

Critical Reading Ability and its Relation to L2 Proficiency of Malaysian ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Critical reading is an important ability to acquire particularly among college or university students. This study investigated the level of critical reading skills among Malaysian ESL learners at the tertiary level. The motivation for conducting the study is due to the increasing number of claims by employers and educators that most graduates lack the ability to read and think critically. Among the required reading and thinking abilities necessary to read a text critically are the analytical and inference skills. Specifically, this study examined the ESL learners' analytical and inference skills when they read two expository texts. A self-developed critical reading comprehension test (CRCT) was used to measure their analytical skills in identifying the writer's purpose and the main ideas in the text. The findings indicated that the students lacked the required critical skills, in particular, when they are required to identify the writer's purpose and the main idea in the text which support the observation and experience of many Malaysian educators and researchers. This has direct implications on reading development in Malaysia.

Key words: critical reading; critical thinking; higher-order reading comprehension; analytical and inferential skills; Malaysian ESL tertiary level learners

INTRODUCTION

Many literacy researchers highlight the importance of critical literacy development for college adolescent readers to ensure academic success and to prepare them for their future undertakings at the workplace (Conley & Wise 2011, Ippolito, Steele & Samson 2008). In Malaysia, critical reading or critical literacy is a relatively new area that has increasingly caught the interest of educators and researchers. This is in line with the key thrusts of the Malaysian Higher Education Action Plan of 2011-2015 (MoHE 2011) which are formulated with the aim of producing first class human capital, employable graduate and knowledgeable workers. Further, the recent move by the Malaysian Higher Education Ministry to implement the National Education Blueprint to innovate the education system (announced in September 2012) in the hope of ensuring that graduates are employable (Aisyah Sulaiman 2012) has provided further evidence that it is crucial to develop critical literacy among the students. In light of the action plan and the National Education Blueprint of 2009, we see critical thinking and reading as the skills that can contribute towards realizing the goals set because these skills can guarantee graduate employability (Gee 2007) and qualities as responsible citizens among them in a global society (Shor 2009). With this, we will get a generation of first class human capital, which is in accord with the rising demands for knowledge workers who are marketable (Gee 2007). In other words, this group of people would be those who are knowledgeable workers with efficient critical thinking abilities (Halpern 1997, Stupnisky,

Renaud, Daniels, Haynes & Perry 2008) and who can solve problems creatively and collaboratively (Ramlee & Abu 2009, Ordonez & Maclean 2007).

These efficient critical thinking and reading skills will serve as toolkits to read the world (Luke & Elkins 2002, Morgan & Ramanathan 2005) that could help one to be a better student or worker. In formal settings, such as in academic and working environments, students and workers are constantly required to synthesize, evaluate, interpret and selectively use the information in texts. Therefore, it is crucial for students, particularly at the tertiary level, to possess good analytical skills to evaluate and analyse information contained in the texts they encounter daily. However, Malaysian university students are often labelled as lacking in their ability to think and read critically. Many reading researchers and educators have claimed that Malaysian university students are not prepared to engage in demanding reading tasks, such as critical reading, required of them (Koo 2011, 2008, 2003, Nambiar 2007, Pandian 2007, Thang & Azarina 2008). This situation does not augur well for the students as academic literacy does not only demand the skills to read for general comprehension and for information, but also the skills to integrate, evaluate and critique the information for their academic tasks and future undertakings as part of democratic citizens and employees. Crismore (2000) related her five-year experience teaching in one of the Malaysian universities and concluded that most of the students were ill-prepared for academic reading particularly when reading the information contained in their textbooks. Koo (2003) argues that most Malaysian university students are afraid to exercise critical reading because they are accustomed to conformity to power, loss of face (when their views are found to be fallacious), and fear of being different. However, these claims were made based on anecdotal observation in their experience as instructors at local institutions of higher learning. Empirical studies are needed to further support the views by these researchers and instructors. In view of this, the present paper presents part of a study that examined the critical reading ability of Malaysian undergraduates in identifying the writer's purpose and the main idea in a text in order to determine their level of underlying reasoning and inferential skills in reading. In particular, this study was carried out to provide some insights into Malaysian ESL learners' critical reading abilities by analysing their written responses in a critical reading test that assessed several higher-order thinking and reading abilities such as evaluation, and complex analytical and inference skills. The primary aim of this study is to investigate the level of the students' analytical and inference skills when they read a text.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In a critical reading context, the act of reading is viewed as a meaning construction process which entails higher-order abilities primarily because it is concerned with one's understanding of the ideas and concepts in the text (Rapp, van den Broek, McMaster, Kendeou & Espin 2007). Thus, the conceptualization of critical reading ability is largely explainable through fluent execution of critical thinking skills in that reading and thinking are two interdependent skills and the reading process cannot take place without active use of thinking activities (Bartu 2001, Hennings 1999, Rubin 1993, Stauffer 1969). Critical reading is related to critical thinking in that engaging critically in reading means employing critical thinking skills while reading (Douglas 2000, Thistlewaite 1990). These include the analysis and inference skills (Ennis 1985, Halpern 1998). Reading critically differs from other forms of reading in that the reading act goes beyond the literal meaning by questioning the functions and purposes of the text (Fisher 2001, McLaughlin & DeVoogd 2004). Turner (1988) describes it as "...reading with awareness of similarities and differences between what the reader has already seen and what he is seeing in the text he is reading" (p.186). It is clear

that the process involves analytic thinking and evaluating what one reads (McLaughlin & DeVogd 2004, Molden 2007, Thistlewaite 1990), i.e. it requires higher order cognitive skills (Beck 1989, Halpern 1998, Kobayashi 2007) and comprehension skills such as making inferences, reasoning and judging. These skills are important in order to infer, compare, distinguish between fact and opinion, and identify the author's intention (Turner 1988, Worden 1981).

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this study were 295 first and second-year ESL learners, aged between 17 and 19 years. They were representatives from the various diploma programmes offered by a local university: Engineering, Information Technology, Architecture and Management. As part of the university requirements, the students attended English proficiency classes and they were grouped into their English proficiency groups according to their respective programme by the Academic Office. The administrator at the Academic Affairs Division of the university provided a list of students' names that had been randomized into their respective proficiency groups according to their programme. Subsequently, the students in the various proficiency groups were further selected through stratified sampling procedure to ensure students from all programme were represented in this study.

The ESL students were from various fields of study: Engineering (37%), Information Technology (26%), Architecture (16%) and Management (21%). They were grouped into their respective proficiency courses by the Academic office: English for Communication (C=44%) and Business English (B=56%). The proficiency groups from each programme were selected randomly to allow for student representation from various fields of study: Engineering (C=36%, B=64%), Information Technology (C=33%, B=67%), Architecture (C=41%, B=59%) and Management (C=42%, B=58%).

In addition, the students' proficiency levels were decided on the basis of their scores on a standardised proficiency test, the Oxford Placement Test (1992). The full score for the test is 100% and those who scored between 65% and 79% were classified as having intermediate proficiency level while those who scored between 50% and 64% were classified as having low proficiency level. None of the students had scores above 79%.

MATERIAL

CRITICAL READING COMPREHENSION TEST (CRCT)

A reading comprehension test, the CRCT, was administered to measure the students' critical reading ability. The test consisted of two different text types. Text A is a 577-word letter to the editor adapted from a college academic book (McEntire 2004). Text A contains information on a writer's point of view on healthy eating. The second text, Text B, is an argumentative text taken from a Malaysian University English Test (MUET) book (Richards, (Kaur, Ratnam & Rajaretnam 2006). It is a 610-word text on the effects of excessive intake of multivitamins. Both texts were checked for their readability level with the Flesch-Kincaid reading ease test and Gunning Fox readability test. The indexes of Flesch-Kincaid reading ease for Text A and Text B were 63 and 54 respectively. The Gunning Fox indexes for Text A and Text B were 12 and 16 respectively. Based on these indexes, both texts were found to

be easy read for the participants, with Text A being categorized as easier than Text B. The total score for the CRCT is 42 marks: 21 marks for Text A and 21 marks for Text B.

Among the questions in the CRCT were critical reading questions that were formulated to assess the identification of the writer's purpose (both Text A and Text B) and main ideas (Text B only) in the text. These measured the underlying analytical and inference skills of the students. The questions in the CRCT were a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The skills in the CRCT were coded into three aspects, namely analysis, evaluation and understanding. The texts and the questions were vetted by a moderation committee comprising four experts.

PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

The CRCT was administered after obtaining verbal agreement from the respective language instructors to collect the data in their classes during their normal meeting hours. The duration of each proficiency class was 110 minutes and they met twice a week. The students were informed of the objective of the study. After the briefing, the students responded to questions based on Text A. The questions for Text B were administered during the second meeting. The gap between the administration of the first and second text was between two to three days. The students were allotted 45 minutes to answer questions for each text. Their responses were scored by the researcher as the first rater. As the comprehension questions require subjective judgments, a second rater was appointed. The inter-rater reliability index was .82 Cronbach's Alpha.

The group scores for questions on identification of the writer's purpose and identification of main idea were calculated. Further, ten written responses each from both the lower and intermediate groups were selected for the qualitative analysis in order to obtain more information on the students' analytical and inference skills. The scores were awarded based on the level of difficulty of the comprehension questions. Multiple-choice questions were awarded one point each while open-ended questions that required advanced and complex reasoning skills were awarded two points each. The analysis of the students' written responses were analysed further to get more insights into their higher-order reading skills. The CRCT was scored according to the scoring rubric which was verified by the moderation committee.

RESULTS

This section presents the students' performance in the identification of the writer's purpose and the main idea in each text of the CRCT. The results are discussed by question type and proficiency level.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE WRITER'S PURPOSE

The purpose in writing, which can be to inform, entertain, persuade or a combination of these, has a role in influencing and informing the content of the text which underlies the writer's expression of his beliefs of the world (Graney 1990). The students were assessed on their analytical and inference skills through the identification of the writer's purpose in the text. The question is *What is the writer's purpose of writing the article?* The writer of Text A wrote the letter to criticize the health-conscious people who like to impose their views on the public. In Text B, the writer wrote the text to inform readers of the possible effects of excessive intake of multivitamins to the human body. Table 1 below shows the students' performance in identifying the writers' purpose.

TABLE 1. Scores of purpose identification in percentage

Components	√	X	Total (%)
	Purpose		
Text A	21	79	100
Text B	47	53	100
Total (Text A & B)	34	66	100

n=295

Note: √ indicates correct answer. X indicates wrong answer.

The students' overall performance in this skill indicates that most of them were not highly skilled in identifying the writer's purpose. The results show that a total of 66% of the students were not able to recognize and state the writer's purpose. In other words, only 34% of the students were able to do so. In addition, the students performed better on Text B compared to Text A. One of the reasons for this is probably because identifying the writer's purpose in the letter to the editor (Text A) is more difficult than identifying it in the expository text (Text B). This is related to text organization, Text A being less structured than Text B. The genre of letter to the editor (Text A) in which writers express their views and opinions, allow them to express their views without paying much attention to the structural organization of the text. However, in an expository text, such as that in Text B, which is more academic in nature, the ideas are usually more organized, thus making the text easier to comprehend.

Further analysis of the students' responses to the open-ended questions that assessed their skills on the identification of the writer's purpose provided more insights into their analytical skills. Below are some of the responses provided by the students (P1 to P10) of both proficiency levels.

LOW PROFICIENCY GROUP

Text A

P1: "eat drink but the dietary doom-sayers won't let you be happy"

P2: "A crazy eating and drinking, and it was swell"

Some students chose to quote directly from the text as a way of providing the answer to the question. The response of P1 was a direct quotation from the title of the text, while the response of P2 was a direct quotation from the text. The written responses of the students did not only indicate that they were not able to identify the writer's purpose, but also the manner in which they were unable to do this. For example, when the students were found to typically quote directly from the text, this implies that these students lacked the knowledge on and understanding of how to identify the writer's purpose in a text.

Text A

P3: the dietary doom

P4: junk food

P5: unhealthy food that Malaysians eat every day

Text B

P6: the effect of taking supplement

- P7: multivitamin
- P8: supplement vitamin, good or not?
- P9: effects of multivitamins
- P10: the bad of multivitamins

Interestingly, the pattern of the students' responses from Texts A and B shown above indicate that the students in the low proficiency group were not only incapable of identifying the writer's purpose in writing the text but also wrote answers that were more suitable for generating the main idea. It is interesting to note that these responses were found mostly among low proficiency students. Further, their responses reflected their lack of knowledge in the identification of writers' purpose due the absence of the words that describe purpose such as 'to inform' or 'to persuade'. Such patterns in their answers suggest that they did not possess sufficient background knowledge on how to aptly and precisely answer the question for purpose identification.

INTERMEDIATE PROFICIENCY GROUP

Text A

- P1: to make people realise about the effects of eating unhealthy food
- P2: to remind people to take care of their dietary
- P3: to try expressing his views about food that are not healthy
- P4: to tell the editor that we should eat and drink in moderation
- P5: it is about the unhealthy food that Malaysians eat every day and they didn't know the risks of taking that food. Some of them known but they ignored it and just eat for fun"

With regard to text A, similar to the answers of the low proficiency group, the responses of students in the intermediate proficiency group did not accurately reflect the writer's purpose of writing the text. In the case of P4, the student's response indicated that s/he was not aware of the function of a letter to the editor which is to inform the readers and not the editor. On the other hand, P5 provided a summary of the text instead of providing the purpose of the writer in writing the text. The response of P5 indicated that s/he did not know what was required of him or her in order to answer the question, and also how to answer the question. P4's and P5's responses imply that these students were not aware of the function of a letter to the editor. The data suggest that the intermediate students did not possess appropriate knowledge of the world, i.e. the functions or the purpose of the editorial section in the newspapers in this case.

Text B

- P6: to tell the people about the intake of multivitamins has not prevented any disease and cannot correct poor diet
- P7: to show the people that multivitamin not good for health
- P8: to make people realize that supplement can give a disease not good for baby
- P9: to expose to all people that multivitamin are actually not good for health
- P10: "to know the advantages and disadvantages of multivitamins

Similar to the responses to the question in Text A, the responses shown above indicate that the students were not able to capture the writer's purpose accurately in Text B. However, when compared to the descriptions of the responses of the low proficiency group, the students from the intermediate proficiency group displayed better knowledge of purpose identification than the lower proficiency students. They were able to respond to the question that requires them to identify the writer's purpose. This is indicated by the infinitive verb forms, 'to show', 'to make', 'to expose' and 'to know' at the beginning of their answers.

The descriptions of the students' responses to the questions in both texts indicate the various ways they provided their answers to identify the writer's purpose of writing the text. While the percentages indicate the students' overall performance in this skill, their written responses provided a better insight into their ability in identifying the writer's purpose. Their responses suggest that the students from both proficiency groups were not able to accurately capture the underlying reason of the writer's motive in writing the text which could be the explanation for their poor performance in this skill. In addition, the fact that the infinitive 'to' followed by a verb was missing from some of the students' responses (especially the low proficiency group) indicated that they were not aware of how to write a purpose or objective. In other examples, some of the students were found to typically resort to quoting the writer's words or phrases from the text which demonstrated that they lack higher-order thinking ability, i.e. the skills that are necessary to infer the underlying intentions of the writers when they write the texts. In addition, the responses of the intermediate proficiency students for Text A and Text B indicated that they were able to provide more key words than those from the low proficiency level group, suggesting that L2 (second language) proficiency of the students in the two groups may have played a role in the difference in the students' ability to infer the writer's purpose.

The results clearly show that the students lack the ability to identify the writer's motive in writing the text. This is a critical issue because their lack of ability in these skills would mean they are unable to understand that the writer's underlying intention which shapes the basic form of text development and production. To further illustrate this point, the letter to the editor, along with other editorials and advertisements, are meant to sell ideas and persuade readers to believe the writers' opinions or points of view (Gunning 2008). Thus, it is extremely important for them to understand that it is an important skill to acquire as it allows them to understand that if the students were not cognitively competent to recognize the writer's purpose, they run the risk of not being able to capture the essence of the writer's intention which could lead to them being easily manipulated or influenced by the writer.

IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN IDEA

The students were also assessed on their ability to state the main idea of the text. However, this was only tested in Text B. In order for them to generate the global main idea which involves complex comprehension (Steven 1988), the students were required to acquire a high level of inference skill (Wang 2009). The ability to identify and state the main idea in a text, either explicitly (local) or implicitly (global), is one of the most important skills required in order to decipher the meaning of a text because understanding the meaning of the main idea is synonymous with understanding the gist or central idea of a text (Afflerbach 1990). Table 2 below shows the students' performance in generating the main idea of the text in Text B of the CRCT.

TABLE 2. Scores of main idea generation in percentage

Components	√	X	Total (%)
Text B	Main idea 44	56	100

n=295

Note: √ indicates correct answer. X indicates wrong answer.

The result shows that the majority of the students were less competent in generating the main idea of the text. Only 34% of the students were able to state the main idea correctly while the remaining 66% were not able to do so. The former is at paragraph level and the latter, which is at text or discourse level, specifically refers to one central idea of the multiple paragraphs in the text (Wang 2009).

A qualitative analysis of the students' responses to the questions was done to obtain more information on their inference ability. The main idea of the text, *the effects of excessive intake of multivitamins*, was not explicitly stated in the text. The key words are *the effects of excessive intake*. The issue in the text is not only about vitamin intake but the potential effects of these vitamins when they are taken excessively. Below are some of the responses provided by the students by proficiency level.

LOW PROFICIENCY GROUP

- P1: Vitamin needed to our body
- P2: Help people knows the used of vitamin type
- P3: Intake supplements vitamin among the public
- P4: Multivitamins; prevent or risk of disease
- P5: The intake of health supplement
- P6: Multivitamins
- P7: The effects of multivitamins
- P8: Vitamins intake
- P9: People intake of multivitamins
- P10: Health supplement is good and not good

INTERMEDIATE PROFICIENCY GROUP

- P1: Intake of unnecessary vitamins and supplement
- P2: Bad effects of multivitamins supplements
- P3: Multivitamins and its effects
- P4: Multivitamins has not prevented any diseases
- P5: The effect of the multivitamins
- P6: Multivitamins are not good for health
- P7: Vitamins and its effects
- P8: Advantages and disadvantages of vitamins
- P9: Unnecessary vitamins and supplements
- P10: Multivitamins

Generally, the responses from both groups indicate that the students were not able to accurately capture the main idea of the text. The issue of 'excessive' vitamins intake was not identified even though they were able to identify the idea of the effects of vitamins intake. There are several factors that can hinder the comprehension of the global main idea in a text. Even though understanding or generating main ideas is a relatively easy skill in the hierarchy

of Bloom's taxonomy, stating the implicit main idea is not an easy task. It requires conscious and effortful inference skills (Wang 2009). In order for the students to generate the main idea, it is necessary for them to read between the lines and exercise higher-order cognitive processes involving higher-level inference skills (Wang 2009). Therefore, lack of ability to infer can potentially affect students' ability to understand the gist of the text which in turn will affect their comprehension ability (Steven 1988), which seems to be the case with the students in this study.

In addition, the students' lack of ability in identifying the main idea in the study was probably due to their poor linguistic knowledge in English. Engagement with the text might be impaired by their poor L2 ability which may hinder their ability to explore the relationship among all the sentences that could potentially affect their comprehension (Wang 2009). Therefore, in order to understand the gist of a text, a reader must possess competent linguistic skills to generate implicit main ideas (Wang 2009). It can be seen from the responses that students from the intermediate proficiency group were able to identify more key words of the main idea than those from the low proficiency group. This suggests that L2 proficiency does play a role in generating the main idea of the text. Other than that, the result was also probably due to their poor use of broader reading strategies (i.e. integration of background knowledge and understanding text gist) (Jitendra, Chard, Hoppes, Renouf & Gardill 2001).

DISCUSSION

One of the key issues that need to be addressed in the area of reading ability among Malaysian university students is to find out the extent to which they are capable of engaging with a text analytically. The comprehension questions that measure the generation of main idea and the identification of writer's purpose required the students to analyse the information in the text and to engage efficiently in complex inferential skills (Day & Park 2005). Making inferences is important for text comprehension because the ability to infer is critical for unpacking implicit underlying meaning in the text (Cain 2009). The results of this study show the students lacked analytical and inference skills. The students' poor performance in the identification of the writer's purpose and main idea were further supported by the analysis of their written responses to the comprehension questions. One of the reasons for the Malaysian students' poor ability to read critically is because they lack the training on how to read and think critically (Koo 2008). This is indeed reflected in the students' performance in the identification of the writer's purpose. The manner in which they provided the answers shows their lack of knowledge to address the question on purpose identification.

Further analysis of the students' written responses in the reading comprehension questions throws some light on their underlying higher-order cognitive processes in reading particularly on their analytical and inference skills. The responses indicate a pattern of responding to the questions which shows that the students' analytical and inference skills are weak. Their performance on these comprehension tests imply that they were not able to infer the information that require them to go beyond text-level cognitive processes. Many poor readers, such as the students in this study, were found to have great difficulty when attempting inferential comprehension tasks (Hansen & Pearson 1983). Engaging in these comprehension tasks may be too cognitively demanding for the students. Inferential comprehension is deemed more difficult because they involve more resource-demanding control processes that essentially go beyond text-level cognitive processes and involve automatic schematic integration (Alptekin & Ercetin 2010). Due to this, second language research consistently points out the difficulty many poor readers experienced in their response to inferential comprehension tasks (Hansen & Pearson 1983). If the students do not make an effort to consciously engage with the text in order to analyse the information in it,

they might not be able to generate the main idea. Therefore, the students' lack of ability in stating the main idea or understanding the gist of the text implies that they were not able to efficiently apply their analytical and inference skills that further suggest that they lack the ability to actively engage in higher-order reading and thinking skills.

There is a possibility that the students' level of L2 proficiency play a significant role in explaining their poor performance in these skills. The students' poor performance in inference skills in this study was probably related to their poor proficiency in English. A number of researchers have claimed that in looking at inference generation during reading comprehension, the proficiency levels of L2 readers have a direct impact on this skill (Barry & Lazarte 1998, Hammadou 1991, Wang 2006). This is because making inferences is believed to be more demanding and challenging in inferential or interpretative reading than reading for literal meaning (Kintsch 1998). Therefore, readers with high L2 proficiency are much better at making appropriate inferences than readers with low L2 proficiency (Hammadou 1991). This can also be seen from the students' written responses in that that L2 proficiency seemed to have played a role in the difference in the quality of the students' responses in the open-ended questions. Students from the intermediate proficiency group were found to be able to generate more key words for the main ideas and to be better at identifying the writer's purpose than those from the lower proficiency group. This finding implies that the students from the intermediate group comprehended the text better than those from the low proficiency group. However, in terms of their thinking patterns, they seem to be similar in that the students from both groups either quoted directly from the text or quoted the writer's idea in the text to justify their answers in the open-ended questions. Therefore, the need for sophisticated linguistic knowledge is particularly critical for identification and generation of main ideas that are stated implicitly in the texts so that the students can focus more on constructing meaning of the text.

Another contributing factor to their poor performance is because they were not able to relate their knowledge of the text with appropriate knowledge of the content and text genre. This is observable in their written responses when they demonstrated lack of knowledge of text genre such as in the letter to the editor. When they did not have the experience of reading letters to editors of newspapers, they were not able to monitor and apply appropriate strategies to comprehend the text. Knowledge of text genre is crucial for the meaning construction process in that familiarity with various text genres can facilitate activation of relevant prior knowledge on how to process and deal with the text (Johns 1997).

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to investigate Malaysian ESL university students' ability in reading a text critically. Adopting a critical stance in reading is inextricably linked to operationalizing higher-order cognitive processes. The overall results demonstrated that the level of critical reading skills of the students as measured by their analytical and inference skills is poor, suggesting that they have not acquired the desirable higher order thinking skills required for the tertiary level. In other words, they had not acquired the skills to enable them to read a text efficiently and critically.

Furthermore, the finding of the study provides further support to the fact that the reading development practices for Malaysian students in school do not sufficiently prepare them for academic reading at university level. This has serious implications for the students since they are expected to be able to read and think critically at the tertiary level. The findings of the students' performance in this study support claims made by some Malaysian educators that Malaysian student are not able to read critically or engage in higher-order thinking and

reading practices (Koo 2011, 2008, 2003; Nambiar 2007, Pandian 2007, Thang & Azarina 2008).

While it is important to foster critical thinking and reading skills among students, it is also equally important for educators and language instructors in particular, to help students enhance their linguistic competence in the L2. At the same time, it is also crucial to foster positive thinking and reading dispositions among the students as they were also found to lack the willingness or inclination to think and read critically. Therefore, this situation calls for necessary measures by the Malaysian Education Ministry and the universities to design appropriate curriculum for literacy development for the secondary and tertiary levels to provide better empowerment in reading.

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