Chapter 40

Using Digital Interactive Notebook to Enhance Secondary Pupils’ Reading Comprehension Skills

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ABSTRACT
The Roadmap 2015-2025 which has been introduced in the reform of English Language Education indicates that Malaysia is determined to bring about substantial improvement in the pupils’ proficiency in English Language. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the Roadmap aims to produce pupils who are able to demonstrate competent English language skills based on an international standard. Nevertheless, despite the implementation of the new framework, a preliminary study reveals that pupils at secondary schools are still weak in reading comprehension skills and this is proven by the poor marks they achieved during the assessment. In the effort to tackle this issue, this study mainly seeks to explore the use of Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) to enhance secondary pupils’ reading comprehension skills. Data for this study were collected from the pre-test, post-test and questionnaires distributed to 60 secondary pupils at 2 urban and suburban schools. The findings showed a significant increase in the marks from the post-test with the intervention of Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) compared to those of the pre-test. It also reveals a few attributing components in Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) which contributed to the pupils’ improvement in reading comprehension skills – the visual aids, layouts and interactive tasks. It is hoped that this study is able to offer some insights to English Language teachers on how Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) improves secondary pupils’ reading comprehension skills and provide more opportunities for further studies.

Key Words: Digital Interactive Notebook, Reading Comprehension Skills, Secondary pupils, 21ST Century Learning.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

Reading can be defined as an active process in which the readers shift between sources of information, elaborate meaning and strategies, monitor their comprehension and use the social context to reflect their responses (Walker 2000). Alfassi (2004) added that reading involves a complex cognitive activity in which the readers obtain information in the current society and this process requires an integration of memory and meaning construction. The importance of reading skills cannot be stressed enough as the process of reading is a doorway to gain and learn more knowledge (Maasum & Maarof 2012). Nevertheless, Jalaluddin, Mat Awal, & Abu Bakar (2008) reveal that pupils in EFL context such as in Malaysia are lacking of reading proficiency which leads to poor English Language comprehension. This is demonstrated by the pupils’ inadequate ability to read, comprehend English materials and instructions and lastly answer reading comprehension questions. Phantharakphong & Pothitha (2014) also agree that the pupils face challenges in their reading comprehension due to their difficulties to understand the written text. As a consequence, these setbacks adversely affect the pupils’ mastery in English Language and their performance in the subject.

Numerous studies on second language reading have consistently confirmed that developing language learners’ reading comprehension skills depends on the reading techniques and strategies used by the teachers throughout the lessons (Zare & Nooreen, 2011). In this regard, this study aims to explore the use of Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) in enhancing Malaysia secondary pupils’ reading comprehension skills. It is expected that the findings of this study offer insights to the teachers on how the integration of technology and interactive reading activities are able to improve the pupils’ reading comprehension skills.

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Waldman and Crippen (2009) describe an interactive notebook as a powerful tool that allows pupils to process information and engage in self-reflection autonomously. An interactive notebook offers a variety set of strategies for the pupils to create a documented learning record which is personal and organized. Pupils are able to produce answers and diagrams to the prompts provided by the teachers and this allows them to self-reflect on their own learning. Pupils are also able to emphasize and reinforce their learning by colouring, highlighting, distinguishing main concepts, vocabulary, questions and diagrams in the interactive notebooks. Meanwhile, a Digital Interactive Notebook (DIN) refers to a digital form of interactive notebook. A Digital Interactive Notebook which comes in the forms of PowerPoint and Google slides consists of hyperlinks, videos, graphic organisers, resources, and other materials at the pupils’ fingertip for immediate use (Grissom 2017).

The Digital Interactive Notebook provides many benefits to the pupils’ language learning especially to their reading comprehension skills. The Digital Interactive Notebook
helps in the pupils’ achievement (Tuan, Chin & Shieh 2005) and increases the pupils’ grades (Waldman & Crippen 2009). The first factor which makes the Digital Interactive Notebook ideal for the pupils to learn reading is because it is motivating. The Digital Interactive Notebook offers a fun and interactive learning which helps the pupils to be motivated in learning a foreign and second language. According to Lam (2016), various types of activities created in the lessons can be attributed to the pupils’ motivation to learn English. Misbah et al. (2017) later added that interactive lessons should be carried out instead of dull ones to spark the pupils’ interest and motivation. Thus, through the Digital Interactive Notebook, the pupils are able understand reading materials by dealing with interactive tasks, colourful pictures, authentic videos and voice recording. They are also able to foster their thinking, writing and documenting in a variety of formats. As Sillanpää (2012) suggested that how well a language is learned depends on the pupils’ motivation, the Digital Interactive Notebook is able to provide a positive impact on the pupils’ academic achievement.

The Digital Interactive Notebook also promotes active learning, self-reflection, self-expression, organisational skills and ownership. This is because a digital notebook provides a medium for the pupils to organise and synthesise their own thoughts (Hampton & Holder 2018). Each pupil’s interactive notebook becomes a personal, unique expression of their effort and creativity as well a demonstration of their pride and ownership of their work. Through the Digital Interactive Notebook, the pupils are able to practice self-reflection by identifying their weaknesses in their understanding and establishing their personal relevance of ideas. Not only that, this medium also provides opportunities for collaborative experiences in which the pupils can negotiate with their teachers and peers. The pupils are able to showcase their work while sharing with their teachers, peers and even parents. Digital resources including the Digital Interactive Notebook are always known to help pupils to personalise and individualise their learning along with increased collaboration for teachers and peers. This is supported by Miller & Martin (2016) who verified that flexible digital resource like this increases collaboration by integrating multimedia literacy technologies.

The Digital Interactive Notebook is believed to be able to improve pupils’ reading comprehension skills. The integration of technology in reading activities will produce positive results as Goetz & Walker (2014) suggested that technology enhances literacy capabilities of students. Fisher & Molebash (2003) also agree that technology is able to function as an assistive tool for acquiring better literacy especially reading skills. A few researches have revealed that using computers help pupils to improve their reading fluency (Torgensen & Baker 2005). Thus, the Digital Interactive Notebook can present the content knowledge in ways that can help the pupils to understand their reading materials better and provide accurate responses.

3. METHODOLOGY

Sixty Malaysian ESL secondary pupils including 25 male and 35 female took part in the study. The sample was selected in two different schools which are situated in an urban...
and suburban area. The sample of the study was selected through convenience sampling method which means the subjects were selected due to their convenient accessibility and the proximity to the researchers. The instruments used in the data collection are a set of pre-test, post-test and questionnaire. At the beginning of the study, all the subjects were given a pre-test which consists of a written text with ten reading comprehension questions. At the end of the pre-test, the subjects were required to respond to a questionnaire in order to elicit their perspective towards the pre-test. After 4 weeks, the subjects were again asked to sit for the post-test which involved the same written text using the Digital Interactive Notebook. They were again required to give their response towards the Digital Interactive Notebook by answering a questionnaire. The before and after questionnaires had 8 items and the responses are based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree). The marks from the post-test were compared to those of the pre-test to investigate if the intervention of the Digital Interactive Notebook has contributed in increasing the subjects’ reading comprehension skills. The findings from the questionnaire function as an additional information to support the subjects’ viewpoint towards the Digital Interactive Notebook.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Analyses of the subjects’ achievement were recorded during the pre-test and after the intervention of the Digital Interactive Notebook (post-test). Findings revealed that the subjects were able to achieve higher marks in their reading comprehension activity when they use the Digital Interactive Notebook. According to most of the subjects, they prefer working with a reading material which involves interactive tasks, attractive visuals, authentic videos and voice recording. Majority of the subjects admitted that they needed help and supports such as simpler questions, engaging tasks and pictures while dealing with a reading material as they have difficulties to understand every word and questions provided. Hence, it is proven that using Digital Interactive Notebook does enhance secondary pupils’ reading comprehension skills.

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The study has proven that using Digital Interactive Notebook does enhance secondary pupils’ reading comprehension skills. This is mainly because the Digital Interactive Notebook offers an interactive and fun reading activity. The pupils are given the opportunity to complete the tasks interactively and collaboratively with the help of meaningful supports such as colourful pictures, authentic videos and voice recording. They are able to enjoy language learning in a relaxed and non-threatening environment. This study is able to give some insights to teachers on how to incorporate technology into reading activities. Teachers play a crucial role in exploring this resource further in order to come out with creative and innovative lessons with the pupils which improves their reading comprehension skills.
REFERENCES


