension failure) and study strategies (other approaches to text processing such as note taking, skimming, underlining, outlining, summarization, and self-questioning).
- Characteristics of the learner--background experience, reading skills, interest, motivation and experience of the subject area.



People often remember the lyrics of songs. In fact, this particular learning process is almost a subconscious act. We hear songs on the radio, on television and CDs, and by listening to them, we learn the words. It seems that the melody and rhythm make it possible for us to easily remember the words of songs.

We memorize large amounts of text that in normal conditions we would not remember. Learning through songs is, therefore, a great way for students to learn vocabulary and language patterns.



When non-native speakers sing a song in English, their accent is often not as noticeable as when they speak. The intonation and stress patterns in songs are easier to understand and replicate due to the rhythm and melody, and this often results in better pronunciation. Songs are an excellent way of improving students' stress and intonation patterns in English. When students could pronounce the words that they are reading correctly, they will gain confidence and wanted to know more about what they are reading about. Though it may start as reading for fun at the beginning, in the end students will realize that they are reading for some purpose. In this case they are reading in order to answer comprehension questions.





People find it much easier to remember a song rather than a passage from a book. Songs also seem to retain in their long-term memory. People are capable of remembering a song they heard many years ago. Songs are memorable and we do not forget them easily in particular in cases where the lyrics of the song has some meaning which relates to our own lives.

According to Supyan Hussin, Nooreiny Maarof, and J. V. D'Cruz (2001)

“What is more important is that teachers realize that given an environment (in rural areas) where the English language input is limited and non-conducive to learning the target language, teachers need to find creative ways to teach the language and increase the student's motivation to learn the language and to eventually appreciate the language.” Undoubtedly, possessing some knowledge about various language teaching methodologies (e.g. ALM, Direct Method, Grammar-Translation, Suggestopedia, Community language Learning, Natural Approach, Total Physical Responses, Communicative method) is crucial, but it is more important for teachers to know what the most appropriate approach to teaching the language in that particular environment is and what activities are suitable for a given group of learners.





1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out whether the use of songs in teaching reading comprehension will help students to increase their score when answering comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method. The study also investigates whether the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students who were taught using songs may improve their scores when answering comprehension questions as compared to the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students who were taught using the traditional method.



1.4 Research Questions

In relation to the purpose of the study as mentioned above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Will students who were taught using songs be able to increase their score in reading comprehension exercise as compared to students who were taught using traditional method?
2. Will Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students who were taught using songs be able to increase their score in reading comprehension exercise as compared to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students who were taught using traditional method?





1.5 Research Hypothesis

The following null and research hypotheses were formulated to answer the research questions:

- (Ho1) Students who were taught using songs will not be able to increase their scores in reading comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method.
- (Ha1) Students who were taught using songs will be able to increase their scores in reading comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method.
- (Ho2) Limited English Proficiency Students (LEP) who were taught using songs will not be able to improve their scores in reading comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method.
- (Ha2) Limited English Proficiency Students (LEP) who were taught using songs will be able to improve their scores in reading comprehension exercises as compared to students who were taught using the traditional method.



1.6 Significance of the Study

The use of songs in language teaching and learning in Malaysia is mostly done in primary schools as compared to the secondary schools. It is mainly used to teach



vocabulary in the classroom. The activities which are carried out are usually filling words in the blanks.

Teachers usually will distribute the lyrics of the song to the students after deleting a few words to be filled up by the students after listening to the songs. Teachers seldom use songs to teach reading comprehension. By undertaking this research, the researcher will be able to give feedbacks to the relevant authorities about the result of the research and also share the methodology on how to teach reading comprehension through songs.

1.7 Definition

This section presents the definition of all the important terms used throughout this study.

- Malay – The term refers to a person who is from Melayu (Malay) ethnic community in Malaysia. The Malay is also referred to as bumiputera (son of soil) in this country (Nor Azmi, 2002)
- EFL - Students who learn English as a Foreign Language
- LEP - Students who have limited English proficiency
- HEP – Students who have high English proficiency
- ESL - Students who learn English as Second Language



- TMG - (Traditional Method Group) - The group of students who learn reading comprehension using the traditional method.
- USG - (Using Song Group) - The group of students who learn reading comprehension using the song
- UPSR - Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah

