

Second Language
Reading Curriculum Analysis:
A Malaysian Perspective



Harison Mohd Sidek

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PREFACE

The first chapter discusses the importance of English as a language of academic success involving reading in English as a Second Language (ESL). Studies reflecting ESL reading difficulties among students throughout the ESL countries are included to indicate that this issue is a prevalent issue across ESL countries. The discussion is narrowed down to ESL reading issue in the Malaysian educational setting.

The second chapter provides the background information of the Malaysian ESL educational system including a review of its language policies, approaches to the Malaysian ESL secondary curriculum, the Malaysian upper secondary ESL educational context and framework. A more detailed review on the Malaysian secondary and the Form Five ESL educational framework is also presented because the curriculum analysis in the book is specifically for the Form Five only. A description of the Form Five English Language Curriculum Specifications is included in order to provide a clear background for readers beyond the Malaysian setting. Finally, issues of ESL reading at the Malaysian tertiary level are discussed.

Chapter Three provides the review of second language and second language reading instructional approaches in terms of second language acquisition (SLA) and L2 reading theories, types of reading task, and cognitive demands on learners as well as learner roles. A

review of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its various types of L2 instruction and L2 reading instructional approaches are presented.

Chapter Four describes the curriculum analysis in terms of its background and the acquisition of data as well as how the data were processed and interpreted. Chapter Five of the book continues with the presentation of what is unraveled in the curriculum analysis. In Chapter Six, discussion on how the output of the curriculum analysis is interconnected with the multiple factors and elements in the Malaysian English language education scenario.

Chapter One

THE ROLES OF ENGLISH AS AN ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

English has been widely acknowledged as an international language (Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). According to Bruthiaux (as cited in Ridge, 2004), “English has all the key characteristics that make it likely to remain the dominant worldwide language” (p. 415). The importance of the English language has been established universally as a tool for social, economic, and political success (Phillipson, 1992). As a result, many non-English speaking countries promote English proficiency as an effort toward modernization and internalization (Pennycook, 1994; Tollefson, 1995). For example, in Hong Kong, the shift from English to Chinese language instruction was rejected by many education stakeholders, such as parents, because English continued to be seen as the language of economic opportunity (Tsui, Shum, Wong, Tse, & Ki, 1999).

Another example is Japan where the English language is strongly emphasized at the junior and high school as well as university levels in response to practical needs in the business domain (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). Hence, the majority of Japanese junior and high schools students choose to learn English instead of other foreign languages to fulfill their foreign language requirement (Kitao & Kitao, 1997). These scenarios across non-English speaking countries exhibit how the world acknowledges the value of acquiring, maintaining, and enhancing English language acquisition. According to Jung and

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Second Language Reading Curriculum Analysis: A Malaysian Perspective

Within the non-English speaking countries, it is common that students are often faced with difficulties when reading in English. Past studies have reported that students' lack of literacy skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) has negatively impacted students' academic performance especially at the tertiary level. In light of such situation, this book attempts to present a case study that examines ESL reading instruction at the secondary school level with the implications on how well the ESL reading instruction at the secondary school level prepares students for tertiary reading in English.

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