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LIBYAN TEACHERS' SELECTION OF MATERIALS IN EFL READING CLASSROOM

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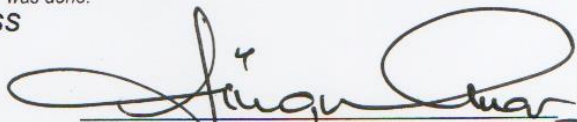
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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to identify the materials used for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading and the difficulties in selecting materials that cater to learners' needs and abilities. It is also aimed to analyse teachers' views on English Language Teaching (ELT) materials in reading lessons and the principles considered in selecting or constructing reading materials. Qualitative method was applied in this study. The data were collected through pre-interview, reading lesson plans and post interview which involved three English as Foreign Language (EFL) Libyan teachers from Libyan international schools. The data was analysed using the semantic analysis. The finding showed that the common reading materials used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are reading texts, quizzes, pictures, and music videos. It was proven that the factors that influence teachers' views on reading materials selection are motivation, proficiency, interest, and subject matter. This study also found that teachers' views on reading materials are highly influenced by their teaching experience as well as students and contextual factors. However, the participants stressed that the insufficient professional development training impedes them in gaining enough skills in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading and in selecting materials. This study provides better understanding and justification of the criteria set by the respective teachers in selecting or constructing reading materials. It will help educators and education policy planners through insights on the needs of English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in enhancing their knowledge in materials selection.





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ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti bahan pengajaran yang digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dan kesukaran yang dihadapi guru untuk memilih bahan-bahan yang memenuhi keperluan dan kebolehan pelajar. Ia juga menganalisa pandangan guru terhadap bahan pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris dalam kelas bacaan dan sifat-sifat yang dipertimbangkan dalam memilih atau merekabentuk bahan pengajaran. Kaedah kualitatif telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Data kajian yang diperolehi melalui pratemuduga, rancangan pembelajaran dan pascatemuduga melibatkan tiga guru Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dari Libya di sekolah antarabangsa Libya. Data telah dianalisa menggunakan analisis semantik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahan bacaan lazim yang digunakan oleh guru Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing adalah teks bacaan, kuiz, gambar, dan video muzik. Selain itu, faktor yang mempengaruhi pandangan guru dalam memilih bahan bacaan ialah motivasi, kemahiran, minat pelajar, dan kandungan bahan. Kajian ini turut mendapati bahawa pandangan guru terhadap bahan bacaan dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman semasa pengajaran dan pelajar dan juga faktor-faktor kontekstual. Subjek kajian, bagaimanapun menegaskan bahawa latihan pembangunan profesional yang tidak mencukupi menghalang mereka mendapat kemahiran yang cukup dalam pengajaran bacaan untuk Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa asing. dan dalam memilih bahan pengajaran. Kajian ini memberikan pemahaman dan justifikasi yang lebih baik berdasarkan kriteria yang ditetapkan oleh guru dalam memilih atau membina bahan bacaan. Ia akan membantu pendidik dan perancang dasar pendidikan melalui pandangan mengenai keperluan guru Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan mereka dalam pemilihan bahan pengajaran.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition





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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction



It is undeniable that the arenas of English Language Teaching (ELT) has been rapidly changing in align to the modernization and globalization. Language educators have become convinced that the way learners are learning the language at present is totally different from the way that they themselves were learning it in the past (Abdallah, 2011). Teachers are required to be constantly updated with the transition in education in order to ensure that they are able to deliver effective lessons. To be an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, one must have both theoretical and practical knowledge of EFL teaching, besides subject knowledge of the English language itself (Lim, 2014). Textbooks and related teaching and learning materials or media have been adapted continuously to the ever-changing and growing challenges and demands of learning English as a foreign language (Lin & Lee, 2010). They also emphasized that





reading materials have also been adapted to new findings in foreign or second language research and theory construction. Advances in information technology, scholarly views. On the role of the textbook and recommendations on how to use it in everyday classroom practice very often reflect little more than personal opinion and/or common sense. In some circumstances, teaching and learning materials are used to supplement the teaching and learning processes whereas some teachers prefer to utilize the materials as the groundwork of the subject matter of the lessons, as the equilibrium to the language skills taught, and as the tie that keeps students engage in the classroom.

1.2 Background of the study



Among the four macro skills in learning and teaching the language, which are reading, listening, writing, and speaking, reading is by far the most important part in the process where English is learned either as a second or a foreign language. Proficiency in reading skills is not only a crucial mean to gain knowledge but also a mean to advance students' learning (Omuna, Onchera and Kimutai, 2016). There are a number of researches done to produce better results in teachers' teaching methodologies in delivering reading lessons with the purpose of reinforcing learners' language skills. Some academicians who state that the ability for the student to get a good grasp of the English language relies on the methodologies and the materials used by the educator or the teacher (Shinde and Karekatti, 2012; Borg et al., 2014). According to Shinde and Karekatti (2012) and Borg et al. (2014), in current time, thousands of English teachers are trained around the world every year, however not every teacher is able to successfully deliver their mandate especially in locations where English is a second language or a foreign





language. They further concluded that teachers, particularly EFL and ESL teachers have difficulties in strengthening their teaching methodologies.

Apart from teaching methodologies, materials play a crucial role in students' learning as well as the teachers' teaching in English (Capan, 2014). One of the more complex tasks facing the English as a foreign language (EFL) reading teacher is the selection of appropriate reading passages (Arias, 2007). She added that deciding suitable reading materials is a meticulous process in an EFL reading class. This is further supported by Gauthier and Lawson (2004) who claimed the aspects of good reading lessons revolves around the potential and application of relevant instructional materials and teachers' teaching skills. This is because instructional resources facilitate the understanding of difficult concepts as well as the teaching and learning of the reading skills (Omuna, Onchera and Kimutai, 2016). According to Cakir (2015), teaching materials particularly instructional materials in EFL teaching can be outlined into various aspects. They can be defined as any tool that teachers use to assist their students in adequately learning the target language. They are also used as means to increase students' access to the language. Teaching instruments also include every instrument that contributes greatly to students' progress; anything which is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning; and are proved to be the keys that influence what goes on in the classroom, just to list a few (Littlejohn, 2012; McDonough, Shaw & Mashura, 2013).

Teachers who do not have access to sound and good quality materials may find the teaching and learning process challenging (Capan, 2014; Borg et al., 2014). On the other hand, students who are not exposed to good materials may not be able to gain a





good grasp of the English language through the teaching process (Capan, 2014; Borg et al., 2014). In making the teaching and learning process successful, it is important for the teacher and the students to feel comfortable with the materials used and to find them beneficial in the learning and teaching process (Barahona, 2014; Capan, 2014; Incecay, 2011).

1.3 Problem Statement

Reading is commonly defined as the ability to read and interpret meaning from varied texts (Connors-Tadros, 2014). It is a conscious and unconscious thinking process where the reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended, and it is done by comparing information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience (Mikulecky, 2008). According to Woodley (2011), the main objective of reading is to achieve a general comprehension through the text rather than to gain meaning of individual words or sentences.

In learning a foreign or second language, reading is one of the most important skills to acquire. Out of the four skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening), reading plays the most important role in different levels of EFL students, such as elementary, intermediate, and advanced (Yazar, 2013). It is undeniable that reading highly influences the achievement of a foreign or a second language acquisition. Reading is useful for language acquisition which means the more they read, the better they get, and it also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and their writing (Harmer, 2007). According to Guo (2012), extensive reading





should be made accessible at the early stage of learning. Students should be able to understand the need of reading so that they can start reading on their own. This is to instil reading culture among students.

In order to cultivate reading habits, teachers should be able to provide an effective reading lesson. According to Kumar (2010), teachers should provide lesson plans with diverse activities to encourage reading culture among students. The success of a lesson depends also on the teachers' focus on the preparation of the learning process. A good reading lesson does not only come by having a good lesson plan that focuses on specific segments, but also by taking a view on the big picture on how each activity in the lesson fits the aim of the lesson. According to Spratt, Pulverness and William (2005), a lesson plan is reflected as a chain of curriculum that offer enough directions for teachers on appropriate materials to be given to the students considering their interest and skills, and also how the materials are to be delivered in classroom. Nesari and Heideri (2014) also deliberated that in order to be able to manage the class properly and effectively achieve lesson objectives, lesson plan must be well-constructed. Teachers' instructions and also classroom management are influenced by lesson plans. Characteristics of a well-managed classroom are that (1) students are deeply engaged with their work; which would be possible if their roles are described and they have a goal as provided in a good lesson plan; (2) students know what is expected; which would be possible via routinely implemented good lesson plans; (3) there is little wasted time, confusion; which would be possible via effective implementation of a good lesson plan; and (4) the climate of such a classroom would be work-oriented, but relaxed and pleasant; which would be possible via good time management due to effective implementation of a good lesson plan (Wong, 2009).





As stated by Greenberg, McKee, and Walsh (2013) in National Council on Teacher Quality - Teacher Prep Review: A Review of the Nation's Teacher Preparation Programs, 90 percent of reading teachers do not include reading tasks that could significantly boost the amount of competent readers among students. The report further stated that the teachers are rather occupied in acquiring their distinctive teaching approach. Teachers' proper decision – making & planning is crucial in avoiding students' reluctance during teaching (Nesari&Heideri, 2014). To improve reading ability, teachers are supposed to have the capabilities to select advantageous reading materials and are presented with resources to help them in making the selection. This brings to the utmost issue deliberated in this study which is most of the teachers especially EFL teachers in Libyan international schools are not given enough trainings as well as resources to help them in enhancing their reading lessons. Research has shown that both pre-service and practicing teachers are often not able to accurately gauge their understanding of critical concepts related to reading instruction (Berkeley, 2016). Although teacher preparation programs are vastly different, disconcerting reports suggest a lack of relevant information in course textbooks (Joshi, Binks, Graham et al., 2009) and a lack of conceptual knowledge of language across faculties that prepare future teachers of reading (Joshi, Binks, Hougen et al., 2009).

In the teaching and learning of the English language, it is crucial that teachers have the right materials and techniques or strategies to deliver quality English language education to students (Barahona, 2014; Capan, 2014; Incecay, 2011). Another issue is the inability of teachers to choose materials that are suitable for their respective students and classrooms (Barahona, 2014; Leland, 2013; Incecay, 2011). Due to their lack of experience in the field, teachers may not be able to identify the learning difficulties of





their students and thus may not be able to choose the right materials to address their students' learning needs (Rahimi, n. d.; Capan, 2014; Incecay, 2011). In addition to that, teachers may also face problems to match the right materials with the specific needs of students or their different levels of proficiency (Rahimi, n. d.; Capan, 2014; Incecay, 2011). Often teachers do not use the right materials or do not have access to the right materials to teach the English language which results in the entire teaching and learning process being weak and thus being unable to achieve the desired outcomes (Barahona, 2014; Capan, 2014; Incecay, 2011).

Selecting good reading materials has always been a challenging task for teachers particularly in reading lessons. In EFL reading classroom, failing to provide effective instructional materials may obstruct learners' understanding. Omuna, Onchera, and Kimutai (2016) debated that this issue may give an impact on teaching and learning of English reading skills.

By not using strong and potent teaching materials to engage their students in the learning process, teachers are in fact setting their students up for failure and disrupting the entire learning process (Rahimi, n. d.; Leland, 2013). In the context of Libyan teachers teaching at Libya international school, the teachers were not provided with variety of resources in teaching English. Based on the problems stated, it is crucial to explore the Libyan teachers' conceptions of teaching materials used to teach reading. It is also significant to understand the principles that guide the teachers in selecting their resources in teaching reading.





1.4 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to analyze the perception of teachers on ELT reading materials and how they use existing materials to implement classroom sessions and are able to achieve the learning objectives of their students. In addition, it also consequently help other researchers to design better and suitable reading materials for the use of EFL teachers. The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To identify the teaching materials used by the teachers to teach reading
2. To investigate the factors which influence the use of the chosen materials to teach reading
3. To explore the perceptions of the teachers on the teaching materials used in the classroom to teach reading



1.5 Research Questions

Following from the objectives mentioned above, this research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the instructional materials selected by the teachers to teach reading?
2. What are the factors that influence the teachers to use the chosen materials to teach reading?
3. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers on the teaching materials used in teaching reading?





1.6 Significance of Study

In order to achieve the objectives, set before the reading lessons commence, teachers should be prepared with reading materials that cater to learners' needs and abilities. This study will help the teachers to weigh in certain criteria in designing and selecting reading materials in the classroom. Apart from EFL teachers, this study is also beneficial for ESL teachers as the content is similar. The study is also good for teachers in gaining knowledge on strategies in teaching reading and instructional materials to be used in the teaching and learning process of reading skills in English language. This study will provide better understanding towards teachers' attitude and reactions in using instructional materials in reading lessons. In addition, this study is important in transforming the experience of EFL students with the use of effective instructional materials in Libyan reading classroom. Therefore, the education planners can also benefit from this study as they are required to understand the justifications made by the EFL teachers for using intended materials in reading classroom. This study can contribute to further studies that are aiming in designing guidelines for reading materials selection in classroom. On top of that, this study can contribute deeper insights of this issue in Libyan context since very few researches were done in the context.

1.7 Limitations of Study

This study only involves teachers in three schools, which are the Libyan International Schools that the researcher has chosen. The researcher is constrained by geographical





limitations in involving more schools in this study. The research settings chosen are three Libyan international schools in Kuala Lumpur which respectively located in Damai, Jalan Ampang and Kajang. As the setting of the study focus on Libyan teachers and in EFL environment, the restricted number of Libyan international school in Kuala Lumpur becomes a major shortcoming to this study. This leads to the limited number of samples involved in this study.

Another limitation of this study is time constrain. This study can be explored more and resulted in a framework that can work as a guideline for EFL teachers, novice or pre-service EFL teachers particularly, if a longer timeline is given.



To facilitate the understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:

1.8.1 Instructional Materials

They are tools designed to enhance the learning experience and make the lesson clearer for the student (Oladejo et al., 2011). They can be described as physical objects that provide sound, visual or both to the sense organs during the teaching process (Oladejo et al., 2011). In the context of this study, instructional materials refer to any teaching materials used in teaching reading comprehension.





1.8.2 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

This is a traditional term which is used to describe the study of English by non-native speaking students from countries where English is not a local communication medium (Richard, 2015). In this study, EFL refers to the study of English language in the Libyan international school.

1.8.3 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the capability to interact with words and ideas on the page in order to understand what the writer has to write (Burner, 2012). It includes meaningful interpretation of written language, and it involves an interaction of the reader, the text and the situation in which the text is read (Riahi, 2017). In the context of this study, reading comprehension refers to learners' ability to comprehend the materials given by the teacher and answer the questions related to the reading materials.

1.8.4 English Language Teaching (ELT)

English Language Teaching is the method and principle of learning and teaching English to those whose English is not the first language. The analysis of ELT examines four broad families of issues: how teachers learn content and teaching practices, how teachers' mental processes are conceived, the role of prior knowledge in learning to teach, and the role of social and institutional context (Freeman, 2002).





1.9 Chapter Summary

This section dealt with the introduction of this research, the problem statement, research objectives and research questions, the significance of the study, limitation of the study, as well as the operational definition that are used in this study. All in all, reading materials selection has always been challenging to teachers. In order to understand the issue, better we need to know the root of the matter which in this case is teachers' perception on reading materials selection.

