

“JUST” - A Reading Module: An Innovation Report

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Abstract

Reading, especially in English as Second Language (ESL), is always one of the most important language skills emphasised by educators globally. Reading and vocabulary are interrelated in a reading class. However, a reading module that compiles reading aloud, reading comprehension and vocabulary is still not being widely used among learners and teachers in Malaysia. Reading comprehension was one of the main problems faced by the learners in secondary school. Thus, this study aimed to design, develop and evaluate a reading module for the pupils in lower secondary school. The module was developed by applying the five stages of the ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, evaluation) model. The design and development of this reading module were underpinned by whole-language theory. The evaluation of this reading module was conducted using pre and post-test amongst 23 pupils in a school in Kuala Lumpur. The results were analysed descriptively by comparing the score of pre and post-test. The main findings showed pupils' reading ability significantly improved after using this reading module. Therefore, this reading module is pedagogically feasible for lower secondary school pupils. The favourable outcomes also demonstrate how using a reading module in an ESL classroom helps pupils strengthen their reading ability.

Keywords: *reading module, vocabulary, whole-language theory, ADDIE, English Language Teaching (ELT)*

Introduction

ESL is compulsory in school and the pupils are struggling to excel in English (John & Mohamad, 2020). One of the challenges faced by ESL pupils is lack of exposure to reading materials (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). ESL learners must possess adequate reading skills, as it is part of the process of learning and acquiring language (Aziz et al., 2020). The process of reading comprehension involves communication between the reader and the text. Through the use of prior knowledge and efficient reading comprehension techniques, the reader derives meaning from the text as they read (Javed et al. 2020). As a result, using certain signs can improve how poorly readers do while trying to understand what they are reading (Javed et al. 2020). According to the Malaysian Education Act of 1966, English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian schools. Due to this, Malaysia encourages the concerned parties to improve pupils' English language abilities, particularly reading comprehension, in line with the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) under the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, in order to bridge the gap in reading skills among pupils, a reading module entitled “Just Read” is produced. English modules showed significant impacts towards development of English skills (Nambiar et al., 2020). This is parallel with the aims of this module which are to improve pupils’ reading ability and promote learning through engagement with their peers. It is hoped that by using this module, pupils should be able to understand vocabulary through contextual clues from the text provided and answer questions based on the reading text. The aims of developing this module are to improve pupils’ reading ability that suit all levels of proficiency and promote learning through engagement with their peers. The objectives of this module are; 1) Pupils should be able to understand vocabulary through contextual clues from the text provided and 2) Pupils should be able to answer questions based on the reading text.

Whole-Language Theory

This module employed the Whole-Language Theory designed by Goodman (1970). It emphasises that pupils learn to read through immersion in books and eschewed traditional systematic teaching of phonics and spelling. During its heyday, it dominated U.S. teacher-preparation programs and curriculum guidelines alike. Therefore, the theory is immersed through all the activities in this reading module. However, specific alterations to the activity design were implemented due to the pupils’ background. Ling (2012) mentioned that Whole-Language Theory is a whole-part-whole theory. In order to understand a whole text, pupils need to understand the parts of it such as vocabulary used in the context. In the end, comprehending the whole text is the main aim. In this theory, teachers are the encourager, planner, knowledge-passer and “enlightener”. Fachin (2020) has implemented whole-language theory in her study to examine reading instruction in the teaching and learning of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL). This study proved that whole-language reading instruction was more efficient than the alphabetic method in the regards to the productiveness of the AFL learning progress. As for English language learning, Adel and Mohammadi (2021) have proven that whole-language theory sustained the learning motivation and knowledge amongst the pupils in teaching reading and writing skills.

Model

ADDIE model was used as the framework to design and evaluate the module. This model consists of 5 phases: analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Studies have proven that the ADDIE model is useful in designing and developing materials related to language skills and has shown effectiveness in implementing the materials in language classrooms (Herout, 2016; Al Ghawail et al., 2021). Figure 1 shows the phases of the ADDIE model in developing this reading module.

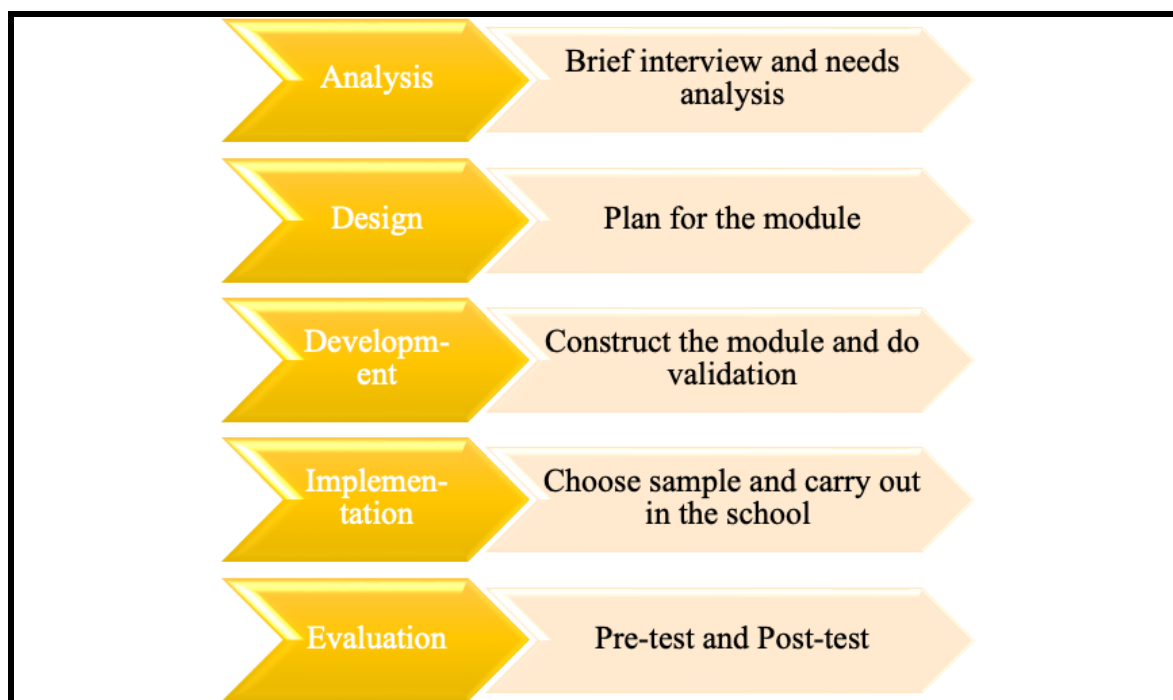


Figure 1: Phases of the ADDIE model

Sampling

The respondents from the selected school were from *Menengah Asas* (Basic Secondary) class, which consists of pupils between 13 and 15 years old. There were 23 respondents in the class. The method of sampling was purposive sampling as this technique has been proven useful in educational research (Allam & Martin, 2021). The respondents' proficiency level was lower-intermediate. They were from different cultural backgrounds with the majority of them were Malays with diverse backgrounds such as stateless or parentless. Figure 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents in this study.

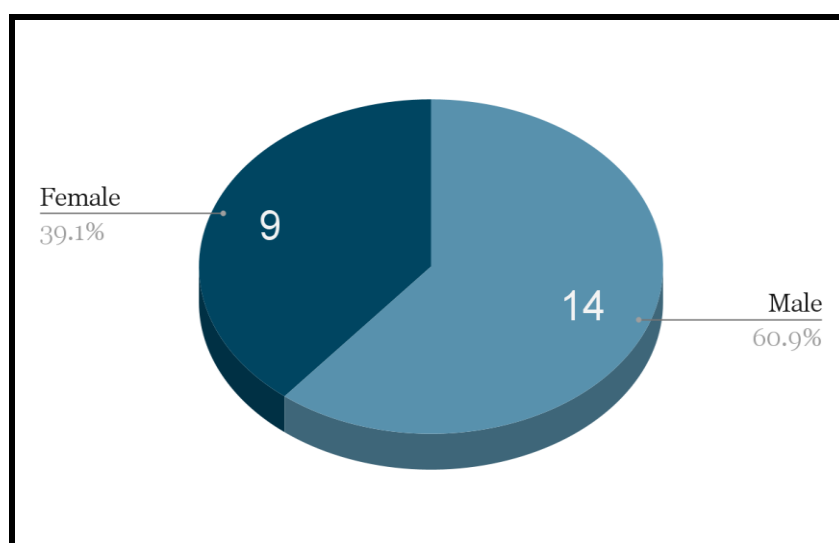


Figure 2: Respondents' gender distribution

Strategy: “Just” - A Reading Module

A reading module named “Just” - A Reading Module was developed in this study. The process is further discussed in this section based on the ADDIE model.

Phase 1: Analysis

Before developing this module, a needs analysis was conducted in order to understand the respondents’ problem in reading. A semi-structured interview was conducted by the researchers as it was proven useful to collect information for needs analysis (Aung et al., 2021). The questions for the interview were:

1. Do you like reading texts?
2. Do you understand the texts while reading?
3. What is the most difficult part of reading a text?

After having the brief interview with the respondents, the results of the needs analysis were then summarised in the following figure (Figure 3). 15% of the respondents in pronouncing some words correctly. This included some high frequency words such as bottle was read as /'bɒtəl/ instead of /'bɒtl/. Next, 20% of the respondents have problems understanding high frequency words and have very limited vocabulary respectively. The highest percentage was the reading comprehension where 45% of the respondents have difficulty in understanding the text and answering the related questions.

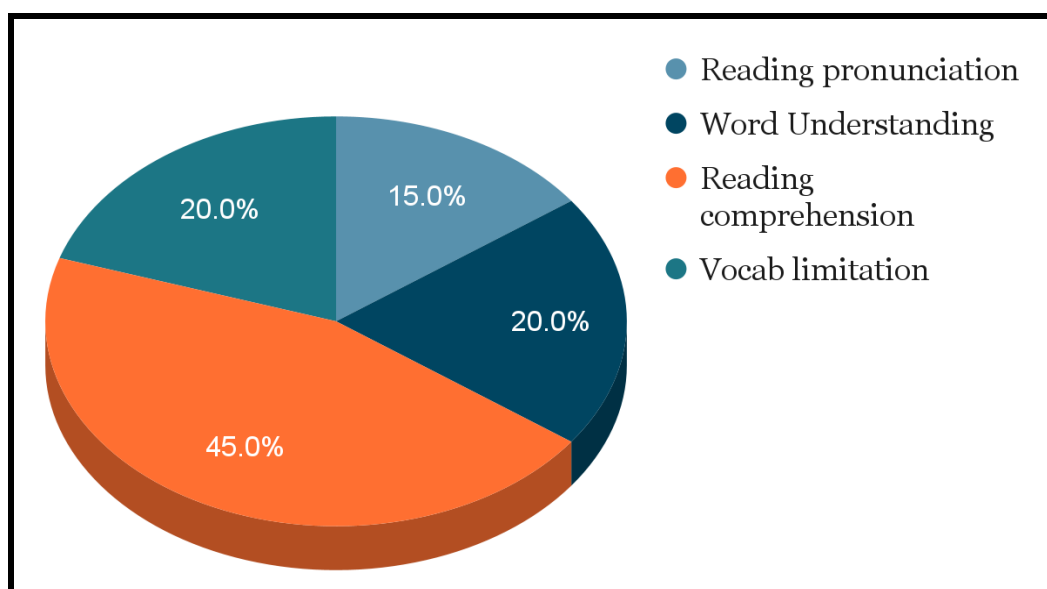


Figure 3: Results of the needs analysis

Phase 2: Design

In this phase, the researchers started to design the suitable module based on the problems identified in the previous phase. First and foremost, a topic was selected from the Pulse 2 textbook. Unit 4 (Life on Earth)

from Form 1 (Pulse 2) textbook was chosen as it contains passages that are suitable to conduct different reading activities. The vocabulary used in this topic is also suitable for pupils of different levels. Next, relevant passages and content were selected from this topic. Then, different reading activities were planned based on the chosen content. Each activity has its own aims and objectives. The reading activities in the module include reading comprehension, reading aloud, matching, grouping and playing tarsia puzzles. Other integrated skills were writing and speaking alongside reading as the focused skill. Finally, questions and items were constructed carefully for each activity. Adaptations were made to some content to cater the respondents' backgrounds. A summary of the reading activities in the module was shown in Table 1 below. The title of this module is "Just" - A Reading Module as each activity starts with the word "Just" to make it catchy to the respondents.

Table 1. Summary of "Just" - A Reading Module.

Activity	Title	Elaboration/Instruction
Pre-Test	Reading Comprehension: Family Wanted to Live on an Island (page 43)	Pupils are required to answer 5 multiple-choice questions and 5 structured questions.
Activity 1	"Just Read" Thula Thula Wildlife Reserve (page 46)	Read aloud with correct pronunciation where pupils do not focus on the meaning.
Activity 2	"Just Match" Thula Thula Wildlife Reserve (page 46)	Group work: Given 10 words and definitions. Pupils match the definitions to the words.
Activity 3	"Just Think" A Day as A Volunteer (Page 48)	Read the text of the website. Pupils think and identify the answers.
Activity 4	"Just Group" Endangered Animals (Page 45)	Pupils identify the endangered factors of the animals: human or environment.
Activity 5	"Just Tarsia" Family Wanted to Live on an Island	Read the text and solve the puzzles into the right shape.
Post-Test	Reading Comprehension: Family Wanted to Live on an Island (page 43)	Pupils are required to answer 5 multiple-choice questions and 5 structured questions.

Phase 3: Development

The purpose of this phase is to generate the “Just”- A Reading Module. There were 4 stages in this development phase. Stage 1 was to decide on which platform to use to create the module. design the module. Canva was chosen to develop this module. Its interactive features can attract the pupils while presenting in the class. It is easy to convert into a booklet too. During the second stage, the researchers constructed and developed the package with help of media software Canva and supporting documentation (Pulse 2 textbook). The images used in this module were all taken from the textbook to avoid copyright or intellectual property right issues. The next stage was the conversion of the module into booklet format before being printed out. This is because it is easier for the pupils to use and keep the module in the form of a booklet. The final stage is where validations took place. Two experts were invited to validate this module. They were head of the English panel in one of the secondary schools and an iconic English teacher who received multiple awards in the past few years. Both the experts commented that the module was an excellent teaching material to support reading lessons.

Phase 4: Implementation

“Just” - A Reading Module was implemented in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The implementation was conducted in two days’ time, aside from the first meet up where needs analysis was conducted.

First meet up: (10/11/2022) Needs Analysis

During the first meet up, the researchers introduced themselves to the respondents and went through some ice-breaking sessions. There were a total of 23 pupils (Form 1- Form 3). Teachers also interviewed the pupils. A need analysis was conducted. Needs analysis is a process of identification and evaluation of needs. It is the first step that should be taken in order to successfully develop an effective training program (Bleich, 2018). From the needs analysis, it was concluded that the pupils were facing problems in reading skills. Teachers then decided to focus on reading and a bit of writing skills.

Second meet up: (04/12/2022) Pre-test and Activity 1-3

On the second meet up, the booklets of “Just” - A Reading module were distributed to the respondents. This reading module comprises a pre-test, 5 reading activities and a post-test. This module is hoped to be a tool for the teachers to be used in class as extra teaching aids to teach reading for lower-intermediate pupils. The main focus for these activities was the reading skills. Writing and speaking skills were also integrated in the activities. Each activity took around 30-60 minutes to be carried out. Specific goals, objectives and values for each activity were set to measure pupils' achievement at the end of the lesson. Answer keys and teaching

materials were also provided. All of the activities were student-centred to provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise their reading abilities in interactive learning environments. Before conducting each activity, the researchers explained the instructions on what the respondents needed to do. Figure 4 shows the cover of the reading module.

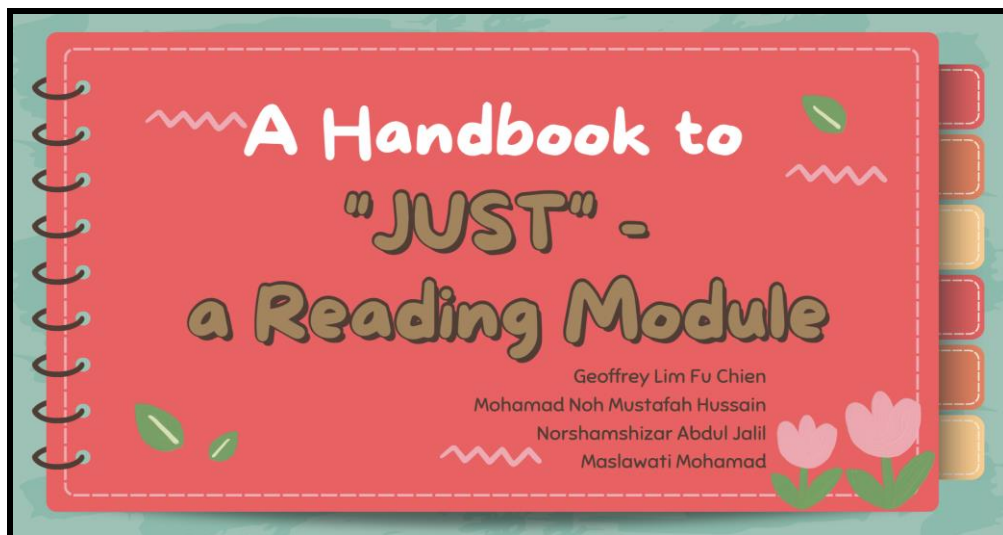


Figure 4: Cover of the reading module

(i) Pre-Test

Respondents were asked to sit for a pre-test. This activity aims to test their reading skills before going through the reading module. Respondents read the text “Family Wanted to Live on an Island” (Unit 4: Life on Earth, page 43 of the textbook Pulse 2) and answered 5 structured questions and 5 multiple choice questions. Their scores were recorded. Figure 5 shows the interface of pre-test activity.

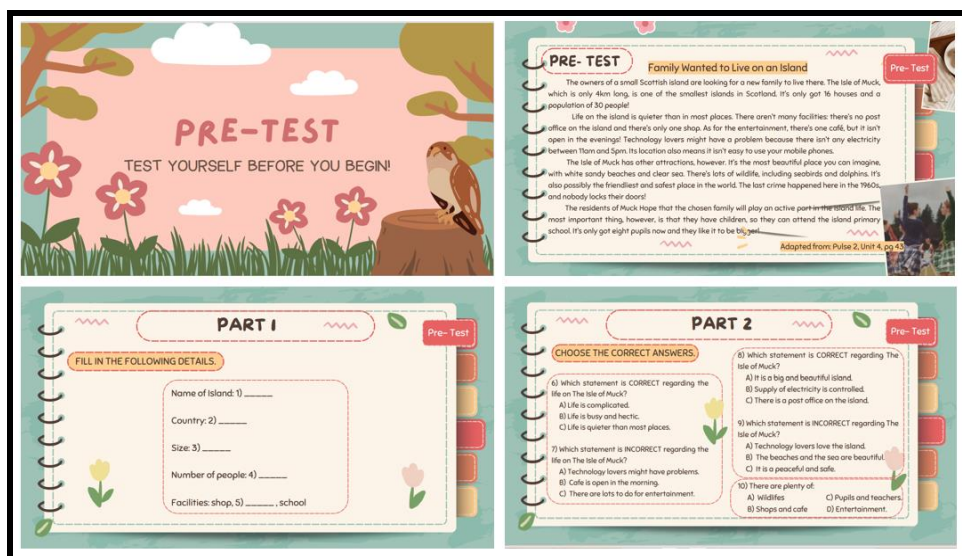


Figure 5: Interface of pre-test activity

(ii) Activity 1: “Just Read”

The first activity in this reading module was “Just Read”. This activity aims to develop respondents’ ability to read aloud a text before proceeding to the next activity. The text was adopted from Pulse 2, pg 46. The “Thula Thula Wildlife Reserve” was about a wildlife Reserve in South Africa. Respondents will be able to practise their pronunciation skills while reading the text. Figure 6 shows the interface of activity 1.



Figure 6: Interface of “Just Read” activity

(iii) Activity 2: “Just Match”

The second activity in this reading module was “Just Match”. This activity aims to develop respondents’ vocabulary skills in looking for contextual clues. The respondents matched 10 words to their meanings. They then read the text a few times in order for them to understand the text and match the words with the definition to the words based on the contextual clues. Figure 7 shows the interface of activity 2.

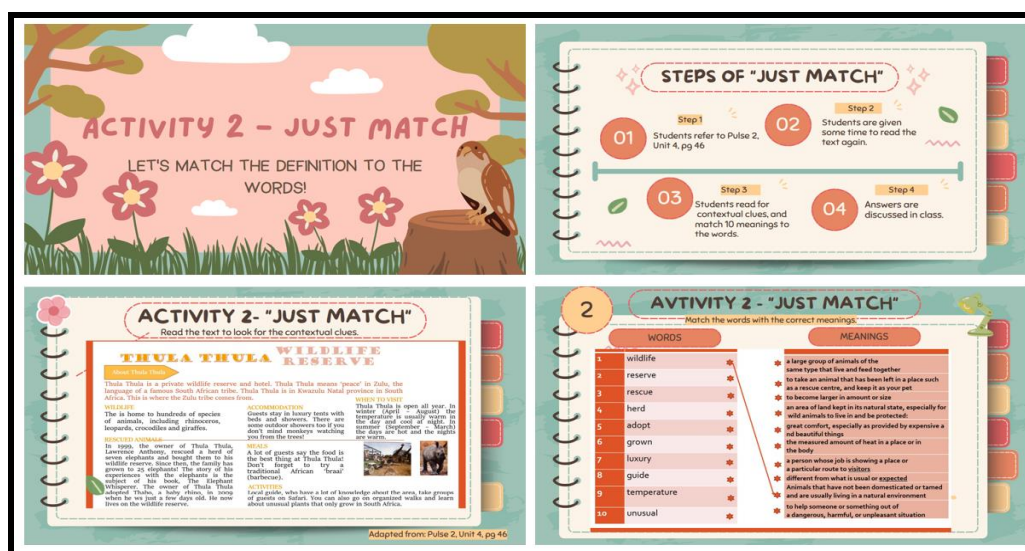


Figure 7: Interface of “Just Match” activity

(iv) Activity 3: “Just Think”

The third activity in this reading module was “Just Think”. This activity aims to develop pupils' critical thinking, to identify and to analyse. The respondents read a text adopted from Pulse 2, page 48. The text was four selected websites which respondents have to read, analyse, identify the gist and critically think before they come to a conclusion. They then answered the questions that required them to identify the correct activities. Figure 8 shows the interface of activity 3.

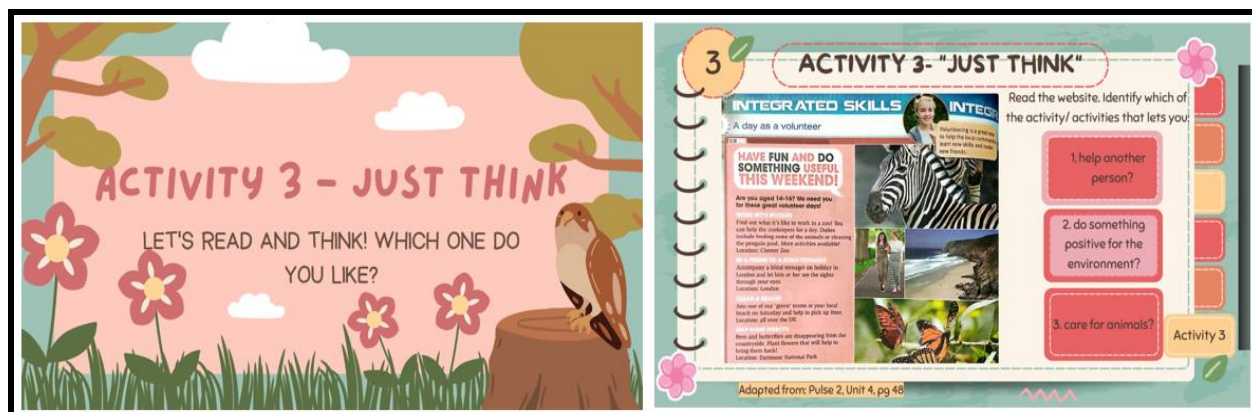


Figure 8: Interface of “Just Think” activity

Third meet up: (05/12/2022) Activity 4-5 and Post Test

On the third meet up, two more reading activities and a post-test were conducted. The respondents have shown interest in reading after the implementation of the reading module on the previous day.

(v) Activity 4: “Just Group”

The fourth activity in this reading module is “Just Group”. This activity aims to develop respondents' ability to read and categorise the information. At the end of this activity, pupils will be able to read the statements, and identify the factors that endangered the 10 species. In this activity, respondents looked at the pictures of the species and wondered whether it is human or environmental factors that endangered them. They then ticked the correct box. Figure 9 shows the interface of activity 4.



Figure 9: Interface of “Just Group” activity

(vi) Activity 5: “Just Tarsia”

The fifth activity is “Just Tarsia”. This activity aims for the respondents to read the text and find the relevant information from the text on page 43 of the Pulse 2 textbook. At the end of this activity, pupils will be able to solve the puzzle by matching the correct questions with the correct answers, and get the correct shape of the puzzle. A tarsia is a sort of jigsaw puzzle that is both remarkably simple and challenging at the same time. Instead of fitting little irregular shapes into each other, respondents first matched up pieces of information written on the sides of triangles with corresponding information on other triangles. Then, they were all built into a larger and recognisable shape. Figure 10 shows the interface of activity 5.



Figure 10: Interface of “Just Tarsia” activity

(vii) Post-test

In this final stage, the respondents were asked to sit for a post-test. This activity aims to test pupils' reading skills after going through the reading module. Respondents read the text “Family Wanted to Live on an Island” (Unit 4: Life on Earth, page 43 of the textbook Pulse 2) again and answered 5 structured questions and 5 multiple choice questions. Their post-test scores were analysed and compared to the Pre-test scores. Figure 11 shows the interface of post-test activity. Figure 12 shows the pictures of respondents using “Just” - A Reading Module.



Figure 11: Interface of post-test activity

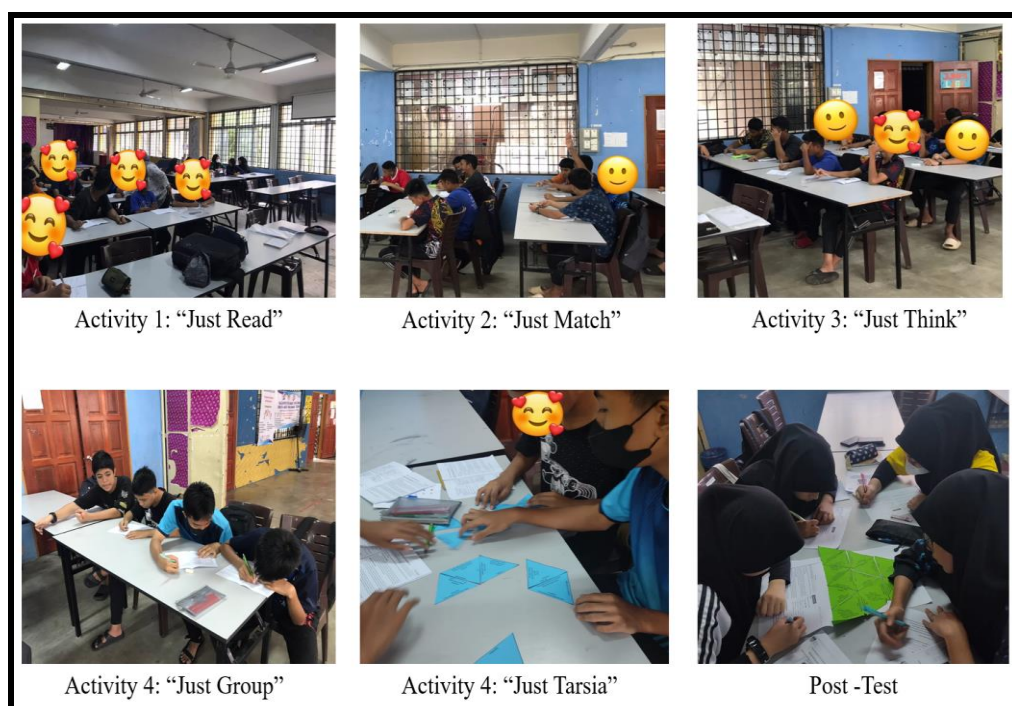


Figure 12: Pictures of activities using the “Just” - A Reading Module

Phase 5: Evaluation

In this phase, the results of both pre-test and post-test by the respondents were analysed and compared. 83% of the respondents showed at least 1 mark of improvement while 17% of them maintained their marks. The highest improvement of the score was 5 marks. The minimum score achieved in post-test was 3 marks compared to 1 mark in pre-test. Figure 12 shows the comparison of the score in pre-test and post-test and Figure 13 shows the improvement chart of the respondents before and after going through “Just” - A Reading Module. It is obvious that this reading module shows significant improvement amongst the respondents in terms of their reading comprehension. Other reading skills such as reading aloud and understanding vocabulary were also improved as observed by the researchers.

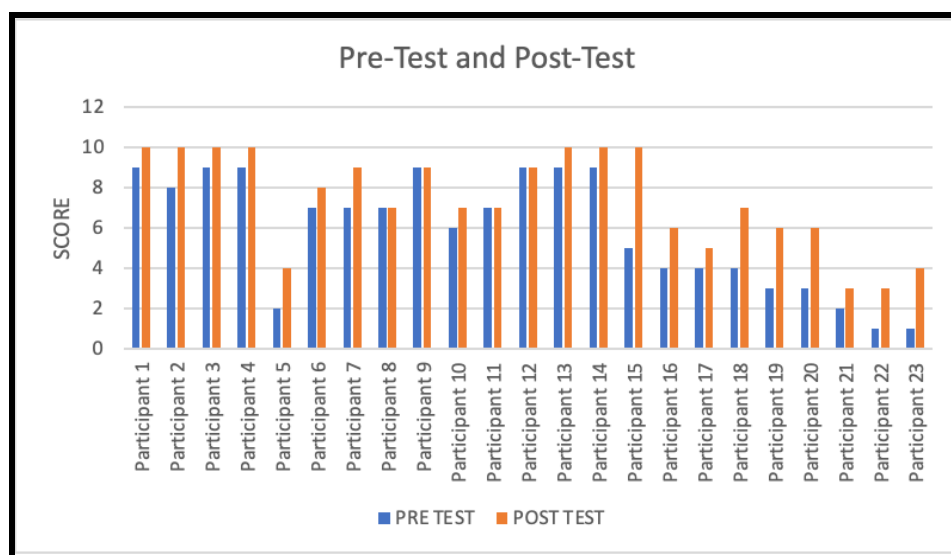


Figure 12: Comparison of scores in pre-test and post-test

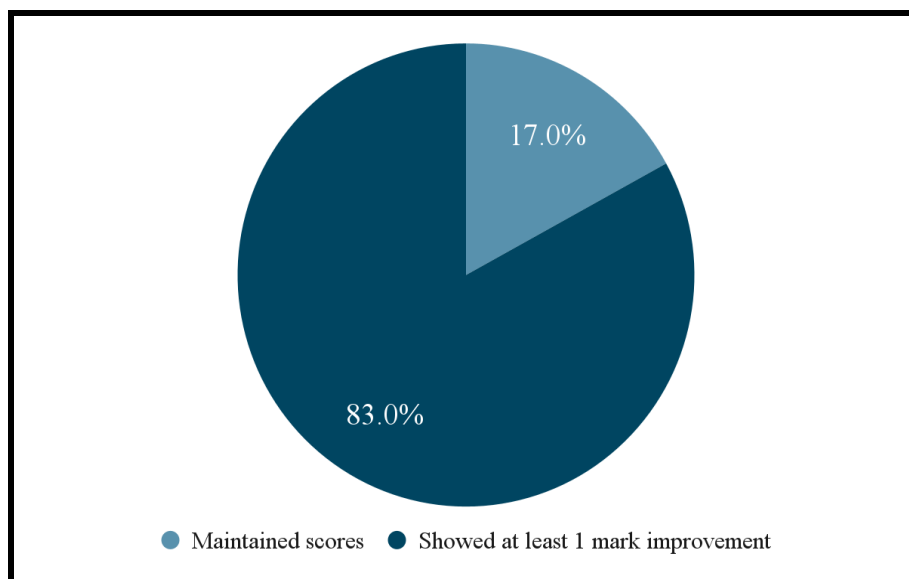


Figure 13: Improvement chart for pre-test and post-test

Strengths

After using a teaching module, it is important to evaluate its effectiveness and make any necessary adjustments. Based on the analysis provided, “Just” - A Reading Module assisted pupils’ learning process, particularly in mastering reading skills. The significant improvement in post-test results indicates that the “Just” - A Reading Module should be considered for use in ESL classrooms. The positive comments made by the pupils regarding the application of “Just” - A Reading Module in the ESL classroom provided further evidence that the reading module had successfully enhanced the pupils' reading abilities. The utilisation of reading modules among pupils studying at the lower secondary level should be the focus of research that will be conducted in the future. It is vital for teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) to develop new ways to aid pupils and to implement these strategies in their ESL classes in order to enhance the learning experiences of their pupils (Eli, 2021; Hasan & Hashim, 2022). Another point worth mentioning, “Just” - A Reading Module helps pupils learn, especially when it comes to developing reading skills. The post-test results showed a considerable improvement, indicating that the "Just” - A Reading Module should be used in ESL classrooms. In addition, such reading modules also helps in gaining motivation amongst the pupils (Durán-Bautista & Marulanda, 2018; Novia et al., 2022). The motivation of English-majored pupils in language learning and their use of reading strategies have been found to be interconnected (Tran & Long, 2021).

Limitations

One of the limitations of conducting this reading module is insufficient time. The researchers were given only two days to carry out the reading module. The researchers would have more time to facilitate some weak pupils and guide them to complete the activities. Despite having only two days in using the reading module, the pupils showed significant improvement in their reading skills. There were also some pupils who were unable to understand the instructions in English. The researchers needed to translate the instructions into Malay language before conducting the activities. This is due to the diverse backgrounds of the pupils. However, during the post-test activity, all the pupils were able to understand what they were going to do. Towards the end, those pupils were able to understand the English commands given by the researchers and communicate in simple English such as “Yes” and “I can”.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is proven that the utilisation of the “Just” - A Reading Module is beneficial in improving pupils' abilities to read. The favourable results also demonstrate that the incorporation of a reading module in an ESL classroom contributes to the growth of pupils' reading skills. In other words, it has been established that using the "Just” – A Reading Module helps to enhance pupils' reading skills. The positive out-

comes also show how the inclusion of a reading module in an ESL classroom helps pupils' reading abilities to develop. It is important to remember that using a reading module is an ongoing process, and that it requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of teachers and pupils. With a well-planned approach and support, a reading module can have a positive impact on pupils' reading comprehension skills. Future research should concentrate on the use of reading modules for a longer period of time to provide sufficient time for pupils to fully utilise the module. In addition, the reading modules can also be implemented in other languages such as Malay or Chinese. To improve their pupils' learning experiences, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers must create innovative tactics to help pupils and put them into practice in their lessons.

Author contributions

Conceptualisation, G.F.C.L., M.N.M.H, N.A.J. and M.M.; methodology, G.F.C.L., M.N.M.H and N.A.J.; validation, M.M.; writing—original draft preparation, G.F.C.L., M.N.M.H and N.A.J.; writing—review and editing, G.F.C.L., M.N.M.H, N.A.J. and M.M.; visualization, G.F.C.L., M.N.M.H and N.A.J.; supervision, M.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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