

Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes toward Reading English Technical Materials among Students in Selected Technical Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the secondary technical school students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward reading English technical materials. This case study was conducted on a sample of 120 students who had been randomly selected from several Technical schools in the state of Perak, Malaysia. The instrument used in this study was a set of questionnaires. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to analyze the empirical data. The main result showed that the level of reading English technical materials in terms of knowledge and skills was moderate. The empirical data also indicated that the about 60% of the respondents spoke mother tongue at home but 40% of the respondents claimed they used mixed languages at home. In terms of reading skills, the respondents were slightly agreed ($M=3.69$; $SD=0.96$) that they possessed the reading skills. They claimed that they were good ($M= 4.25$; $SD= 0.89$) at “visualizing” what they were reading but poor ($M=3.18$; $SD=0.96$) at guessing the meanings of the unfamiliar words that they encountered. With regard to the reading purposes, they concurred ($M=4.30$; $SD=0.86$) that they read for self-development but did not see reading ($M=2.77$; $SD=1.06$) as way to improve their writing skills. In the context of reading interests, they asserted ($M=4.30$; $SD=0.86$) that reading technical materials and resources could enhance their knowledge. But they were unsure ($M=2.67$; $SD=1.17$) with the statement that they only focused on English reading. Finally, the empirical data on the reading preferences indicated the respondents preferred ($M=4.08$; $SD=1.08$) doing reading tasks using computer or digital devices. They, however, seldom ($M=2.24$; $SD=1.17$) read religious book in English. In conclusion, the main findings showed that secondary technical schools students in Perak believed that they possessed competence to read English technical materials but they were weak in writing and reading certain types of reading materials. This implies that the English curriculum for technical and vocational institutions needs further improvement in especially in reading contents, reading coaching, reading activities, teaching methods, and teaching-learning facilities. Digital devices to enhance reading competency should be used.

Keywords: Reading, knowledge, skills, attitude, English technical materials