The Impact of the Linus Literacy Program on Reading Ability Skills in Malaysia

This study was conducted to identify factors contributing to reading proficiency among primary school students who attended the LINUS literacy Program in Malaysia. A total of 108 students were selected to participate in this study, which used a mixed method. The findings show no significant difference in the proficiency of reading aspects between students in terms of gender. However, the findings proved that students whose parents work in the government sector show better achievement than students from the family where their parents work in the private sector. This study also found that students obtained a better command in reading during the post-test was higher than during the pre-test stage. A qualitative approach is applied to obtain desired data by using observation, interview and document review techniques. The study found that the LINUS teachers used various methods such as demonstrations, instructions, drills and fun learning during teaching sessions while incorporating learning aids; for instance, scan cards and reading kits help students recognise syllables and increase reading ability. Low-income parents, type of occupation, passive LINUS students and frequent absenteeism are among the constraints identified in this study.

Keywords: Education, Program LINUS, literacy, primary schools

The problem of literacy mastery among students is an issue that has not yet been fully addressed. Various programs have been implemented to address the problem. The LINUS Program is one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) under the Ministry of Education (MoE) Malaysia. The LINUS program, which stands for literacy and numeracy screening, is a continuous step from the existing program and has been planned more systematically to address students who have not mastered basic literacy skills. The program is designed to ensure that students master the Malay language's basic literacy and numeracy skills in the first three years of schooling at the primary level. Primary schools throughout Malaysia have implemented the LINUS Program to ensure that children successfully master the basic skills of LINUS. To prevent students from dropping out, the LINUS Program is planned and held to strengthen the education system in the country. Student outcomes can be improved from time to time with the LINUS Program. Teachers need to help students who are weak in mastering literacy skills and master those skills before the end of Level One schooling. Mastery literacy skills will make students more productive and confident to participate in society and the local community.

Not being able to master reading skills by school children is taken seriously by the government, which targets a zero illiteracy environment by 2020. Based on the MoE Report in 1993, 80,000 primary school students in Malaysia facing problems in basic proficiency, namely read and write. According to Jamian (2016), the reading process is essential and should be mastered by all students. Report of the Special Rehabilitation Program
Evaluation Study in the primary by the Planning and Policy Research (2002), in 1999, 78,000 primary school students did not master reading and writing ability in Malay language and need special remedial classes. The report also outlined various cases related to special rehabilitation education.

The ability to be in primary school literacy in the Malay language subject is a vital skill to be mastered by them from the early stages of schooling. Under the NKRA, the MoE intended to ensure that every student should master literacy in languages other than English, except for students with special needs after three years of primary school education (Melissa, Gunasegaran, Kung Lung Chiong, 2018). Therefore, to improve students’ ability in literacy learning the Malay language, the MoE has made a significant shift by implementing a program of literacy and numeracy named Program Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) since 2010. The LINUS program is a program that identifies problems of dropout among Year One to Year Three to master reading and writing skills. Following the implementation of this program, the Malaysian Examinations Board has provided teachers and students modules that adhere to an integrated literacy approach. Among the elements found in the teaching and learning of the LINUS literacy program is teaching students with entertaining activities such as singing, games, etc. Next, this study will examine the extent to which demographic factors are closely related to the reading aspects of the LINUS Literacy Program of primary school students.

This study looks at the demographic point of view, namely gender, whom the student lives with, the student's early education, the parents' income and level of education. Chakravarthy (in Palaniappen, 2009) proved that cultivating the habit of reading plays a crucial role in a family. Nurturing the habit and interest in reading has a very close relationship with the family lifestyle, the relationship between the child and the parents at home, and the family's socioeconomic status. Fostering a child’s interest in reading through intimate reading leaves nine positive effects.

Therefore, it is clear that cultivating the habit and interest in reading among children is a great responsibility for every parent. According to Koh (2006), illiterate students in Year One are more likely to experience similar problems throughout their schooling. This is because failure to read well will affect a child’s mastery of skills in school. Reading problems are not something to be taken lightly. Statistics in 2019 show that 40% of the 469,038 pupils in Year One face problems reading in Malay. According to the researcher, several other factors cause students to lack mastery of reading and writing skills, such as the role of students, school, parents, and the environment.

The MoE has formulated and implemented the LINUS Program to ensure that Year Three students in National Schools (SK) can master literacy and numeracy from 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2010). Serious attention to the issue of failing literacy and numeracy is considered as it relates to the country's progress in the long run. The study of Muller and Murtagh (2000) found that a total of 877 million people of the world in 2000 did not master the basic skills of reading and writing. Meanwhile, the Tawau District LINUS Screening
Report (2016) shows that a total of 4,200 Year One students participated in the LINUS program. Findings of the LINUS Literacy Screening Test showed that 190 or 4.52% of the students involved with the LINUS Literacy Program did not master Constructs 1-2, while 737 (17.55%) students failed to master Constructs 3-12. Meanwhile, out of a total of 4,326 Year Two students who participated in the LINUS Program, a total of 25 students or 0.58% did not master Constructs 1-2, and 22 or 5.18% students did not master Constructs 3-12.

Therefore, it is clear that there is a problem of reading proficiency among primary school students, namely in terms of the achievement of recognising letters, syllables, words and sentences. Accordingly, this study will identify the factors that affect the mastery of literacy, especially among students of the LINUS Program. Therefore, the study was conducted based on the following objectives: to identify demographic factors that affect aspects of reading among primary school students that attended the LINUS Literacy Program; to examine the teaching activities of teachers to students of the LINUS Literacy Program, and to identify the constraints faced by LINUS Literacy Program students in terms of reading ability.

The ability to read is a vital aspect of the process of applying knowledge. This view implies that reading activities coincide with human behaviour that will involve comprehension. Therefore, teachers involved in reading teaching and learning activities need to ensure that both elements are taught in an integrated manner to students, especially students who follow the LINUS Program. The researcher hopes that the MoE, State Education Department, District Education Office, principals, and researchers who teach the LINUS literacy program will benefit from this study.

Literature Review

Theories Underlying the Study

The study was based on three theories: Vygotsky's Proximity Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. Proximity Theory explains that the development of children's cognitive thinking results from extensive social interactions, which allows them to connect the basic knowledge with new acceptances. Children's social interactions and behaviours also develop in stages based on their development and growth process. Based on this theory, children are influenced by the social world; children's interaction with others is a significant influence that could improve their thinking. In the meantime, parents are the first human beings for children to receive the experience of mastering the language. In the meantime, according to the Theory of Cognitive Development, the concept of Proximal Development Zone (ZPD) involves the following aspects:
i. Children that have the opportunity to be actively involved among more mature and more adult members of society will become more skilled and always think of something in their cultural circle; and

ii. Children will be more easily involved in society's culture and respond to the environment by using the advantages of thinking, dialogue and language mastery.

Sigelman and Rider (2003), through Bronfenbrenner’s Theory of Ecology, explained the aspects of human development and behaviour. The human social-ecological environment is based on how individuals interact and consists of five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The microsystem is the system that has the most influence on the development of children. The system covers one’s environment, such as around the house with parents and children or around the school, with teachers and friends. According to White and Coleman (2000), based on the philosophy of family ecology theory, schools and communities are the responsible parties in providing early childhood education.

Past Studies

Literacy is an aspect related to one’s culture and background. Children will acquire language knowledge and skills through their parents and others around them. Children will understand written material better in a language they know. In revealing a child’s literacy based on family and community background, it depends on how the child involved is given a broader meaning about literacy (Gillen & Hall, 2013). Thus, several studies examined the relationship of parents, academic level of parents, and other aspects of demographics with literacy ability among children. According to Hoff (2013), children from low economic status are those from families whose parents have low income and academic qualifications. Such children have a different level of language development than children from the middle class, and they usually master one language compared to middle-class children. Upon entering the school environment, the child will face problems in the language class and obtain lower marks than middle-class children. Jumiya (2014) stated that factors that influence students' achievement include the attitude of students and parents, self-identity, cultural differences, economic status, learning style, mother tongue and teachers-students relationship.

Several studies in Malaysia have examined the relationship between demographic factors and literacy proficiency among students. Among them is Ruslida’s (2005) study, which involved 125 parents and 125 preschool children in five preschools, under the supervision of the MoE, in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The study examined the involvement of parents in four aspects, namely providing guidance and material supports to their children, storytelling, interaction and spending reading time with their kids. The study found a
significant relationship between parental involvement and the achievement of essential reading skills among preschool children.

The study of Christopher et al. (2013) has explored the aetiology of individual differences in reading development from kindergarten to fourth grade by analysing data involving 487 pairs of twins in Colorado. Data from three reading measures and one spelling measure were used to study behavioural genetics regarding the aetiology of early reading development among twins. The longitudinal study found a genetic influence on individual differences from kindergarten to fourth grade. Lau’s (2013) study has examined five characteristics of parental involvement that could improve students’ command and proficiency. The five characteristics are the roles of family, resilience, social supports, concrete supports, and attention. The study of Raban and Nolan (2006) showed that early reading practices and exposure at home would bring various advantages to children in mastering basic reading skills. A study conducted in Victoria, Australia, showed that parental involvement has started since their child was three years old. The results show that reading storybooks to children will help them improve language skills and inject a desire to learn and read. Chakravarthy (in Palaniappen, 2009) proved that reading practices positively affect a child’s reading habits.

A study by Hasnalee and Zulkifley (2001) found that demographic factors of students and teachers do not affect reading and comprehension skills among students. The expertise of LINUS Program teachers in determining the readiness of students and the level of assistance given to LINUS Program students will improve students’ literacy mastery. The results also show that the inability of teachers to identify children’s problems at the time they first enter school will impact the learning process and would prevent children from gaining the full benefits (Achenbach, 1991; Offord & Lipman, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman, Planta, & Cox, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the findings of previous studies, the researcher found that several demographic characteristics have a relationship in terms of reading ability among students. Thus, the researcher concluded that the factors that influence the reading aspect of students are demographic factors such as early education of students, gender, socio-economic level of their family, place of residence and parental education level. Thus, Figure 1 is the study's conceptual framework that summarises the variables used by the researcher.

Methodology

To collect the relevant data and meet the objectives outlined, the researcher used a hybrid approach, a quantitative approach followed by a qualitative method. Quantitative data was used to detect demographic factors on aspects of reading command among LINUS Literacy Program students. The study used two types of research instruments: a questionnaire to collect
information related to student demographics and achievement tests to measure student literacy. The achievement test that was used is the LINUS Screening Test. Inferential statistical analysis – t-test and ANOVA were applied to identify the effect of demographic factors on aspects of reading commands and determine the differences in the achievements, both at pre and post-test levels. In the meantime, qualitative data were obtained through the observation method by using parent-teacher interview instruments, teachers’ teaching reflections and researcher field notes. Under the quantitative approach, the researcher selected 108 students, involving five primary schools in the urban zone of the Tawau district. The researcher only focused on LINUS Literacy Year Three students and selected them using the sampling method based on Krejcie and Morgan formula. In the meantime, the researcher also ensured that the study complied with legal provisions, including laws related to children, minors and students' fundamental rights. Therefore, every student and parent involved in the study have the right to know about the purpose of the study. Apart from providing adequate information and explanations, all respondents, including teachers, were protected from ethics and confidentiality and were given assurance that information and responses shared only be used for academic purposes.

As described earlier, through this study, the researcher examined to identify the effect of demographic factors on aspects of reading proficiency among primary school students and the data were analysed using independent sample t-test and ANOVA. Meanwhile, the researcher had measured the differences between pre-test and post-test by using a matching t-test. Of 108

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study
respondents, 65 or 60% are male students, and the balance is female students. In addition, 92.6% of students live with their parents, three or 2.8% of students stay with mothers while the remaining students with their guardians. In terms of education, a total of 51 or 47.2% respondents are students with early education in government kindergartens, and the balance 57 or 52.8% are students with early education in private kindergartens.

Meanwhile, 103 or 95.4% of respondents are parents with SPM academic qualifications, only one or 0.9% of parents have a Diploma, and the remaining four or 3.7% obtained a Bachelor's Degree. In terms of income of parents and guardians of the students, a total of 70 or 64.8% of them earning between RM500 and RM2,000, 35 or 32.4% (RM2,001-RM4,000), and only 2.8% earning RM4,001 and above. Furthermore, the data obtained showed that 45 or 41.7% of the parents work in the government sector, 40 or 37% work in the private sector, while the remaining 23 or 9.8% are self-employed parents.

Table 1. Differences in terms of post-test scores from a gender perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent sample t-test results show that there is no significant difference in test scores in terms of gender (t = .93, p> 0.05) (Table 1). This means that male and female post-test scores are the same.

Table 2. Differences in terms of achievement from respondents’ residence perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean of squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In groups</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, one-way ANOVA test analysis shows that there is no difference in post-test scores according to the residence of the respondents (F = .120, p> 0.05) (Table 2). This suggests that the post-test scores obtained were no different whether living with a parent, mother or guardian.

Based on Table 3, the independent sample t-test results show a significant difference in the post-test scores according to the early educational background obtained by the respondents, i.e. (t = 1.67, p < 0.05). This means that the post-test scores of government and private kindergarten students are different.
Table 3. Differences in terms of post-test scores from early education level of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-test scores</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Kindergarten</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Kindergarten</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Differences in terms of post-test scores from the academic level perspective of parents/guardians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Jumlah kuasa dua</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Min kuasa dua</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the description in Table 4, one-way ANOVA test analysis shows no difference in post-test scores according to the academics level of parents or guardians of students (F = .14, P > 0.05). This situation illustrates that whether the parents have an SPM, Diploma or Bachelor's Degree qualifications, the post-test scores are no different.

Table 5. Differences in terms of post-test scores from income perspective of parents/guardians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean of squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, one-way ANOVA test analysis shows that there is a difference in post-test scores in terms of income (F = 5.86, P < 0.05) (Table 5). This indicates that post-test scores obtained are different in terms of the level of income of parents and guardians.

Table 6 Differences in terms of post-test scores from the sector of occupation perspective of parents/guardians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of occupation</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sum of mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of one-way ANOVA test analysis shows that there are differences in post-test scores in term of the sector of occupation (F = 3.33, p < 0.05) (Table 6). Indirectly the finding indicates that working parents, whether
in the government, private sector or self-employed, the post-test scores obtained show a significant difference.

In the meantime, the researcher also tested the difference between the two mean dependent variables by selecting a sample to test the null hypothesis. The researcher studied the differences between achievement scores (reading command) before treatment (pre-test) and after treatment (post-test). The scores obtained for each test shown in Table 7. The finding shows that there is a significant difference between the achievement level during pre-test and post-test ($t = 13.223, p <.05$), and the post-test score was higher (mean = 4.97) than the pre-test level.

**Table 7. Differences in the achievement level during pre-test and post-test of LINUS Literacy Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.480</td>
<td>-13.223</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

**Teaching Activities of Reading Aspects of the LINUS Program**

Teachers have implemented various activities in teaching the reading aspect of the LINUS Program, which contains ten constructs focused on in this study. The study's findings show that LINUS teachers have implemented several activities that help the mastery of the reading aspects of LINUS students. Among them are teaching using the syllable method, entertainment, scan cards and pictures.

i. The syllable method is a method used by teachers in teaching the reading aspect of the LINUS Program. Findings of the study show that this method is the choice of teachers in teaching and learning activities, especially for ten constructs in the aspect of reading;

ii. *Didik hibur* is also an activity that is the choice of teachers to teach aspects of reading in this study. Entertainment activities involve singing, acting, elements of obsession and so on. Teachers were found to use singing techniques in teaching the reading aspect of the LINUS Program;

iii. Reading skills teaching activities for ten constructs were also implemented by teachers using pictures. Pupils are shown pictures and asked to read sentences and examine the information shown. The researchers' field notes further reinforce these findings. Teaching that uses pictures and scan cards will make students more involved in the learning process; and

iv. The teaching and learning of reading aspects of the LINUS Program are also implemented using teachers' reading kits. The kit contains colourful reading cards to make it easier for students to identify
syllables. In addition, this reading kit is equipped with coloured reading cards that can be used and applied repeatedly until students can master the aspect of reading.

**Constraints in Mastery of Reading Aspects of the LINUS Program**

Students who already have difficulty in reading will usually have difficulty mastering other skills. Past studies have shown that the problem of illiterate students is still prevalent, and the occurrence is due to various factors. The findings of this study have identified several constraints that cause LINUS students to have problems in mastering aspects of reading, namely:

i. Constraints related to parents’ income: There is a significant relationship between parents’ income and the level of mastery among the LINUS Program students. Parents who have a high income or substantial financial resources can provide better learning facilities for their children.

ii. Constraints related to the type of occupation of students’ parents or guardians: The type of occupation will determine whether they have the conducive space and opportunity to assist their children to study or do homework at home. Parents working in the private sector or self-employed spend more time at the working or business place than government sectors.

iii. Constraints related to the level of education: Parents who have higher academic qualifications tend to monitor their children's learning progress closely. The finding shows that parents with a higher educational background, such as a degree or diploma holder, will concern more on the educational development of their children.

iv. Constraints related to students capability: Students who have difficulty reading and writing skills, especially in Bahasa Melayu, could not learn like regular students. Therefore, they need teachers’ determination and parents’ support to improve their skills and command.

**Discussion And Implications**

The discussion and summary of the findings of this study justify that this research has been able to meet the objectives and answer the research questions. In addition, a description of the study's implications to justify the contribution of this study to education and research. Regarding one of the components related to the first research question, namely whether there is an effect of gender factors on reading by following the LINUS program, the results show no significant difference between male and female students. The findings of this study are slightly different from the study of Von Suchodoletz et al. (2013), who found that there were differences between male and female
students in reading skills in Germany and Ireland. Regarding the effect of living together on reading, the findings also show no significant difference between students who live with their parents and students who live with their mothers or guardians. The findings of this study are slightly different from the findings of the study of Christopher et al. (2013), who found a difference between students living with parents and students living with mothers or guardians. This is probably due to the cultural differences between Eastern and Western societies.

In terms of the academic level of parents on the aspect of reading, the results show that there is no significant difference between students and the academic qualifications of parents. The finding of this study differs from the view of Hoff (2013), who found that students in the United States whose parents had low academic qualifications had lower literacy proficiency than students whose parents had high academic qualifications. However, there is an effect of early education factors on students' skills. The researcher found a significant difference in post-test scores based on the type of early education of students. For example, post-test achievement scores of government kindergarten and private kindergarten pupils are different. The finding is in line with Muhammad, Song, Guang, Altaf Marwat and Bilal (2014), who stated that there are infrastructure differences between public educational institutions and private educational institutions in Pakistan. The results of this study prove that different types of institutions influence the findings of the study. This is because each country has different policies on public institutions and private institutions.

Another component in the first research question is the effect of parents employment factors. The study's findings found a significant difference in post-test scores according to the type of parents' occupation. Post-test achievement scores of students whose parents work in the government, private and own sectors are different. This study found a difference in the level of literacy mastery based on the parents' occupation. Moreover, the findings of this study are in line with the writings of Raban and Nolan (2006) and Chakravarthy (in Palaniappen, 2009), who had stated that parents leave a positive impact in cultivating their child’s interest in reading. Parents who work in the government sector have more time at home than parents who work in the private sector. Regarding the effect of parental income factors on reading, this is also similar to Cooper's (2006) study, which stated that parental income affects the level of literacy mastery of students. According to Cooper, students who come from high-income families have better literacy levels than students who come from low-income families.

Meanwhile, in terms of differences in pre-test and post-test achievement of reading skills, the researcher found a significant difference. The finding shows that there are effective practices in psycholinguistics to master basic reading materials in Bahasa Melayu. Therefore, the results of this study are similar to the finding of Nur Shakirah and Muhammad (2017), which show that the level of reading proficiency of LINUS students increased in Screening Test 2
compared to Screening 1 and the level of reading comprehension of LINUS students was in a suitable category.

The findings of this study show that the activities applied by teachers are more student-centred activities and use methods of learning while playing, such as puzzles and singing. Maddahiri, Khairuddin, Jerry and Mosin, (2018) suggested that LINUS Program teachers need to be more innovative in using teaching techniques appropriate to the ability level of LINUS students. Innovation in teaching techniques can engage students and help them master basic literacy skills better, and it supports the opinion shared by Kyle, Kujala, Richardson, Lyytinen and Goswami (2013), and Maszuraini and Hamedi (2015).

This study also shows that activities in the classroom trigger students’ interest, but learning only occurs in the classroom and does not continue at home. This is due to the limited time factor that has caused parents to be too busy at work and not spend time reading books with their children. The study of Sim, Berthelsen, Walker, Nicholson, & Fielding-Barnsley (2014) showed that the reading culture of parents with their child from an early age would improve reading skills among children.

In terms of constraints in the mastery of reading skills, the researchers found two factors. For example, low-income parents are not affordable to buy books for their children or send their children for extra classes, and parents who are less educated tend to hand over teaching to the school. On the other hand, parents with a high level of education will always try to take care of the status and development of their children. The findings are similar to the study of Heath et al. (2014), who had stated that parents with low economic and educational levels pay less attention to their child’s literacy development. Constraints in the mastery of reading skills of the LINUS program are also due to student factors. The findings of this study show that there are students who are passive in learning and do not want to engage in learning.

**Recommendation**

Almost all countries are aware of the importance of parents spending time with their children. Japan is a developed country that attaches great importance to the practice of parents spending time with their children. Therefore, Japan has implemented several policies, including giving working mothers long leave to take care of their children. The Malaysian government needs to take proactive measures as practised by Japan in ensuring that parents give adequate attention. MoEs need to be more sensitive to students who are less literate and come from low economic status. They need to be given appropriate assistance, such as giving reading materials to the student. The LINUS program can also be implemented based on various approaches that appropriate according to students’ needs. Teachers need to provide early exposure to the concept of printed materials, i.e. the introduction of literacy before teaching reading skills. Parents should also be encouraged to attend parenting courses, primarily
developing their children's minds and literacy improvement. Studies have identified several important factors that influence the literacy mastery of LINUS students. Therefore, this research has been able to identify the demographic impact on literacy mastery, particularly reading skills. However, there is still room and opportunity to add value to literacy-related research. The added value can provide a more accurate picture of all the crucial things in the teaching and learning literacy among LINUS students in Malaysia.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are in line with the views put forward by Shapiro and Waters (2005), Sagarr and Alba (2006), and Atay and Ozbulgan (2007), who found that the use of keywords can produce significant learning effects. Atkinson (1975) once emphasised that the keyword method is the most effective method to improve memory among the many vocabulary learning strategies. Findings show that teachers apply student-centred teaching activities by using demonstration methods, giving instructions, drills and entertaining learners such as puzzles and singing. The innovation of LINUS Program teachers in teaching techniques can attract students and help them master literacy skills even better.

Learning aids such as scan cards and kid reading used by LINUS teachers can help LINUS students recognise syllables and read. The availability of learning aids and entertainment methods combined in teaching can attract students' interest. Students who are usually passive will eventually also participate in learning in this activity. Classroom activities such as group learning also play a role in arousing the interest of LINUS program students to learn. Teacher teaching in schools and student-parent interactions can indirectly increase vocabulary and language mastery. Parents' reading practices to children from an early age will improve their children's reading skills (Sim, Berthelsen, Walker, Nicholson & Fielding-Barnsley, 2014), thus being able to address literacy issues that concern many parties, including the students themselves, parents, schools, communities and educational authorities.

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50 mudah alih untuk kemahiran membaca kanak-kanak: Aplikasi Literasi LINUS


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