

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE USE OF HUMOROUS
PRE-READING MATERIALS ON
ESL LEARNERS'
READING COMPREHENSION**

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ABSTRACT

Common instructional strategies of reading entail situations in which students are presented with reading texts without knowing the context beforehand. Such practice has been proven to deflate the learners' interest and motivation to read and subsequently leads to poor reading comprehension. A number of comprehension instructional models and studies advocated the use of pre-reading activities to instigate motivation and encourage comprehension in reading. Meanwhile, other studies have revealed that humour could stimulate interest and engagement in learning tasks and improve learning performance. Therefore, this study was done based on the belief that humorous pre-reading material could influence learners' reading comprehension. The study involved an experiment in order to answer the first research question which was to identify if there was any significant difference in comprehension test scores between the group exposed to humorous pre-reading materials and the group not exposed to the materials. The study also employed an interview in order to answer the second research question which was to determine how humorous pre-reading materials influence the students' reading comprehension. *t* test analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups' scores. However, gradual improvement was detected from the experimental group's comprehension test scores. Meanwhile, interview analysis described the insights on some influences that humour has on the participants' reading comprehension. Implications of this study included propositions for language instructors to apply pre-reading activity as well as diversify their teaching materials by including humorous stimuli in their reading classrooms.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Reading is a vital element of learning. Many educators consider reading as crucial in predicting learners' performance not only in the other three skills of language learning and in other subjects, but also in students' general academic success (Zhao & Zhu, 2012; August, 2011; Merisuo-Strom, 2006). Reading allows learners to gather input and generate schemata that could be applied in the teaching and learning process. In the language classrooms, for instance, learners can gather relevant vocabulary and necessary content through reading. This input can then be integrated into the students' body of knowledge and applied in their effort to complete any activities assigned. Nevertheless, such process can only be accomplished if comprehension of the reading texts is achieved. Therefore, pedagogical emphasis should be given to the reading activities in the classroom setting (Zhao & Zhu, 2012).

However, reading activities usually involved students being asked to read passages without knowing the context involved beforehand. This, thus, affects their ability to relate their relevant prior knowledge to the content of the passages (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In addition, their interest to read and motivation to complete the assigned tasks are also affected (Hayati, Shooshtari, & Shakeri, 2011). These would inevitably and eventually influence their reading comprehension. ESL researchers have found that reading comprehension is affected not because the learners lack the appropriate background knowledge, but because they fail to activate it during reading activities (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Humour is a unique yet universal part of human experience (Hayati, Shooshtari, & Shakeri, 2011). Over the years, countless studies on humour can be found. As tedious as it may sound, humour is, in fact, taken very seriously as it inspires past philosophers, scientists and researchers to attempt to explain what causes people to perceive humour in things, events or texts and its effect on people. The study on humour has even extended into the field of teaching. Not too long after, studies on language teaching and learning also began to investigate its potentials in the classrooms and demonstrated a positive shift