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Low Achiever Students' Perception on the Use of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Reading activity helps students to acquire Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in reading comprehension as one of the important elements in learning a language. Most students are aware of the implementation of HOTS in learning the language skills, including reading. However, low achiever students' perceptions on the use of HOTS are slightly different. This research aims to identify findings on students' perception of the use of HOTS in reading comprehension among low achievers. Data was gained from a questionnaire survey of 30 low achiever second language students from a school in Bagan Serai, Malaysia. This study shows that the use of HOTS is beneficial and helps low achiever students to gather good information on their reading comprehension. The results of this study are hoped to gain good perception among low achiever students as feedback whether HOTS can be one of the methods to enhance their reading comprehension.

Keywords: Low Achiever, Reading Comprehension, Thinking Skill, Perception

Introduction

Reading is identified as a complex process in all skills developed in teaching and learning English. It involves the process of connecting every aspect of skills, abilities, mental and physical among students, and should be instructed and required effectively. The teaching and learning of this specific language component are aimed to develop students' abilities to comprehend, analyze and synthesize factual information provided in multiple types of reading items (Singh & Shaari 2019). Yoke, Hasan, Jangga & Mat Kamal (2015) agreed that the main field in cognitive psychology is between reading skills and critical thinking. A need for critical thinking skills becomes crucial in the need to remain relevant and involve in the 21st-century pedagogy. As we are moving towards the move of restructuring knowledge for better skill, critical thinking skill has become more important. A vital deal has been stated to implement the teaching of HOTS skills in Malaysian classrooms. The Ministry of Education [MOE] (2013) defined HOTS as the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and values in reasoning, reflection, problem-solving, and decision

making, innovating and creating something new. The purpose is to uphold the English language in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 that the government's venture in commencing thinking skills as one of the current outcomes.

Low-achiever students are identified for enduring most difficulties in providing feedback on reading comprehension at the degree of higher critical thinking. The curriculum is more critical for low-achiever students because without the absolute delivering of metacognitive items, students are lacking of well-developed metacognitive skills to depend on during learning (Zohar, Degari & Vaakseh 2000). Researchers consent upon the belief that it may have major consequences regarding instructional elements if the instruction of HOTS is beyond the capabilities of low-achiever students. Students with intermediate or low cognitive levels will face difficulties in understanding HOTS items; while the advanced students will discover that the items are not challenging at all (Singh & Shaari 2019). This is related to their deficiency in the abilities to tackle the clues, themes, and ideas during reading among the students. Hence, the need to conduct this study is to identify low achievers' perception of whether HOTS can help them in reading comprehension, as they claimed that HOTS questions are only for high achiever students. Most of the low achiever students do not have the ability to negotiate with the concept of HOTS, since they think that the thinking process leads to the immeasurable understanding of overworked components. It is also to measure to what extent HOTS can assist low achievers in the reading activity since they could not adapt to the skills. Low achiever students believed that they are having difficulties to transform the information they have gained from reading into general understanding.

Research Objective and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the implementation of HOTS can enhance reading comprehension among secondary school low-achiever students.

a) Research Objectives

- i. To identify low achiever students' perceptions on mastering the level of HOTS in reading comprehension.
- ii. To identify low achiever students' perceptions on the level of acquiring HOTS knowledge.

b) Research Questions

- i. What are the low achiever students' perceptions on mastering the level of HOTS in reading comprehension?
- ii. How HOTS approaches assist low achiever students in reading activity?

Research Gap

It is often found the view of HOTS from the eyes of researchers or teachers but rarely from the students. This study try to fill the gap left in the discussion of HOTS among low achiever students, and what are the effects of it towards them. It might help other educators to plan their lesson effectively based on the findings. Ganapathy, Singh, Kaur & Liew (2017) posit from their studies that students do not have significant predisposition for aggravate unification of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT), where students need them through the implementation of HOTS in assisting them towards learning and comprehending reading activities. Another study by Yee, Othman, Yunus & Hassan (2015) exposed that students perceived they have adequate intensity for collating, inductive and deductive reasoning and fact-finding. This brings them to the perception that low achiever students did not have skills in using HOTS for their reading activities.

Kaur (2014) stated that for teaching language skills in English as Second Language (ESL) classroom, teachers must develop pedagogical content and mastery its knowledge by integrating HOT skills in teaching language to help low achiever students learn better. However, no studies have been carried out to probe the results regarding students' perceptions on the use of HOTS to help them in reading comprehension. As a solution to close the gap, this study suggested that teachers and educators should give more focus on low achiever students whether they are able to acquire from teaching and learning affairs that are tailored to nurture HOTS.

Literature Review

Reading Comprehension

To being comprehensive is the vital reason that students perform reading activities. The ability to not only able to read the lines and abstract but also understand the clue on each word or phrase leads to the mastery of reading comprehension. Febrina, Usman & Muslem (2019) stated that reading comprehension is the complete process to get the meaning from the text. High achiever students can read and define meaning in reading smoothly without having to struggle. They build comprehension where they are exposed to the learning process of reading, including accuracy, fluency, vocabularies, word of knowledge and comprehension strategies. Keshta & Seif (2013) stated that reading comprehension texts are important in training learners to practice all levels of cognitive skills, and agreed that all kind of reading activities aims to achieve comprehension.

Reading in English as a foreign language (EFL) requires teachers to explore strategies that can improve students' reading comprehension on secondary education (Acosta & Ferri 2009). A teacher as a facilitator plays a significant part and has a big portion to encourage students to improve their thinking skills by letting them providing spontaneous idea related to the skill, and were suggested to give HOTS questions for students (Febrina, Usman & Muslem 2019). Zaki & Yunus (2015) posit that teachers and educators may reach the abstract version of objective in teaching regarding students' needs if they built own curriculum and method of instructing. The researchers also explained that as English second language learners (ESL), the students are having several concerns and deterrent in expressing objectives and theories on academic values. The English language learners are expected to have HOTS to assist them to complete their tasks in reading comprehension and to open their minds towards world wide's issues.

Hots in Reading Activities for Low Achiever Students

Low achiever students are having lack adequate skills to help them comprehend the contents of their reading. They are just doing the reading activity without able to understand and interpret the outcomes of their reading. Having a lower ability in dealing with poor working memory brings a massive impact on students' reading comprehension (Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood, & Elliott,

2009; Swanson, Kehler, & Jerman, 2009). HOTS take reading derivation in meaning one step farther as another important step in reading. HOTS enable students to find information in the materials they are reading. Students can activate basic knowledge about topics or contents to determine and remember the meaning of words while reading. Students need to do a generous amount of practice to achieve good HOTS skills in reading and to enhance the stimulation of their understanding of the materials they read. Students as readers will be able to comprehend the text better if they captivate actively with the content and meaning, in the reader-text interaction (Kabilan, Mak & Ooi, 2010; Darwish, Abdo, & AlShuwaiee, 2018).

Gordon & Lu (2008) stated that low achiever students and struggling readers in school select reading materials and evaluate the benefits of reading based on social and psychological effects. Low achiever students are highly promoted to use reading fluency assessment to the maximum level to identify risky (Ergul 2012). Gordon & Lu (2008) enlightened that low achiever students seem to agree on all realistic stories and trusted characters which help them overcome life issues. The researchers stated that it is vital that low achievers students see all the alternative reading materials as development and growing needs.

Low Achiever Students Perception on Hots in Reading

A few researchers have concluded that low achiever students were always facing difficulties in adapting themselves for a higher level cognitive knowledge due to their disabilities to master the skill. Low achiever students themselves also agreed that they are unable to relate new ideas and previous knowledge in their learning process since it needs the implementation of higher thinking efficiency. Yee, Yunus, Osman, Ibrahim & Tee (2012) highlighted that most low achiever students stated that one of their failure factors in achieving various concepts in teaching and learning is related to their weaknesses in developing thinking skills in school. Low achiever students perceived that high achiever students learning abilities are better in responding to HOTS oriented questions compared to them. Lestari & Yuliati (2018) stated that low achiever students are having less awareness in understanding HOTS oriented questions, whereas most of them responded by providing single answers.

Students' beliefs on their capabilities mostly do not match between the conceptions of competency with their academic performance may affect their learning acts (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2015). These researchers also highlighted that as consequences; many low achiever students are not showing a common interest in reading and did not assume themselves as good readers towards the end. Dermitzaki, Andreou & Paraskeva (2008) mentioned that the various individual characteristics of learners influence their ability and acting during learning. Low achiever students mostly tend to discriminate the higher level of thinking skill reading materials that they received by focusing on the easier texts and features appear mostly with pictures. This was supported by Gordon & Lu (2008), who noted that low achiever students prefer texts and stories with human touch that have realistic views.

Methodology

This part mainly deals with the methodology used which consists of research design, research participants, research site and instruments. This part also emphasizes on the data collection procedure.

Research Design

The research design used in this study is a survey design to explain how HOTS influence low achieving pupils' perception of reading activities. This research is appointed on solitary teacher research as the researcher is a teacher in a secondary school in Bagan Serai, Malaysia.

Sampling

The study was conducted in a rural secondary school in Bagan Serai, Malaysia. The respondents for this research were 30 low achiever students from the low level of proficiency. They are selected due to the weaknesses to comprehension texts and materials in English reading activities.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a set of questionnaire, which consists of 4 sections. The questionnaire included 25 structured questions. To justify the respondents' response to the measurement of answers and acceptances, the questionnaire were construct by using Likert-scales. All section was constructed with 4 points scale.

Data Collection Procedures

30 secondary students from a low level of proficiency are gathered for the process of gathering information. The students are asked to complete the questionnaire by responding to the Likert-scale that has been provided. Then, the data are collected and analyzed using SPSS software, and reported in tables using percentages. The finding shows that 46.7% of respondents agreed that they know what HOTS is and 30% of respondents strongly agreed that the use of HOTS is relevance in understanding the content of the texts through reading.

Findings and Discussion

The demographic data for this research is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender	Male	17	56.7%
	Female	13	43.3%
	Total	30	100%

As Table 1 shows, the data were collected from 30 low achiever secondary students. The number of respondents is not equal on gender where male respondents are 56.7% and stated 13.4% over the female respondents, which are 43.3%. The reason that male respondents were over female is that male students were having less ability to comprehend texts or the reading materials they read regarding to their lack of interest.

Table 2: Perception in Reading Activity

ITEMS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I read a lot in the English language	0%	36.7%	60%	3.3%
2. I read for fun in the English language	3.3%	20%	70%	6.7%
3. I look for things to read that interest me	0%	13.3%	76.7%	10%
4. I read for things to read that are not too difficult	0%	26.7%	60%	13.3%

As Table 2 shows, several perceptions encourage students to read in English. Among all these, 86.7% were on the positive agreement that they look for interesting elements and items which lead them to read. The reason synchronized with 76.7% of students who were on the positive agreement that they did the English reading activities for fun. However, 23.3% were on a negative agreement that they did not feel the excitement in English reading; meanwhile, 26.7% disagreed that they read for materials that are not too difficult in terms of the usage of words, phrases, and sentences for their better understanding. There is evidence from existing literature that did not support this strategy practiced by low achiever students. Eldredge & Quinn (1988) suggested that when low achievers were assisted to read too difficult materials by themselves, they can upgrade their reading comprehension skills. Apart from this, 36.7% disagreed that they read a lot of materials and texts in the English language.

Table 3: Methods in Reading

ITEMS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I skim over reading to get the main idea	0%	23.3%	66.7%	10%
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read	10%	10%	43.3%	36.7%
3. I underlined or circle the information in the text to help me remember it	0%	6.7%	53.3%	40%
4. I use tables, figures, and pictures in a text to increase my understanding	0%	10%	56.7%	33.3%
5. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read	0%	36.7%	46.7%	16.7%

As Table 3 shows, there are several numbers of methods being practiced by students to achieve the objective of reading. 76.7% were on the positive agreement that they get the main idea of materials or texts by skimming over the contents, while 92% were on the positive agreement that they increase their understanding by using tables, figures, and pictures while reading. 20% were on the negative agreement that they take notes while reading to help them understand what they read and 36.7% disagreed that they can remember what they read by using pictures or visualize information. As Dermitzaki, Andreou & Paraskeva (2008) highlighted that poor readers

were lacking skills in controlling over their reading where it involves a lack of engagement in strategic action and monitoring skills to adapt and regulate in a different reading situation.

Table 4: Perceptions of HOTS in Reading

	ITEMS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Something was interesting at the beginning of the reading text that got my attention	6.7%	26.7%	53.3%	13.3%
2.	My teacher exposed me to HOTS in understanding the reading text	3.3%	23.3%	43.3%	30%
3.	I know what HOTS is	0%	0%	53.3%	46.7%
4.	I know how to use HOTS in reading	3.3%	26.7%	56.7%	13.3%
5.	When I first heard about HOTS in reading, I thought it would be easy for me	10%	33.3%	53.3%	3.3%
6.	The explanations or examples presented on HOTS are relevant to the content of the text	0%	20%	73.3%	6.7%
7.	The use of HOTS in reading activities helped me to understand the content of the texts	6.7%	33.3%	43.3%	16.7%
8.	The content of the reading texts in reading is relevant to the level of my thinking skill	6.7%	20%	63.3%	10%
9.	I could relate the content of the text to things I have seen, done, or thought through reading activities by using HOTS	0%	30%	53.3%	16.7%
10.	The content of texts presented through HOTS will be useful to me in reading comprehension	10%	16.7%	46.7%	26.7%
11.	The use of HOTS is relevance in understanding the content of the texts	0%	33.3%	36.7%	30%
12.	After doing the test, I felt confident that I can understand the text from HOTS approach	6.7%	26.7%	43.3%	23.3%
13.	As I worked on with HOTS, I was confident that I could comprehend the content of the texts	16.7%	23.3%	46.7%	23.3%
14.	After learning with HOTS, I was confident that I would be able to comprehend the content of the text	3.3%	16.7%	56.7%	23.3%
15.	I feel satisfied to learn to comprehend the text by using HOTS	3.3%	6.7%	66.7%	23.3%
16.	I enjoyed the HOTS approach	3.3%	26.7%	50%	20%

As Table 4 shows, the perceptions of HOTS by the low achiever students were varied. Students' understanding of HOTS was influenced by the students' acceptance of HOTS in reading. 90% were

on the positive agreement that learning to comprehend texts by using HOTS give them satisfaction. 80% of students were on the positive agreement that they accept the explanations or examples presented on HOTS are relevant with the content of the text, they accepted that after learning with HOTS, they were able to comprehend the content of the text confidently, and they positively agreed that HOTS are relevant with the explanations or examples of the content of the text that they have read. 73.3% were on the positive agreement that their teacher exposed them to understanding the reading text by using HOTS. As being highlighted by Singh & Shaari (2019), where the most important factor that contributes to students' educational success is the teacher's quality of teaching. However, 43.3% were on the negative agreement that they would be able to use HOTS easily in reading when they heard it for the first time, and 40% were on the negative agreement that they were able to comprehend the content of the text confidently after working with HOTS. 70% were on the positive agreement that they know how to use HOTS in reading, and 100% of students strongly positive that they know what HOTS is.

Conclusion and Implication

On the general outlook, based on the three literature amalgam, I agreed that most of the low achiever students in this secondary school are having similar problems regarding the implementation of HOTS in reading. It has arrived at the main target of this study, is to identify low achiever students' perception of the effectiveness on the implementation of HOTS to comprehend reading. It is also delivered the necessity of using HOTS in accommodating low achiever students for a better understanding of reading. It is found that the use of HOTS has shown positive and negative aspects in low achievers' perception, as an aim to assist them in comprehending texts and materials in the reading activity.

According to the result from the questionnaire revealed low achiever students' perceptions towards the implementation of HOTS in improving their comprehension in reading activities is undeniable. Most of the low achiever students believed that HOTS provides huge assistant in helping them to comprehend the content and derive meaning from their reading materials. They agreed that when working with HOTS they are able to achieve most understanding, but only with teachers' guidance. Keshta & Seif (2013) emphasized that there is a lack of progression from the lower cognitive skills to the higher ones. Regarding this, low achiever students need lots of attention and supervision with teachers' appearance. This study proves that HOTS should be encouraged to bring good perception for low achiever students as an assistant in their reading activities. It is indeed an urging need where various learning strategies have prompted students' capabilities and creativity to become more occupied in learning activities

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