

**THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN ENHANCING
MEANING-MAKING AMONG
PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

by

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PERANAN FACEBOOK DALAM MENINGKATKAN KEBERMAKNAAN KERJA
(*Meaning-Making*) DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR PRA-UNIVERSITI

ABSTRAK

Kejayaan atau kegagalan pelajar di sekolah adalah bergantung kepada keupayaan mereka untuk membaca dan memahami bahan yang dibaca. Untuk memahami bahan yang di baca, pembaca harus tahu makna bahan bacaan mereka. Dalam konteks Malaysia, membaca merupakan aktiviti yang kurang diminati dalam kalangan para remaja kerana aktiviti lain menjadi lebih popular seperti aktiviti Web 2.0. Faktor ini menjadi pendorong kepada guru MUET untuk menjalankan satu kajian tentang fungsi dan peranan Facebook sebagai satu platform untuk aktiviti bacaan dan kebermaknaan kerja pelajar-pelajar tingkatan 6. Tugas yang diberi kepada pelajar adalah membaca dan berinteraksi di Facebook untuk mendapatkan makna bahan bacaan mereka. Untuk tujuan ini sebuah kelas pelajar tingkatan 6 rendah yang mempunyai seramai 22 pelajar telah dipilih untuk mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti ini. Tugas yang diberi adalah untuk membaca dan memahami bahan bacaan secara dalam talian internet. Kajian ini memberi sebab untuk pelajar membaca dan seterusnya mentafsir maksud bahan bacaan yang dibaca dan mengaitkan apa yang dibaca dengan pengetahuan sedia ada mereka. Dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, data yang didapati dari analysis Thematic ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar memaparkan sikap positif dan terlibat dalam aktiviti 'learner centered'. Dapatan utama daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa Facebook dapat membantu pelajar dalam meningkatkan kebermaknaan kerja bahan yang dibaca. Aktiviti ini juga telah memupuk sikap kerjasama di kalangan pelajar, mengkongsi idea dan informasi yang

diperoleh daripada internet. Data keseluruhan dalam kajian ini telah memperbaiki perbendaharaan kata pelajar serta memberi pelajar latihan secukupnya untuk meningkatkan kebermaknaan kerja mereka. Teknologi abad ini menyediakan peluang untuk pelajar membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris walaupun mereka tidak berada di dalam kelas. Ini meningkatkan keyakinan dan motivasi kepada mereka.

THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN ENHANCING MEANING-MAKING AMONG PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The success or failure of pupils in school in all subjects depends on their ability to read and understand. In order to understand, the readers should be able to make meaning out of what they read. Within the Malaysian context, reading is an activity that is fast losing its appeal as other forms of media gain popularity especially the Web 2.0 technologies. Bearing this in mind the researcher experimented on the use of Facebook as a platform to read and make meaning. The main objective of this study was to investigate students' ability in reading and make meaning via Facebook. A total of 22 students from pre-university class were chosen to take part in this study. The task was to read and understand articles via online. This study created a reason for students to read. At the same time, they make meaning of what they read, review the content of the article chosen and relate what they had learned to what they already know. Using a qualitative approach, data was obtained from the thematic analysis showed that the students exhibited positive reading habits and engaged in learner centered activities. The main findings from this study showed that the use of Facebook could help students in making meaning of what they have read. Next, this activity also helped to inculcate collaboration and share of ideas among participants where the students shared various types of information from the internet. They also discussed choice of words to use especially when replying to their friends. The findings of this study provided students with a lot of language practice which developed their meaning -

making. New media technologies in education offer the opportunity to practice English even outside the classroom, engage students in reading, increasing their level of confidence and motivation to continue their reading.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The modern society is becoming increasingly dependent on information communication technology (ICT) and its related technologies such as computers, mobile gadgets and smart phones to complete daily routines and tasks. In education, the impact of ICT and its related technologies has been profound on various communities and levels of societies. For instance, teaching and learning practices are evolving with the aid of ICT, whereby students' empowerment in learning is evident (McCarthy, 2010). In addition, both teachers and learners are discovering how to make learning environments more responsive to their needs and interest through the use of ICT (Zaira Abu Hasan, 2008).

As for teachers, they should be involved in creating and developing lessons that will meet their students' needs and interest. They can be innovative by integrating technology into their daily lessons. For example, they can use social media (SM) and social networking system (SNS) to support the teaching of reading and writing. For learners, the SM and SNS could be a platform to learn English, as well as a form of networking and collaborating with other learners, especially in terms of using English as the language of communication.

In Malaysia, learning English is important and is a subject taught in all educational levels since it is required for entry into the tertiary level of education (Ministry of Education, 2003). However, the change in the medium of instruction from English to Bahasa Malaysia in 1980 has led to the deterioration of English language competence among Malaysian learners

(Kabilan et al., 2010). To arrest this decline, English was reintroduced as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics in 2003 by the Ministry of Education (Darmi, 2013). It was implemented for Year one learners in primary schools and for Form One learners in secondary schools.

However, the government aborted the policy in 2009 and announced that the teaching of both subjects should be in the National language i.e. Bahasa Malaysia (Nor Hashimah, 2009). The importance of English, nevertheless, is maintained under the 10th Malaysia plan for 2011-2015, with the introduction of “upholding Bahasa Melayu and strengthening English” program. The decision to revert to Bahasa Melayu as the medium of instruction had created linguistic challenges for learners in Malaysian universities. One of these challenges is the rise in the number of unemployed graduates who fail to secure jobs because of their lack of competence in the English language that is evident particularly during interviews (Chan & Helen 2006).

A study conducted by University Kebangsaan Malaysia on the quality and marketability of local graduates indicates that the English language courses offered at university do not prepare students adequately for the workplace and the testing instruments used do not test whether students have the skill and level of competence that they are going to need in the workplace (Norizan Abdul Razak, 2006). As a result, local universities are taking numerous measures to facilitate students in improving their English language proficiency. One of those measures is by providing a wide range of English language courses, some of which are mandatory for graduation requirements. Entry to such courses is often subject to the students’ score in a proficiency test as predetermined by the university (Elder and O’Loughlin,

2003) such as TOEFL (The Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and ESOL exams (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Since English is widely used as a medium of instruction at the tertiary level in Malaysia (Gill, 2005), there is a requirement to determine prospective students' English language proficiency in English for the purpose of admission into tertiary institutions. It is for this reason, the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) was introduced. Prior to the introduction of MUET, there had been no allocation for English classes in the pre University level (Chan & Wong, 2004). MUET was introduced by the Malaysian Education Ministry in the late 1999 and was fully implemented in 2000. MUET is managed by the Malaysian Examination Council and specifically aims to "bridge the gap in language needs between secondary and tertiary Education" (Chan & Wong, 2004, p. 6). The MUET syllabus seeks to synthesize and raise the English language ability of pre university students to allow them to perform effectively in their academic pursuits at tertiary level in line with the aspirations of the National Education policy. It aims to assesses candidates' ability in four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. The MUET scores obtained by candidates are graded in a 6 band scale with corresponding aggregate band score that ranges from 0-300. The scores and time allocated for MUET are as in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Time and Score Allocated for MUET

Test component	Code	Time Allocation (minutes)	Score	Weightage %
Listening	800/1	30	45	15
Speaking	800/2	30	45	15
Reading	800/3	90	120	40
Writing	800/4	90	90	30

Note. Adapted from “Muet Syllabus, Malaysian Examination Syndicate (2015)”. www.mpm.edu.my

The score allocated for the reading skill (refer table 1.1) is the highest, as it is considered an important skill to be mastered. In the 21st century, where technology growth is relentlessly productive and educated citizens will require even stronger literacy abilities, especially their reading abilities. Unfortunately, the reading habits of students are still at an disappointing level (Mozihim, 2010). Mohammad Fazli Baharuddin and Mohd Razilan Abd Kadir (2015) in their study concluded that parents should encourage children to read as the reading habit of Malaysians is not at a satisfactory level. Recently in a study conducted by Central Connecticut State University, Malaysia was ranked sixth from the bottom of a list of 61 countries in the world’s literate nation ranking (Asila Jalil, 2017). If this phenomena is neglected, the future of Malaysia would gradually be directed by “reluctant readers” who are backward in terms of knowledge, intelligence and maturity (Pandian, 2006, p.2).

However, recent trends suggest that reading is gaining learners’ acceptance. This is due to the emergence of new digital environment, in which youngsters are spending most of their time exploring, searching and reading electronic materials. When learners read for pleasure, they involuntarily and unconsciously improve their language skills (Kos, 1991). This also means that more time is

spent on skimming and browsing for information on the internet, which would certainly develop their skill to think creatively and critically (Kabilan et. al.,2010). In a nutshell, reading, whether for leisure or pleasure, is important since it helps broaden youngsters' knowledge (Smith, 2016)

The introduction of the internet has enabled educators to create language learning environment using the web and encouraging students to use language in real context. With the advent of the Internet and more recently SNS (Social Network System) and SM (Social Media), teachers and learners are not merely reading and retrieving information but also creating and sharing information. Selwyn (2009) emphasizes the above by using Facebook as an opportunity and environment for learners to socialize, as well as learn successfully. Hence, the present study experiments with the idea of using Facebook as a medium for reading and meaning-making among Form Six students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan X. Facebook is used in this study as a social networking tool to enhance the students' language competence

1.1 Problem Statement

Reading habit is a basic tool in education. Reading habits have contributed significantly to all levels of the education system as they constitute the foundation of knowledge (Afendi Hamad et al., 2012; Zulita Mustafa, 2018). Studies have revealed that many school-going children do not read for pleasure (Melor Md Yunus, Hadi Salehi & Chen Chenzi, 2012; Nurulalima Nordin, 2011; Pandian, 2006 ; Zulita Mustafa, 2018). The education system practice spoon feeding and passing down the knowledge for the sake of examination without getting the students involvement (Tan & Arshad; 2014). In addition, there is excessive emphasis on

passing examinations among parents, teachers and pupils, and this obsession makes reading unimportant (Noraein Mansor, 2017)

The habit of reading in this country has deteriorated with the prevalence of digital devices, which the young find much easier to access compared to books (Noraein Mansor, 2017; Zulita Mustafa, 2018). Mahbob Yusof, the chief librarian of University of Malaya said that reading methods have evolved as the technology and trends keep changing, moving away from printed books to electronic, digital and social media. These are the platforms extensively used by students to read, write as well as to communicate (Pandian & Balraj, 2010; Zulita Mustafa, 2018). The above phenomenon is occurring in most countries where reading habits among youngsters are deteriorating. Japan, once upon a time was a country which has been looked high for their peoples' reading habit is facing similar problem in decline in reading. According to a Japanese media, a national survey on the Japanese undergraduates found that 53.1% of college students admitted they spend '0' minute on reading everyday (Sugihara, 2018).

Other countries, such as Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, India, United State of America, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, are also seem to be facing similar problems (Abdullah, 2007; Aspero, 2013; Darmi, 2013; Quijano, 2010; Rich, 2008;). According to Reading Study Group of United States (2002), a study of fourth grade reading achievement, reported that US fourth grade out performed many countries on measures of reading aloud comprehension passages but did poorly on answering text comprehension (Bennett et al., 2008). In Philippines, Quijano (2010) in an interview, attributed reading problems as the main culprits for poor performance in the National Achievement Test because reading and understanding influence the capacity to interpret, understand, evaluate and

comprehend. In the Malaysian context, the above statement is true when Malaysia had performed poorly in the earlier PISA assessment. According to the PISA 2012 result, Malaysian students scored below average or ranked 52 out of 65 countries compared to Vietnam which ranked 17 out of 65. Dr Frederico Gil Sander, (PISA, 2012) the senior economist for Malaysia said Malaysians should be alarmed that their children are doing worse in school than children in Vietnam, a country that is poorer than Malaysia. On 4th December 2013, the Malay Mail headline was “Malaysian Students Scored Higher in Mathematics Decline in both Reading Comprehension and Science...”(International Education News: PISA, 2012, p. 6).

Rethinasamy and Kee (2011) found that Malaysian learners performed the poorest in the reading section in MUET examination. When asked why they obtained low scores for reading the students responded that they do not understand the meaning of passages in the MUET reading paper. They also suggested that they were frustrated that they do not understand the meaning of the overall passage (Balakrishnan, 2013; Torsten et al., 2016; Zulita Mustafa, 2018). These are strong indications that the learners were not able to understand and make meaning out of the passages that were given to them in the MUET examination. Thus the similarity among all the other countries and Malaysia is, reading and understanding seems to be a problem. In other words, students are able to read but unable to make meaning out of what they are reading. This is supported by Acheaw's (2014) findings, when he asserted that “Most Malaysian University students do not read other materials apart from reading materials related to examination. They only read for exam purposes and there was no voluntary reading involved.” Consequently, Shahriza and Amelia (2014), suggested that

Malaysian students read for academic purposes only and not for general knowledge.

The current generation is technology savvy and are more adept with technologies in their daily lives. Thus, one of the effective methods to inculcate reading and meaning-making of the text is through interactions that is intertwined with a pedagogy that would motivate them. So, the one way to make students read and make meaning is by using their own passion which is the social media.

Therefore, a good way to inculcate reading and meaning-making among learners is the one that promotes engagement and sustain their interests and subsequent learning activities. Moreover, this initiative will encourage them to take control of their own learning, as well as promote quality and meaningful interactions (Junco et al., 2012). Eventually, students' motivation will increase if they see that their efforts are helping them to make progress towards a goal (Smith, 2016).

The challenge therefore, is not only to bring the "passion" to read and make meaning. but also to use the appropriate tool to inculcate reading habits and improve students reading where students are able to make meaning out of what they are reading. Keeping all this in mind, the researcher decided to enhance the students' meaning making ability that is aligned with Constructivist theory using Facebook as the platform.

1.2 Research Objectives

Based on the problem statement, the aim of this study is to examine, investigate and explore the pre-university students' experiences of engaging with their peers via

Facebook in their effort to make meaning. Hence, the research objectives of this study are:

1. To explore how interactions in a Community of Practice (CoP), using Facebook as a platform, leads to meaning-making.
2. To investigate what the students learn from the entire meaning-making process via Facebook.
3. To examine how the use of Facebook facilitates students to make meaning.

1.3 Research Questions

From the above research objectives, the following research questions were formed to provide answers to the objectives. Specifically, the research questions are:

1. How do the interactions among learners, as a Community of Practice (CoP) on Facebook, lead to meaning-making?
2. What do the students learn from the entire meaning-making process via Facebook?
3. How do the use of Facebook facilitate students to make meaning?

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The present study was constructed based on the significant role of social media among the teenagers. Yusop and Sumari's (2013) study showed that youngsters use SNS frequently to read, search activities and share information. Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin's et al. (2011) study also indicated that rural school learners are interested in online reading and therefore, integrating ICT and related technologies (including SNS) would be beneficial for learners.

With the availability of digital technologies and the increasing amount of time that people spend on reading digital media, the electronic environment has begun to affect peoples' reading behaviour. People are becoming digitally literate at an alarming rate where current technology has greatly influenced students' reading habits (Shahnil Asmar Saa'id & Zaliffah Abd Wahab, 2014). Thus, the rationale for adopting Web 2.0 to support and facilitate reading and meaning-making in this study are based on the following three main reasons.

First, the use of SNS and SM provide learners with new platforms and materials for reading, where interaction and discussion of the materials read among the learners could be part of their learning opportunities and experiences. Second, socialization, in the form of sharing reading materials; for example, could be encouraged and this could also be a new form of learning experiences for learners in terms of reading activities and reading based learning activities. The above two reasons could lead to the third, which is the provision of personalized meaning-making experiences. This personalized meaning-making is achieved when the learners' reflections, views and opinions of the materials read are shared and discussed as a CoP, resulting in new knowledge and understanding of the materials or texts (Smith, 2016).

In a nutshell, this study would enlighten teachers on new ways of teaching reading and for the learners, it would present them a personal experience of meaning-making of the materials and texts read. Thus, there is a need for a study which investigates "Net Generation's" perspectives regarding how they make meaning via social media within their own learning contexts.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Hence, a community consists of a collection of individuals that are oriented to each other and share their activities (Morgan, 2010). The three crucial characteristics of CoP are the domain, the community and the practice.

The domain is a shared understanding of what is important to individuals and the society. It is the area of knowledge that brings the community together and defines the key issues that its members want to address. It explores and develops the activities of the community and facilitates the learning process among the members (Wenger & Wenger, 2015). Without a commitment to a domain, a community is just a group of friends (Lamontagne, 2005). The community refers to the social structures that encourage learning through interaction and relationships among members. In pursuing their interest in their domain, members of a CoP are engaged in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information (Wenger, 1998).

Practice takes place when a CoP requires its members to share a common practice. In a CoP the members have a shared collection of resources such as, stories, experiences, tools, documents, or problem solving methods, which they share. They interact and share with each other to learn how to perform their various tasks efficiently. This takes time and sustained interaction. A CoP brings together people who are involved in doing something. For example, CoP members of an educational institute take aims to learn and improve the quality of education in all educational institutes (Wenger, 2004; Daniel et al., 2013).

Figure 1.1 shows the conceptual framework of this study identified a Facebook group called “The Digital Readers” who are interested in reading the articles and make meaning using Facebook as the platform. Here the domain is reading and make meaning. The community are the members of the “Digital Readers” (pre-university students) and the practice which took place is the interactions among each other to make meaning of the articles posted on the Facebook wall. In order for the practice to be a success, the members need to share and interact with each other so that the aim of this study, which is reading and meaning-making (MM) can be achieved. Simultaneously, for a smooth sailing of the reading and meaning-making process, engagement is an important factor. Members of the community need to engage with Facebook in order to post the articles on Facebook wall as scheduled and interact with the members of the community. The Digital Readers too must engage with the articles by reading them and engage in the interactions by taking part actively so that they are able to make meaning of what they are reading. When there is engagement among the members of the community with Facebook, with the articles posted on Facebook wall and engagement in interactions, meaning-making of the articles will eventually take place through the interactions among the members of the community on the Facebook wall.

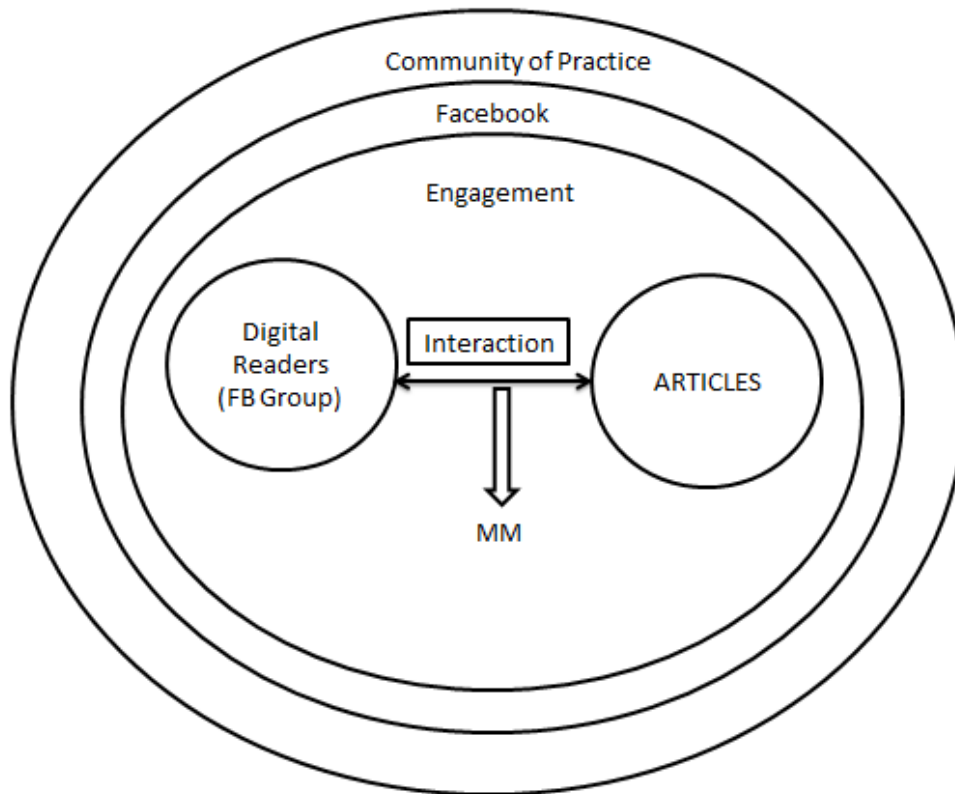


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework.

1.6 Significance of The Study.

The study is timely as it is equally important to examine the present state of students' reading and understanding in Malaysian secondary schools as it is important to find the problems and rectify those to improve the overall situation in the interest of the country. This is especially so when studies indicate that Malaysian learners have discouraging levels of reading habits (Pandian, 2010; Mohammad Jafre Zainal Abidin, 2011; Mohammad Fazli Baharuddin and Mohd Razlan Abdul Kadir, 2015). One option of improving this situation would be by igniting learners' passion using a learning and interaction platform that they are interested in and use frequently such as the SNS. In this study, with the use of Facebook, learners would experience meaningful engagements with other learners (and with the teacher) on the values and benefits of reading (Kabilan et. al.,

2010). Reading and meaning-making using Facebook will be a good platform to encourage students' reading habits, especially when there is a shift in reading from page (books) to screen (computers and smartphones). This study could improve the reading habits of Malaysian learners and also be a catalyst for teachers to adopt this platform as a way of improving the reading habits of Malaysian learners, and eventually, understand the texts and materials by meaning-making processes, as will be suggested by this study.

1.7 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the study, the following definitions will be used throughout this study.

Meaning-Making

Meaning-making is the process of how students explore their understanding. It is a process of define, justify and interpret the material one reads. Meaning-making is individual subjectivity where a person draws or gives meaning to events and experiences. It is the foundation behind thoughts, actions, interpretations and application of knowledge (Krauss, 2005). Meaning-making also occurs when a person actively construct meaning through broader social interactions and context (Daniels, 2007 ; Van der Veer, 2007). In this study participants construct their understanding through their own interactions using Facebook as the platform. Students in this study actively seek meaning of the articles posted on Facebook via interactions between peers.

Community of Practice (CoP)

A Community of Practice (CoP) is where a group of people share and react to a task or a responsibility given. It consists of members who have common interests in a particular area. The term community suggests that the group is not constrained by typical geographic, business unit or functional boundaries but rather by common tasks, contexts, and interests. In other words, a community can be composed of people with similar enthusiasms, interests and purpose, and this type of community is said to possess internalized ‘shared understandings’ (Allen, 2000). The word practice implies knowledge in action; how individuals actually perform their jobs on a day-to-day basis as opposed to more formal policies and procedures that reflect how work should be performed. Together the terms community and practice refer to a specific type of social structure with a specific intended purpose (Wenger et al., 2002). Community of Practice can exist in a physical setting or in a virtual environment when they collaborate online via social media (Kietzmann, 2013). Three elements of Community of Practice are the domain, community and practice.

Domain

A group of people or a network of people or a club of friends share the same interest. In this study the interest shared by “Digital Readers” is reading and meaning-making (Wenger et al., 2002).

Community

A Component of people or members who interact, engage and share the activities and information to help each other. In this study the community are the

group of pre-university students who forms a Facebook group called the “Digital Readers” (Wenger et al., 2002).

Practice

The interactions or conversations that develop in the process of sharing stories, experiences or handling problems is called the practice. In this study, the practice which took place is the interactions among the pre-university students to make meaning (Wenger et al., 2002).

Engagement

Engagement is when a person devotes his or her time and effort to educational activities. It also encompasses investment in the academic experience and interactions with peers and educators (Kuh, 2009). In this study engagement is conceptualized as the effort students devote to interact with peers, teacher and the engagement with the article in the process of meaning-making.

Interaction

Interaction is meaningful conversation that occurs with two or more individuals which enable learners to develop their own understanding. (Hall, 2002 ; Lantolf, 2000). In this study students interact among themselves to make meaning on a social media platform. The manner students interact are posting various form of comments such as negotiating, asking questions, justifying, arguing, sharing information (meaning of words, videos, images) and other types of interaction.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the joint effort of multiple individuals or groups to accomplish a task or a project. It can be done face to face or over a network. In this study, collaboration refers to the process how students interact together to make meaning on a social media platform and how technology can bring people together and that they do not need to be in the same location.

1.8 Summary

Youngsters today are far from contributing to a reading society. Without reading there is no meaning-making. In order to advance to a society that loves reading, the readers should be able to understand what they are reading. Thus, they should read and make meaning. However, learners appear not to be interested in reading as they are distracted by a variety of entertainments, including the internet and SNS. One approach to overcome this is by utilizing SNS and actively engaging the learners in their learning and reading activities. Once the interest in reading is inculcated, teachers would be able to nurture reading culture. Hence, this study utilizes Facebook, a popular social media, to engage pre-university learners in reading text critically and to make meaning.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Background

Reading is one of the most important skills that we should acquire. By reading one not only develops his or her knowledge but also learns and understands the language itself well and eventually one becomes better language user. Reading is an art of interpreting a written discourse and the only indicator to show that one is literate. Krashen (2009 p. 27) made a conclusion on a reading research that “we do not learn to write by writing, but rather by reading. We acquire writing skills via exposure to reading”. By teaching students to read, we change their world, as Victor Hugo (1885, p.22) said “to learn to read is to light a fire, every syllable that is spelled out is a spark”. For most people living in today’s modern world, reading is an everyday ordinary task to which little thought is given. Furthermore, understanding what we are reading is far more important to us than the mechanics of reading. Making meaning out of what we read is not an innate ability but it can be learnt.

Without making-meaning , reading would serve no purpose. Yet youngsters today do not show interest and put effort in comprehending what they are reading. Living in the 21st century with rapid advancement in technology especially the World Wide Web has made vast information easily available to people who have access to the internet. In addition to this, social media not only gained popularity in the online sector but also transformed the lives of those using them. Recognizing the power of social media, this

research is conducted by integrating Facebook in education. Young learners in this new millennium embrace newer modes to learn. Long passages and articles are not their preference to read (Rosen, 2011). Rosen (2011) in view that this net generations consume abundance of online knowledge and are the most communicative generation to date. In order to develop habit for reading, Facebook is used as the platform to enhanced reading and making meaning among the pre university students.

2.1 Using History To Understand The Present

The purpose in this historical analysis of the past reading research is to remind that today's research and practices are a legacy with roots that was from the past. Moreover by paying our respect to the past, we may improve the activities of the present and anticipate the paths for reading research that lie ahead. Way back in 1607, reading institution was started for a single purpose, teaching children to read the Bible and religious related materials. Then, (1776-1840) the American Revolution changed the emphasis for reading from theology to politics. Eventually in 1840's there came a time when educators came to realize that the success of democracy depended on developing intelligence of people and not upon arousing patriotic sentiments. Later the development of scientific instruments promoted reading research and led to the development of standardized test. 1950's seemed to be an era where the whole world realized that the key to knowledge was education and that the key to education was reading. Later in 1992, reading is seen as a naturally occurred event and literacy development is prompted through reading. The

importance and priority of literacy changed according to the need of a particular era. (Lapp & Flood, 1992).

Now, the essence of both reading and reading instruction has changed. Today, ways of technology require new literacy. These include technologies such as gaming software, video technologies, internet, social media and many more yet to emerge. All these practices impact our conceptions of reading and ultimately influence the definitions of reading in the classroom, at home and at work. Reading is no longer a static construct, it has now come to a point of change in what we read (Merisotis, 2016). Thus, reading acquisition, has come to a transformation of the mindset and the ability to adapt to new methods required by new technologies that rapidly and continuously spread on the internet. The reality is, reading landscape is being fundamentally altered where web based technologies are revolutionizing learning and reshaping the educational process (Merisotis, 2016) So, a paradigm shift in how we teach reading is required. As John Dewey (1994, pp 167) said “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow”. So, the methods of reading is slowly transforming as in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Method of Reading Transformation

FROM	TO
-the teaching of genre, fluency, vocabulary, literary elements and text structures	- teaching students to end reading with some insightful thoughts about what the author might have been trying to convey.
- explicitly teach points and ask students to transfer to their own reading.	- setting up strategies in order to figure out what the text means or what the author is trying to show.
- expect students to practice one or more reading skill or strategy.	- expect students to strategically problem solve and think critically .
- using “ I, we, you” approach and release responsibility to students.	- “I, we, you” approach is used to train students to think individually, then collaborate with others.
- assessing students’ mastery of strategies, skills and individual reading goals.	- facilitate students and naming what they have done which can develop a dynamic mindset.
Note. Adapted from “Vicki Vinton (2014), Literacy Consultant” http://tomakeaprairie.wordpress.com	

2.2 Reading and Meaning-making

Before proceeding further, it is important to know the definition of reading given by numerous researchers.

Table 2.2

Reading and Meaning-Making

Researchers	Definition of Reading and Meaning-making
Mitford	Words are creation of man. Reading is transforming a text,
Mathews (1976)	into thought or meaning.
Toit (2001)	Involves the process of recalling, relating and thinking the functioning of written words.
Biddulph (2002)	A construction of meaning from written text.
Kumar & Rani (2008)	Reading is a process of decoding a print, recognition a print and the process of comprehending the message being conveyed in the text.
Palani (2012)	Reading is the association of meaning.
Jeniffer Serravallo (2010)	Read by thinking and understanding and getting at the meaning behind a text.
Rand (2014)	A process of simultaneously deriving and making meaning through interaction.

All the definitions in Table 2.2 stress one thing which is meaning. Thus, in reading the most important aspect is meaning-making and the process of reading engages readers in three different kinds of thinking which are :

Comprehension : Figuring out what a writer is saying explicitly or implicitly line by line, page by page.

Understanding : Connecting what we comprehend to interpret or understand the underlying ideas or themes.

Evaluation : Considering the worth or value of what we have come to understand. (Vinton, 2012)

What is meaning-making ? It is a process of define, justify and interpret the material we read. A person draws meanings from or gives meaning to events and experiences. It is individual subjectivity and people are free to choose meaning. (Krauss, 2005). Moreover meaning-making is a basic human process where everyone is engaged all the time in any setting. When one encounter information, he or she seek to make sense of it (Silverman, 2010). Thus, meaning is the foundation behind actions, thoughts and even application and interpretation of knowledge.

2.2.1 The Importance of Reading and Meaning-Making

There is a saying, “The pen is mightier than the sword”. Ideas that are written down have changed the destiny of mankind. The flow of ideas cannot be stopped and we need to read and comprehend what has been written, absorb the good things and avoid bad ideas that can lead to destruction. The goal of reading is comprehending what was read and being able to construct

the meaning. Reading is regarded as a complex process which refers to a reader's background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to interact and understand with a text (Ng & Bartlett, 2017). Thus, precisely reading can be concluded as "a process of perception, interpretation and recognition of written and printed materials" (Castles, Rastle, & Nation 2018). Meaning-making plays a great role in understanding and comprehending a statement accurately. Reading is the core to function in today's society. In every profession some kinds of reading has to be utilised. The UNESCO conference 2011 states that reading is the fundamental means of acquiring skills, knowledge and expression of thought especially in the modern world of science and technology (UNESCO Annual Report, 2013).

It is important to observe that most of the definitions of reading have similarities including the two international reading programmes PIRLS and PISA. Although these programmes target 2 different student population, both stress on "reflecting, using, understanding, and engaging with written texts in order to achieve one's goal to develop one's knowledge and potential to participate in society" (OECD, 2010, p. 23)

PISA is Programme for International Students Assessment which began in the year 2000. It is a project of The Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) which is participated by 74 countries and in 3 yearly cycles. PISA consists of assessment in scientific literacy, mathematical literacy and reading literacy. It is an international assessment that is designed to measure knowledge in reading, science and mathematics and particularly focusing on reading literacy. On the other hand, in 2001, IEA, International Evaluation Association launched a Programme for International Reading

Literacy Study (PIRLS) which is an international five yearly cycle designed to measure trends in reading literacy achievement at fourth grade. The latest was the third cycle with 49 countries participating.

Both PISA and PIRLS are international programmes which stress on reading literacy. PISA is designed for 15 year old students and PIRLS is for fourth grade students or 10 years old. According to OECD, the rationale to include reading literacy is because it is one of the most important skills students acquire through their school years. Furthermore it is said that reading is “vital to determine each individual’s trajectory through life, his or her economic well being and the ability to dynamically and fully participate in broader society”. (Mullis & Drucker, 201, p. 39-40). Due to the importance of reading skill, the International Association for the Evaluation of School Achievement conducted its first international study specifically aimed at analyzing reading achievement (OECD, 2010). PIRLS focuses on aspect of reading literacy such as the purposes of reading, processes of comprehension and behaviours and attitudes towards reading. The result obtained by PIRLS is used to improve teaching and learning methods in many countries.

From the above, it can be concluded that reading is an utmost vital skill for an individual to progress in life as it has been given importance internationally. Unfortunately reading is declining among the youngsters today. Many factors were attributed to decline of reading such as the emergence of social media and the new literacy where youngsters prefer to read online, the school curriculum where students are being tuned to read to pass examination and students themselves who are not engaged to read (Pandian, 2006).