



# *A Dictionary Journey through 'Staycation'*

## @ Gamification of English, Mathematics & Science (GEMS) 2022 Programme

*By Marni, Dr. Nur Husna & Dr. Nur Ilianis*

An English language session with 15 Maahad Riyadhil Quran (MRIQ) students was carried out at Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Razak (PTAR), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Penang branch from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on 14 October 2022. The session was part of the Gamification of English, Mathematics & Science (GEMS) 2022 programme, jointly organised by the Academy of Language Studies (ALS), Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Faculty of Applied Sciences, *Pra Pengajian Tinggi* (PPT), English Language Club, MySTEM and MRIQ.

The staycation-themed session was blended with gamification and storytelling elements. Ms. Marni, Dr. Nur Husna, and Dr. Nur Ilianis from ALS led the dictionary skills slot with the assistance of eight UiTM Penang branch students. For the improvement of language skills, it is undeniable that students need to refer to the dictionary in order to develop their vocabulary to exhibit better performance in their higher education and career. It is pivotal for students to receive proper training in dictionary-use in the language classroom to attain linguistic proficiency in their professional academic settings. Therefore, a slot to teach dictionary skills was integrated into the programme.

The first activity conducted was reading out loud by Ms. Marni. This activity is very important as we want to help students to establish comprehension of the reading material as reading out loud is known as the foundation for literacy development. Ms Marni, with various tones and facial expressions, read a brief story about a staycation set in the United Kingdom. Throughout the story, Dr. Husna showed the images of words uttered by Ms Marni such as scenic sights, monuments, summer days and others - an approach known as the multisensory technique where students will see the picture while listening to it simultaneously. After the reading session, Dr. Ilianis explained the importance of using dictionaries when encountering difficult words. To further enhance their vocabulary skills, she continued by giving examples of words on the board and taught them to identify the words according to their sequence in the dictionary. The students were actively involved in giving responses. Within a short period of time, it was observed that most of the students were able to identify the sequence of those words while helping them to acquire a broader vocabulary.

For the following slot, the MRIQ students were divided into four groups of varying ages. Each group made use of English dictionaries provided by PTAR. They were tasked with arranging five sets of jumbled words in alphabetical order on the library wall. The students enthusiastically flipped through the pages of the dictionary to look for answers. Each group was facilitated by one UiTM student. At the end of the activity, the fastest group to answer the questions accurately received a gift. All the groups were able to successfully complete the activity with just a minor error.

Generally, the programme was successful as it had achieved the main aims: to familiarise students with English dictionaries, to raise students' awareness of the information that can be located in the dictionary, and to encourage group collaboration. This activity also incorporated various other skills including reading out loud and pronunciation skills in the learning process. Other than receiving positive feedback from the school's headmaster and students, we believe that such a programme helps to increase students' interest in English language learning, thus, leading to positive academic outcomes in the long run.

