

Influence of social media on Reading Habits among Year 5 Pupils

Wong Pei Miin, Ashairi Suliman, Melor Md. Yunus



Abstract: *Social media is an online platform which allows individuals and groups, as well as pupils to collaborate with each other. However, studies shown that pupils used them more for leisure than for academic purposes, including cultivating bad reading habits. This study aimed to explore the influence of social media towards reading habits and interest in reading among year 5 pupils in an urban school. The researchers see a need to carry out this study as it provides an insight for educators, especially for primary education teachers, who are longing for different pedagogical approach in language teaching, specifically the teaching of reading. A survey was carried out with 50 year 5 ESL pupils by using a questionnaire comprising 50 close-ended and 1 open-ended items to identify the influence of social media on their reading habits. Besides, unstructured interviews were conducted with 10 of the respondents to examine the influence of social media on interest of reading. The findings showed positive reading habits are able to construct by using social media as it successfully increased the interest of pupils in reading. In conclusion, the use of social media is effective in cultivating positive reading habits. The results of this study may be beneficial to educators in adapting the use of social media in teaching reading. It is suggested that further studies could be done to identify the social media platform that contributes towards pupils' better reading habits.*

Index Terms: *Social media, reading habits, reading interest, ESL learners.*

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Malaysian Reading Profile Survey in 2010, Malaysians above 10 years old read at the average of eight to twelve books a year [1]. Despite the remarkable result, the researcher found a problem among Year 5 pupils in her school where they are unable to comprehend reading materials thoroughly thus failed to answer comprehension questions that following. It was coherent with [2] where Malaysian pupils might have difficulties in learning English as a second language and they do not seem to be able to attain reasonable English literacy even after going through 11 years of learning English in school, thus extensive investigations are needed [3].

In order to elucidate the problems, teachers have to look for ways and measures to improve the teaching and learning of English in schools in order to keep the pupils interested and motivated to learn English [4]. Teachers have tried various of

methods, including segregating the materials into smaller parts, allocating more time allowance to comprehend the materials and adding informative pictures to the materials, still, there are numbers of students who are unable to answer most of the comprehensive questions and it negatively affected the pupils because they failed to perform in both the formative and summative assessment being held in school.

According to [5], "Currently on-line social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace etc. are advanced that received reputation inner extraordinarily short amount of time and accrued full-size quantity of users." Considering pupils nowadays are more exposed to social media, the use of social media would influence their reading habits. Despite numerous studies related to social media and reading habits had been conducted, the researcher had carried out the study to investigate the influence of social media on reading habits among year 5 pupils and its influence towards their interest in reading.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Media

Social media is defined as an aspect of the Internet which allows individuals and groups to create and publish online content, share the content, and interact about it [6]. With the rise of social media in recent decades, it is no surprise that many are using it for a variety of purposes: sharing, learning, interacting, and marketing [7], including the pupils.

"Some of the teachers referred to the advantages of using internet for improving pupils' reading abilities. They believed that the students can search more about the reading topics in order to fully comprehend the text." [8]. However, [9] found that the pupils are exposed to a wide range of ICT gadgets and used them for leisure or socialising than for academic purposes. Furthermore, studies shown that pupils spent more time on the use of social media, especially with the affordability of gadgets, thereby causing less time spent on reading and cultivating good reading habits [10]-[12]. In addition, Malaysian pupils often use social media for both positive and negative [13].

B. Reading

Reading is one of the major skills being taught in English education as it stimulates pupils' mind by enriching their thinking power [11]. According to [14], reading is the ability to understand meaning depends on the reader's knowledge of the language, the structure of texts and background knowledge of the subject being read about. It is similar with [15] who stated that the ability to understand written text is influenced by the readers' background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and experience with the text.

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Reference [16] discussed that “Online reading for information purposes is not widely used in Malaysian schools, especially in rural areas. Some students have low English language proficiency and the language barriers discourage them from reading English language reading materials.” Reading online and the proficiency in English became a challenge to the pupils. Therefore, it is important that pupils cultivate good reading habit as it is a deliberate effort towards understanding and acquiring knowledge [17].

C. Importance of Interest in Reading

[18] described interest as “the feeling of being engaged, caught-up, fascinated... of wanting to investigate, become involved, or extend or expand the self by incorporating new information and having new experiences with the person or object that has stimulated the interest.” According to [19], interest is an important element in reading because young pupils who are interested in reading tend to read more and have better understanding on the reading materials than those who are not interested. It is in conjunction with a statement made by [20] where pupils who are interested in reading show more positive attitude towards reading activities.

Apart from that, interest actually consists of intellectual property. When curiosity becomes intellectual, it is transformed into interest in a degree in finding out for oneself the answers to questions [21]. This suggests that interest is essential in pupils’ learning. When pupils are interested in reading, they will be able to put in more effort and try to comprehend the given materials, although it might not an easy task.

Past studies have shown that interest is related to the feelings of enjoyment, the quality of exciting curiosity or the fascination and attention. It is also a key factor to turbocharge pupils’ thinking effectively. Thus, it has the ability to transform the low achievers to high performers. Hence, being interested in reading is the core principle to acquire the skill.

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to study the relationship between uses of social media and reading habits among year 5 pupils, the researcher employed a survey research design in a primary school in Seri Kembangan, Selangor. Firstly, 50 Year Five pupils, aged 11, were selected randomly to participate in the survey. This is to avoid experimenter bias as the researcher was not familiar with the respondents previously.

Next, data was collected through both quantitative and qualitative method. For quantitative data, a questionnaire comprising 50 close-ended and 1 open-ended items were distributed across six sections: demographic profile of the respondents, access to ICT tools, social media usage, social media competency, reasons of using social media and reading habits on social media was administered. A four-point Likert scales: strongly disagree (S.D), disagree (D), agree (A) and strongly agree (S.A) was used for the fifth and sixth section of the questionnaire. The choice for neutral was omitted from the scales as Asians tend to choose the midpoint on the scales [22]. Since the respondents were only 11 years old, the language used in the questionnaire is suitable with their prior knowledge and it was administered with the existence of a teacher to further explain the questionnaire and to provide them with minimal guidance when they faced difficulties in vocabularies and other hiccups. Besides, the respondents

were required to answer the questionnaire in a classroom with separated sittings so no discussion was made among them during the process of answering the questionnaire. As for qualitative data, an unstructured interview was conducted with 10 of the respondents after answering the questionnaire. The respondents were interviewed by the researcher individually in the classroom as mentioned above. The questions of the interview were aimed to find the answer for the following research questions: how do social media influence pupils’ reading habits and their interest in reading? After gathering the data, the mean for every item in the questionnaire was analysed, tabulated and discussed in the following section to explore the influence of social media on the respondents’ reading habit. Meanwhile, the interviews were transcribed and used to further explain the data obtained throughout the study.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Influence of Social Media on Reading Habits

Table I: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender	Male	54%
	Female	46%
Duration of Use	1-3 years	42%
	4-6 years	54%
	7-9 years	4%

TABLE 1 showed the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of 50 respondents chosen through simple random sampling method, 27 of them were male and 23 of them were female. However, the gender of the respondents was not the focus of the researcher in this study. They were the Year five pupils from an urban school in Seri Kembangan, Selangor. Most of the respondents, which were 54% of them had experience in using social media for four to six years, 42% of them had minimal experience in using social media, which were one to three years while only 4% of the respondents were the long term users where they might had started using social media since the age of three, “I started watching YouTube videos when I was three. I guess my parents just wanted to keep me quiet, that’s why they fed me with all those videos. Anyway, I really enjoy watching videos on YouTube as I can learn a lot of new stuffs,” as stated by a respondent.

Table II: Access to ICT Tools

	ACCESS	YES (%)	NO (%)
1	Computer	68	32
2	Smartphone	96	4
3	IPAD	82	18
4	Internet	88	12
5	Using Social Media	88	12

Among the ICT tools suggested in the questionnaire, 96% of the respondents owned possessions to their own smartphones, 82% of them owned IPADs or tablets and 68% had a computer or laptop at home. However, only 88% of the respondents had access to internet which provided them with the usage of social media.



According to one of the respondents, “I’m only allowed to use my phone to contact my parents whenever I’m away from home, that’s all, no social media...”

Table III: Social Media Usage

	SOCIAL MEDIA	NEVER (%)	SELDOM (%)	SOME TIMES (%)	ALWAYS (%)
1	Facebook	32	30	16	22
2	Twitter	76	14	6	4
3	Wechat	36	20	18	26
4	LINE	76	10	6	8
5	Instagram	56	10	18	16
6	YouTube	2	8	16	74
7	Whatsapp	34	22	16	28
8	Telegram	90	4	2	4
9	Tik Tok	42	30	12	16
10	Snapchat	82	2	10	6

Referring to the usage of social media, more than 90% of the respondents were exposed to and used YouTube and made it the top social media platform used among the list. It was followed by Facebook, Whatsapp, Wechat, Tik Tok, Instagram, Twitter, Line, Snapchat and Telegram as the least preferred social media platform by the respondents. According to one of the respondents, “I really love to watch YouTube videos as I can learn a lot of different things. Sometimes the advertisements are funny too.” “I never heard of Snapchat and Telegram. I don’t know what their function is and none of my friends is using them. So, I don’t think I’ll try them out,” added by the respondent. It was parallel with [23] where there were individual differences in the participants’ preferences for particular ICT tools.

Table IV: Social Media Competency

	SOCIAL MEDIA	NOT APPLIED (%)	WEAK (%)	MODE RATE (%)	GOOD (%)	VERY GOOD
1	Facebook	32	16	16	16	20
2	Twitter	80	6	6	4	4
3	Wechat	34	8	10	14	34
4	LINE	70	10	6	6	8
5	Instagram	56	8	16	10	10
6	YouTube	4	6	4	34	52
7	Whatsapp	32	6	18	20	24
8	Telegram	94	2	0	2	2
9	Tik Tok	42	12	18	12	16
10	Snapchat	74	8	8	8	2

According to the table above, the respondents’ competencies on social media were coherent to their usage of social media. For instance, 90% of the respondents were above moderate in using YouTube and 52% of them in using Facebook. “I’m actually very good in using YouTube. I can even edit my videos and post it on my YouTube channel, although there’re not many subscribers,” answered one of the respondents. “I can do a lot of things on Facebook, read the latest news, watch videos, browse through my friends’ profiles ... and I think I’m quite good in posting feeds as well as commenting on other’s post,” mentioned by another respondent.

Table V: Reasons of Using Social Media

	ITEM	S.D	D	A	S.A	MEAN
1	I use SM to communicate with my friends	10	5	13	22	2.94
2	I use SM to communicate with my family	9	4	12	25	3.06
3	I use SM to learn new things	6	3	19	22	3.14
4	I use SM to follow my favourite artiste	12	11	11	16	2.62
5	I use SM to learn English	11	10	13	16	2.68
6	I use SM to fill my free time	9	10	12	19	2.82
7	I use SM to gain knowledge	10	9	21	10	2.62
8	I use SM to follow the current trend (fashion, movie, music)	2	3	11	34	3.54
9	I use SM because my friends use it	22	12	9	7	2.02
10	I use SM to do business	44	1	2	3	1.28
11	I use SM because it is easy to use	6	13	15	16	2.82
12	I use SM because it is useful to me	6	4	16	24	3.16

Based on the results derived from the questionnaire, the respondents who used social media to follow current trends (mean=3.54) were starkly juxtaposed with those who used it to do business (mean=1.28). It was followed by multiple of reasons, including it was useful (mean=3.16), to learn new things (mean=3.14) and to communicate with their families (mean=3.06). It corroborated the findings by [24] where the preferred activities of the respondents in rank order were: watching films, social networking, playing video games and chatting with friends. As mentioned by one of the respondents, “I always use social media to learn new things. Sometimes, I can even get some past year exercises on Facebook.” “I spend most of my free time browsing through YouTube and Facebook to look for interesting things. Sometimes, I do learn something but most of the time I’ll just use it for leisure. I don’t feel like studying when I’m using my mobile phone,” said another respondent. It also supported [25], [26] where pupils did not spend much of their time for the purpose of learning. On contrary, they used it more for the leisure and entertainment purpose.

Table VI. Reading Habits on Social Media

	ITEM	S.D	D	A	S.A	MEAN
1	I like to read on SM compared to printed materials	15	7	15	13	2.52
2	I spend more than 1 hour to read on SM every day	16	8	10	16	2.52
3	I understand all the words that I read on SM	8	20	14	8	2.44
4	I guess the meanings of new words in context when reading on SM	7	12	22	9	2.66

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5	I skip the words which I do not understand	13	13	13	11	2.44
6	I look up in the dictionary when I do not understand the words on SM	13	11	13	13	2.52
7	I only read articles which I am interested in	6	8	17	19	2.98
8	I share interesting articles with my friends.	13	5	17	15	2.68
9	I respond to interesting articles on SM	11	6	16	17	2.78
10	I neglected my homework because of SM	31	11	6	2	1.58

The data clearly shown that the respondents only read articles they were interested in and share them with their peers. "It is fun to read all those interesting articles on Facebook and Instagram, especially when my friend is reading the same article with me. It gives us more topics to talk about," said one of the respondents. Reference [27] stated that interest is an important element in reading because young pupils who are interested in reading tend to read more and have better understanding on the reading materials than those who are not interested. It is in conjunction with a statement made by [20] where pupils who are interested in reading show more positive attitude towards reading activities. "When I see articles which I'm not interested in, I'll just skip them. It's such a waste of time to read something that I'm not interested in," commented by another respondent. Hence, being interested in reading is the core principle to acquire the skill.

Although reading is a complex process, yet, it needs to be possessed by the pupils because it is one of the main goals in learning and education [28]. Thus, efforts need to be made to ensure pupils are able to master the reading comprehension skills. Besides, pupils also used contextual clues to guess the meaning of the words which they could not understand and some of them did look up the dictionary for the meaning of the new words they encountered. "I used the words that I learned on social media in my writing exercise, it really helps," mentioned by a respondent. This helped them to learn more vocabulary as they read on social media.

The pupils also prefer to read on social media compared to printed reading materials, thus spending more time to read (mean=2.52). It was indeed parallel with [17] where the use of social media showed a positive significant interrelationship with the pupils' reading habits. Meanwhile, pupils also agreed that the use of social media would not affect their homework, thus giving it another plausible point of use.

B. Influence of Social Media on Interest of Reading

Based on the interview conducted with the respondents, most of the respondents agreed that reading on social media is more interesting compared to traditional way of reading. According to one of the respondents:

My mum used to read to me but she's no longer doing so. She said I've grown up and I must study on my own. Sometimes, reading can be quite boring as there're all words with little pictures. But, those articles on social media are shorter, funnier and some of them even attached with videos and pictures. I like reading that.

It is clearly seen that the interesting facts on social media help to promote reading among the pupils. Another respondent stated that:

I don't really like to read books at first. However, some interesting things that I see on the social media make me curious and wanted to find out more about it. So, I have to go to the school library to look for the books which I can find the answers.

Based on the statement above, the respondent found interesting points of reading on social media; thus driven her to further read on some related materials. She added that:

As time passed, I started to read more, especially on those that I'm interested in. Reading gave me a lot of knowledge, something about Science; something about supernatural; something about family and something about how to be good. I think I quite enjoy reading now.

Although most of the respondents agreed that reading on social media successfully aroused their interest in reading, there was one respondent who mentioned differently:

Although there are a lot of interesting things on social media, there're too many advertisements and I will surely be distracted. I prefer to read books and comics. I can imagine a lot of things when I'm reading, and... no one will disturb me when I'm reading.

In general, social media might have increased the interest of reading in some of the respondents. However, the results might be differing due to individual preference in reading.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

From the perception of 50 respondents, it is clearly shown that the use of social media has significant results towards reading habits of pupils in the school, especially in providing them interest in reading. Their responses also showed that most of the respondents agreed that reading on social media is more interesting than using the traditional way as it provided them with more options of reading materials. Hence, educators should fully utilise it by providing pupils with better, meaningful and great volume of reading materials on the social media platform. This might help to arouse their interest in reading, and to cultivate better reading habits among the pupils.

However, there are certain challenges that need to be taken into consideration. First and foremost, some of the respondents in this study did not have prior knowledge towards certain social media and the outcome could be questionable. Besides, the effect of social media towards pupils' reading habits were measured as a whole, thus it did not reflect the relation between particular social media platform and pupils' reading habits. As mentioned by one of the respondents, the advertisements and other sort of distractions on the social media could be intrusive. It is recommended that further studies could be done to identify the social media platform that contributes towards pupils' better reading habits.

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