

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDING AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter is divided into six sections. The first three sections examine the findings in relation to the three research questions. The fourth section discusses the implications of the findings. In the fifth section, the recommendations for improvement are included. The final section presents the conclusion of the study.

5.1 WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS' ON THE SUITABILITY OF THE READING COMPONENT?

The students' views on the reading component are ascertained through understanding their views on the materials used and the reading skills taught. Consequently, the findings will be presented in terms of views on the materials used and the reading skills taught.

5.1.1 STUDENTS' VIEW ON THE MATERIALS USED

- **Vocabulary**

72% of the students felt that the vocabulary tasks in the reading component were difficult (Table 4.1.6 a). For the majority of students, the existence of difficult vocabulary in the text was discovered to be the main hindrance to comprehension of reading materials (Table 4.1.4 and Table 4.2.3). Therefore one of the ways to improve students' comprehension of business texts is to increase their vocabulary

size. Thus it is beneficial to increase the time spent on teaching CIMA students effective vocabulary learning strategies.

Lunzer and Gardner (1979: 78) state that the greater the proportion of infrequently used words, the more difficult the passage is to the readers.

Researchers like Selinger (1972) and Jenkinson (1973) point out that the students who read too slowly focused their attention on letters and pronouncing each word aloud. This dependence on lexicon causes the students to place too much time decoding every unfamiliar vocabulary item. Fixation on words inhibits reader's attention to conceptual and schematic information. Consequently, the student will rate a text as difficult when he does not understand many words in the text. Beck et al. (1982) propose that the best situation for comprehension of a text occurs when virtually all of the words in a text are highly assessable. Comprehension may be poor if there are too many unknown words in a text. The students' vocabulary problems need to be solved so that their comprehension can be improved.

- **Lengthy Paragraph**

Lengthy paragraphs hindered students' comprehension of business texts (Table 4.1.4 and Table 4.2.3). Lengthy paragraphs usually contain complex sentences, subordinate clauses, cohesive devices (connectors, reference, relative pronouns) and difficult syntax. Invariably, whenever students are required to read texts with

lengthy paragraphs, they have difficulty making connections among fragments of sentences, so they are uncertain about the meanings of the texts.

The reading component should include easier and shorter passages adapted from business magazines such as Malaysian enterprise, Malaysian Business or Asian Business.

- **Unfamiliar Topic**

Topic unfamiliarity also affected students' comprehension of business texts (Table 4.1.4 and Table 4.2.3). This is understandable, as students usually feel more confident in reading texts that they already have prior knowledge. Swaffter (1988) states that every L2 study published confirms the theory that familiarity with a schema will facilitate reading comprehension. This is because prior familiarity with subject matter enhances language recognition, concept recall and inferential reasoning.

One of the criteria for selection of texts for the reading component is that all texts must be business related. As the scope of business is rather wide, there is an assortment of texts to choose from, it is likely that there are some topics which are pertinent to business study but unfamiliar to some students. The assumption that the business students would not have much problem in activating the relevant schema related to any area in business may be misleading.

- **Grammar**

Grammar, which is also called the system or rules of the language, was a hindrance to comprehension to 42% of the students (Table 4.1.4 and Table 4.2.3). Lack of knowledge of grammar rules probably hindered the process of discovering or understanding the internal organization and the underlying meanings of text. This finding implies that more time should be allotted for teaching grammar and the number of grammar tasks ought to be increased.

Smith and Goodman, 1971 (cited in Dechant and Smith: 1977) point out that the surface and deep structure of a language are related in a complex way through the system of rules; grammar. They state that it is almost impossible to read a sentence without mastery of the grammar of the language. Grammar is the link between sound and meaning. The rules of syntax determine how the particular visual-semantic associations should be interpreted for a cognitive re-organization (Smith: 1971: 216).

According to Smith (1971), before learners can begin to structure language into working hypothesis, they will need explicitly to notice particular features of the grammar. This indicates that grammar is a preliminary stage in the learning process and reveals how grammar affects the comprehension of students. This leads to the conclusion that instruction on the grammar is essential in a language course.

- **Usefulness**

The reading materials were considered useful by a large majority (81%) of the students. The students had such view because the business vocabulary, concepts and themes taught, increased their knowledge about business themes. The materials that illustrated events in the business environment probably exposed and familiarized them with happenings in the business world. The reading materials were relevant to the course and enabled students to apply the reading skills learned and improve their comprehension of business texts.

- **Level Of Interest**

The majority of the students rated the materials as well as the reading passages in the reading component as interesting. There were 24% who found the materials uninteresting whereas 18% considered the passages as uninteresting because there were too technical and difficult for weak students (Table 4.1.5 b and Table 4.1.6 c).

Krashen (1982) notes the importance of interest in comprehension. According to him, if the interest in the materials is high, the students are likely to get more meanings out of the texts. Although Snow, Met, and Genesee (1980) agree with Krashen about the importance of having interesting materials, however, they argue that interest is difficult to gauge, and thus is an unreliable guide to content selection.

- **Language**

The majority of the students (73%), were of the opinion that the language used in the reading component was of the right level because they were accustomed to reading Accounting, Management and Law texts which contained difficult language. 25% felt the language was difficult (Table 4.1.6 b).

As the language proficiency of the students differs, it is common to have some who felt the language was difficult. Since the majority of the students (73%) felt that the correct level of language was used because they were accustomed to reading Accounting, Management and Law texts this language level could be maintained.

There is a need to identify the weaker students and conduct extra lessons that trouble-shoot problem areas so that their language proficiency can improve and they will not lag behind the majority of the students.

- **Level Of Difficulty**

The majority of the students (63%) perceived the materials were of the right level because the materials have the same level of difficulty as those that appear in the examinations (Table 4.1.5 c). About one-third of the students who considered the materials difficult explained that the unknown words and long sentences in the texts caused them to seek assistance from lecturers or friends while doing reading tasks in class.

- **Tasks**

The majority of students (67%) felt that there were sufficient reading tasks in the reading component. About one-fifth of the students felt that there should be more tasks to practise the skills learnt. 5% of the students felt that there were too many tasks (Table 4.1.6 d)

The mixed ability among the students might have caused students with low proficiency to prefer more tasks and the students with high proficiency to feel that additional tasks are not necessary. In general, there were sufficient tasks for the average students.

- **Benefits Of Doing The Tasks**

All students benefited from doing the tasks in the reading component. 92% stated that their knowledge of important business terminology had increased. Learning more business vocabulary, improving understanding of business texts and reducing the time required in reading business texts were the main benefits received by the students for doing the reading tasks (Table 4.1.7 and Table 4.1.9).

- **Articles In The Newspaper**

The data gathered shows that newspaper reading as a form of extensive reading that increased students' vocabulary size, familiarized them with business issues,

trends, changes and problems had helped them improved their comprehension of business texts (Table 4.1.8).

Davis (1995) notes that extensive reading improves reading skills, language skills, personal growth and examination results. According to Davis (1995), extensive readers were more positive about starting new texts because improvement in comprehension skills made it easier for them to read in other subjects. Furthermore, improvement in the language skills of the reader can be seen as a result of a wider active and passive vocabulary and usage of varied sentence structure. In addition, extensive readers showed a more positive attitude to studying in general, developed a wider knowledge of the world and had an increase understanding of other people. Thus the extensive readers are mature, critical in giving comments and imaginative. Davis' findings conclude that extensive reading enables students to obtain better results in all English medium subjects.

The findings reveal that the immense benefits of extensive reading. Therefore it is important for lecturers to promote reading among students. Besides the lecturers, the TAR library can encourage the students to read extensively by providing interesting, relevant and useful business magazines that appeal to students of differing language proficiency.

5.1.2 STUDENTS' VIEW ON READING SKILLS TAUGHT

- **Applicability Of Reading Skills**

92% of the students indicated that the skills taught were applicable (Table 4.1.14 b). They were confident in applying most of the skills taught.

- **Frequency Of Using Reading Skills**

The students learned 9 reading skills in the reading component. The skills learned are “scanning for information”, “locating main points in text”, “getting general view of text”, “referring to linking words in text”, “locating topic sentence”, “skimming for information” “recognizing connectors”, “finding meanings of unknown words” and “predicting what will follow”. Instructions on the reading skills are considered effective because 81% of the students used the skills taught frequently or most frequently. The other students used the skills occasionally or rarely (Table 4.1.11). Probably, some students were still not familiar with the skills taught; hence, they were not confident in applying them. So there is a need to identify these students and their problems for the purpose of giving them the assistance required.

Keiko Hayashi (1999) in her study on reading strategies and extensive reading points out that the effects of strategy used depend on language proficiency of the readers. The researcher points out that, the more proficient readers find their own way, take charge of their learning and use various types of strategies effectively,

the others do not use the strategies effectively even though they are taught how to do so.

Research, mostly with first language speakers, has shown that reading skills are learned best when the learners are consciously aware of what they are doing and what their purpose for doing it (Brown, Armbruster, and Baker: 1986: 74 cited in Mikulecky: 1990). According to Brown et al. (1986: 68), providing the rationale for each reading skill leads to an understanding of the significance of those activities, and this awareness contributes to continual unprompted use.

The present study found that 19% of the students were not confident in using the reading skills taught. It is possible that the lessons had to move on once the scheduled instruction and sufficient tasks were done in class. These students possibly had low language proficiency and required more time than the average students to understand the application of the reading skills. This group of students probably needs more guidance and encouragement from the lecturers before they are confident in using the skills.

- **Reading Skills That Improved Comprehension**

Seven reading skills ("locating main point", "scanning for information", "getting a general view of text", "skimming for information", "referring to linking words in text", "locating topic sentence" and "recognizing connectors") had improved students' comprehension of texts. About 60% of the students indicated 4 skills

("locating main points", "scanning", "skimming" and "getting general view of text") were important in helping them comprehend texts (Table 4.1.10).

About one-third of the students indicated that "referring to linking words in text" and "locating topic sentence" had improved their comprehension. The students had such views because the application of "referencing" skill required the students to analyze the text in order to identify the words that helped them understand information mentioned before or after these words. Identifying the words could be difficult if students could not understand the connection between sentences or if the students were only exposed to this skill recently. The majority of the students probably felt that using this skill was time-consuming and difficult and concluded that it rarely improved their comprehension.

"Locating topic sentence" required the students to differentiate topic sentence from main points. As a topic sentence could appear either at the beginning, middle or at the end of the paragraph, the students could have difficulties locating it. Feedback from the lecturers' interviews reveals that the problem of locating topic sentence was evident in the students' answers for comprehension questions in examinations. The students lifted the whole paragraph instead of the relevant points in the paragraph. This indicates that only the small percentage of the students who could locate topic sentence in a paragraph would consider it important to their comprehension.

Only 20% of the students indicated “recognizing connectors” as helpful to their comprehension. Generally, the majority of the students did not have problems recognizing connectors that were commonly used. Very likely the students did not know the meanings of difficult connectors, so they were unable to note the change in meanings of the text as a result of the existence of these connectors in the text.

- **Skills That Were Used Frequently Or Most Frequently**

The five reading skills that the majority of the students used frequently or most frequently were “locating main points”, “skimming”, “scanning”, “getting general view of text” and “finding meaning of unknown words” (Table 4.1.13).

“Scanning for information” had the highest percentage (93%) of students who indicated using it frequently or most frequently. More than 80% of the students used four reading skills (“locating main points”, “skimming”, “getting general view” and “finding meanings of unknown words”) frequently or most frequently (Table 4.1.13).

This is followed by about 60% of the students who used “referring to linking words”, “locating topic sentence” frequently or most frequently. Half of the students used “recognizing connectors” and 45% of the students used “predicting” skills frequently or most frequently.

The interviews with the students were able to provide some reasons for their responses. Regarding “referring to linking words” some students said that they were not confident in using this skill because not many tasks in the secondary education required them to use this skill. Another group of students said that they had difficulty applying “recognizing connectors” whenever they were not sure about the meanings of connectors that were not common. The rest of the students said that they had difficulty identifying the topic sentence when they had no prior knowledge about the topics or when the text had complex sentences or lengthy paragraphs.

There is a need to provide more practice for “locating topic sentence” because students’ efficiency in reading and summary is affected by the ability to use this skill. In view of the low percentage (20%) of students who found “recognizing connectors” helpful to comprehension and none of the students found “predicting skill” helpful to comprehension, these skill could be omitted in the new reading component.

- **Range Of Reading Skills**

The range of reading skills introduced and taught in the reading component was felt to be sufficient by 64% of the students because most useful reading skills that can improve comprehension had been taught (Table 4.1.14 a).

- **Emphasis Placed On Teaching Reading Skills**

The majority of the students (67%) felt that enough emphasis was placed on teaching the reading skills. There were clear instructions and sufficient practices and supervision on the skills taught. About one-third of the students believed that not enough emphasis was placed on teaching the skills (Table 4.1.14 c).

- **Time Allotment**

The majority of the students (74%) felt that sufficient time was allocated for completion of the reading component (Table 4.1.15).

23% of the students felt that more time should be allocated for the component. These students probably had not learned the reading skills in secondary school or were not proficient in English. Obviously, these students prefer to have more time so that they could have a better grasp of the skills taught. There should be extra lessons for these students.

- **Critical Thinking Skills**

Critical thinking is “ higher level thinking” or mental processes, which involve application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material (Bloom: 1956 cited in Pikkert, Joost and Foster: 1996). Williams (1984) points out the necessity for readers to have some degree of critical awareness when interpreting texts. For him, having critical awareness means being able to stand back and consider the

text objectively; has a will to know what the writer is going to do and, how he is achieving it. Apart from this, Williams also commented on the importance of teaching critical thinking as soon as possible.

According to the feedback gathered from the students, the critical thinking simulation tasks were successful in helping them to be more analytical and rational while making decisions and solving problems (Table 4.1.16).

Students' comments on the benefits of learning the critical reading skills include enhancing their probing and analytical skills. Some students reported that the tasks trained them to substantiate comments with facts and increased their confidence in speaking. Hence, activities and tasks in the reading component should develop students' critical thinking ability.

Besides agreeing with Williams on the importance of critical thinking, Pikkert et al. (1996) add that critical thinking should be a mandated criterion in any educational activity in institution of higher education. They are of the opinion that critical thinking as a skill may be more important than the subject matter being taught because it is a skill that never goes out of date. They are convinced that, with critical thinking ability, students are able to evaluate and analyze constantly changing issues that affect their career and future.

“If students in non-western countries are to graduate and be competitive in a world in which technology and globalization is changing more and more rapidly, lecturers and professors need to provide their students with the analytical skills that will enable them to solve problems, make decisions, and integrate new technology and theories outside of the classroom. One of these analytical skills is critical thinking (Pikkert, Joost and Foster, 1996: 57).

- **The Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills.**

85% of the students perceived that there was improvement in their comprehension as a result of learning the reading skills in the reading component. 15% of the students reported no improvement in their comprehension. During the interviews, some of the students mentioned that at the end of the course, their business vocabulary had improved; hence, they could understand and read the business section in the newspaper in a shorter time. The other students said their improvement in comprehension was evident by the increased number of correct answers they obtained in the reading tasks done in class. So instructions on reading skills will remain as the focus of the reading component.

This finding is supported by earlier research. Mikuleky (1990: 11) states that students will learn to read in English best in a classroom which includes regular interactive lessons on specific reading skills, with opportunity to apply the skills to a variety of texts. It is also pointed out that some reading professionals have argued that reading is a whole skill, impossible to be broken down (Thorndike:

1974). However, research has shown that it is possible to divide reading into a series of sub-processes (Collins and Smith: 1980; Schank and Abelson: 1977). Mikulecky adds that instruction on specific reading skills is transferable (Palinscar and Brown: 1980). They showed that students could be trained in specific reading comprehension skills in a way that will enable them to transfer these skills to a new reading situation. Indeed, teaching reading skills is one of the approaches that can help students improve their reading ability.

5.1.3 Students' View On The Reading Component

Apart from commenting that the vocabulary was difficult, the majority of the CIMA students felt that the contents of the reading component were relevant and the quality of the materials was satisfactory. The majority of the students felt that the materials were useful, interesting and of the right level. They also felt that there were sufficient tasks for them to practise the reading skills learned. They concurred that there were numerous benefits in doing the tasks.

The majority of the students indicated that sufficient range of the reading skills was taught (Table 4.1.5 b) and the emphasis placed on the reading skills enabled them to apply frequently most of the skills taught. The students mentioned that instruction on reading skills helped them to be more focused and had better understanding of texts. In tandem with this, the majority of the students rated the reading component as average and 28% of them were of the opinion that the reading component was good (Table 4.1.19).

Based on the views of the majority of the students the following aspects of the reading component need to be reviewed. Firstly, the contents and the instructions on vocabulary require revision. Besides that, simpler and shorter passages can be adapted from business magazines such as Malaysian Business, Malaysia Enterprise and Asian Business. Lastly, “recognizing connectors” and “predicting” skills can be omitted in the new English courses because most of the business texts do not require the application of these skills.

Throughout the study it was discovered that a small group of students (they had low language proficiency and little exposure to reading skills) was not learning at the same pace as the majority of the students. These students felt that the language and materials were difficult; the passages were uninteresting as well as too technical. In addition they also felt that the tasks were too few and they needed more time to learn the skills well.

There are two proposals to this problem. The first is to identify the weaker students and conduct two or three extra lessons that make use of simpler, shorter and less technical materials so that they can concentrate on learning the skills. In this way, the weaker students attend more hours of English Courses in a week and will do more reading tasks. The aims of these extra lessons are to help students improve their understanding of the reading skills and increase their confidence in applying them.

Alternatively, the reading component will include some simpler, shorter and less technical materials and remove some materials that are difficult. There will be no extra lessons for weaker students.

The positive comments made by the majority of the students and the improved performance of the students in doing the reading tasks show that the reading component is relevant and suitable for the CIMA students and has been effective in helping students improve their language proficiency. Generally the majority of the students believed that the reading component caters to their language needs and prepare them for examinations.

5.2 WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF THE LECTURERS REGARDING THE SUITABILITY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE READING COMPONENT?

5.2.1 LECTURERS' VIEW ON THE READING MATERIALS

- **Usefulness**

The majority (60%) of the lecturers felt that the materials were useful. The business related materials were relevant to the needs of the students. Besides gaining knowledge about the business environment, the materials enabled the students to practise the reading skills learnt and improve their comprehension.

40% of the lecturers considered the materials were of little use because of poor presentations, depiction of events in foreign setting and were too technical (Table 4.2.4 a).

- **Level Of Interest**

80% of the lecturers thought that the reading materials as well as the passages were uninteresting (Table 4.2.4 b and Table 4.2.5 c). The lecturers commented that the poor presentation, the out-dated materials and the technicality of the materials made them uninteresting. The students however felt that the materials were interesting because they could learn business events and practices in other countries.

With regard to the selection of materials for the reading component, priority was given to ensure that the materials were interesting for the students. According to Krashen (1982), students' ability to understand texts is affected by their interest in the materials. He points out that if the interest in the materials is high, the students are likely to get more meanings out of texts. Nuttall (1982) believes that the most important criteria in choosing a text is that the text should interest the readers preferably delight them because interesting content makes the learner's task exceedingly rewarding.

As mentioned on the previous page, providing interesting materials for readers is the pre-requisite for teaching reading so these materials could be maintained because they cater to the needs of the students and appealed to them.

- **Level Of Difficulty**

The majority of the lecturers felt that the reading materials as well as the passages were difficult for the students (Table 4.2.4 c and Table 4.2.5 c). During the interviews most of the lecturers mentioned that some students could not understand the texts fully because the materials were targeted for native speakers. The lecturers had to assist and guide these students in completing the reading tasks. The lecturers felt the language of the materials was difficult for the CIMA students who were not native speakers of English language.

It is noted that the lecturers' views were different from the students. The students seemed to prefer more difficult materials if those materials could help them to have better performance in the examination.

- **Vocabulary**

60% of the lecturers felt that the vocabulary tasks in the reading component were difficult for the students because the students referred to the dictionary frequently (Table 4.2.5 a). This finding supports the views of the students. As vocabulary affects students' comprehension, the contents and instruction of vocabulary in the

reading component needs to be reviewed so that it will be effective in helping students improve their vocabulary.

- **Tasks**

The majority (80%) of the lecturers felt that there were sufficient tasks in the reading component for students to apply the reading skills learned (Table 4.2.5 d). The majority of the students were also satisfied with the number of tasks in the reading component.

- **Text Types And Organization**

The majority (80%) of the lecturers felt that there was a good selection of materials and the materials were well organized (Table 4.2.6 and Table 4.2.6 b).

5.2.2 LECTURERS' VIEW ON READING SKILLS TAUGHT

- **Skills That Students Used Frequently And Most Frequently**

All the lecturers believed that students used “locating main points”, “skimming for information”, “scanning for information”, “getting general view of text” and “finding meanings of unknown words” frequently or most frequently (Table 4.2.8).

Only 20% of the lecturers perceived that students used “predicting what will follow” frequently or most frequently. 40% of the lecturers believed students had

used frequently or most frequently three skills (“referring to linking words in text”, “locating topic sentence” and “recognizing connectors”).

It is noted that both the students and lecturers agreed that there were 5 skills that the students used frequently and most frequently, 3 skills were used less frequently and the least used skill was “predicting what will follow”.

- **Range Of Reading Skills**

The majority of the lecturers felt that sufficient range of reading skills was introduced and taught in the reading component (Table 4.2.9 a). Similar response was obtained from students.

- **Applicability Of Skills Taught**

All the lecturers felt that the skills taught were quite applicable because the majority of the students were able to apply most of the skills while reading business texts (Table 4.2.9 b). The majority of the students shared the same view as the lecturers and this confirms the applicability of the skills taught.

- **Emphasis Placed On Teaching Reading Skills**

60% of the lecturers believed that sufficient emphasis was placed on teaching the reading skills. 40% of the lecturers felt that not enough emphasis was placed on

teaching the skills because of time constraint, so the weaker students were not confident of applying the skills (Table 4.1.13 and Table 4.2.9 c).

- **Time Allotment**

60% of the lecturers felt that sufficient time was allocated for completion of the reading component (Table 4.2.10). There were 40% of the lecturers who felt that more time should be allocated for the component. During the interviews, these lecturers explained that having more time would enable them to devote more attention to assist weaker students. With more time and more practices, the weaker students would be able to learn the skills better and use them more confidently.

- **Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills**

60% of the lecturers perceived that the students had received great benefit from learning the reading skills as shown in improvements in students' comprehension tasks and the rest of them believed that the students had obtained little benefit from learning the skills because students could not apply the difficult skills.

- **The Lecturers' View About The Reading Component.**

The majority of the lecturers were satisfied with the quality of the reading materials in terms of usefulness, selection of text types and organization of

materials according to business themes. The lecturers also felt that there were sufficient tasks for the average students to practise the reading skills learned.

The majority of them however commented that the language used in the materials was difficult for the students; the materials were not interesting and were outdated. The lecturers' view was shared by a small group of students.

In addition the majority of the lecturers commented that the vocabulary in the reading component was difficult. The majority of the students also mentioned that the vocabulary was difficult. Thus, it is important to review the vocabulary aspect of the reading component so that students will know the effective ways of learning vocabulary and increase their vocabulary and improve their comprehension of business texts.

The reading component could either replace some of the poor quality materials with those that are more interesting, current and less difficult or conduct extra lessons for the weaker students using simpler materials so that they could focus on learning the reading skills.

The majority of the lecturers felt that the reading component covers sufficient range of reading skills. The skills taught were applicable and the majority of the students were able to use most of the reading skills taught.

Despite some negative comments mentioned above, the general view of the lecturers was that the reading component that focused on instruction on reading skills is well organized and relevant for the CIMA students who want to improve their comprehension of business texts and obtain good grades in examination.

5.3 HAS THE READING COMPONENT FULFILLED ITS OBJECTIVES OF HELPING STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR COMPREHENSION OF BUSINESS TEXTS IN ORDER TO HAVE GOOD GRADES IN EXAMINATION?

5.3.1 THE OBJECTIVES

The focus of the reading component is on introducing the reading skills, helping students master these skills and applying them in reading. The ultimate aim of the reading component is to increase the comprehension and reading abilities of the students so that they can comprehend textbooks, reference materials and journals independently. Eventually, improvement in comprehension ability should result in better performance in assignments and examinations.

The present study indicated that the majority of the students and the lecturers commented positively on the content as well as the quality of the reading materials and the skills taught. Based on the views of the majority, it is concluded that the reading component had played its role and fulfilled its objectives.

Generally, the reading component has successfully introduced the reading skills to the students. The majority of the students and lecturers indicated that sufficient range of reading skills was taught and enough emphasis was placed on teaching the skills.

In terms of applicability of the skills taught, all the lecturers felt that the skills taught were quite applicable. More than 80% of the students were able to use five skills ("scanning for information", "locating main points", "getting general view of text" "skimming for information" and "finding meanings of unknown words") frequently or most frequently.

With regard to the effects of learning reading skills, 85% of the students perceived that there was improvement in their comprehension of business texts as a result of instruction on reading skills. Some students reported in the interviews that they managed to obtain more correct answers for the reading tasks done in the classroom. 60% of the lecturers were of the opinion that there were benefits in learning these skills.

Furthermore, the students and lecturers were of the opinions that seven of the reading skills had improved students' comprehension of business texts. More than 60% of the students indicated these four skills, "locating main points", "scanning for information", "getting a general view of text" and "skimming for information", had improved their comprehension.

This is followed by about 30% of the students indicating that “referencing skill”, “locating topic sentence” and “recognizing connector” had improved their comprehension.

Lastly, the findings also indicated that 80% of the lecturers perceived that the objectives of the reading component were attained.

A small percentage (20%) of the lecturers pointed out that though the students were taught the reading skills, however, the limited time allotted for teaching the reading component compelled the lecturers to race through the course. Thus the weaker students were unable to progress at the same rate as the rest of the students. The weaker students needed more time for revision and application of these skills in order to improve their reading.

Based on the explanation given above, these lecturers believed that one of the objectives of the reading component has not been achieved. The lecturer found that the reading component was not successful in encouraging weaker students to read widely and use the reading skills frequently.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings reiterated the importance of reading proficiency among CIMA students who need to read to increase general knowledge and to obtain essential and additional information for assignments and as preparation for examinations.

The study proposes that any reader who can understand about 50% of a text is confused and uncertain about the meaning of the text. There were 33% of the CIMA students who could only understand about half of the text. This means that instruction on reading should be continued so that they could understand a higher percentage of the texts. In addition, there is a need to identify the 33% of the students so that 2 or 3 extra lessons that used simpler, shorter and less technical materials be conducted. This will help students focus on learning the skills.

Vocabulary is identified as the main hindrance to students' comprehension of materials in the reading component. There is a need to review the methods used in teaching vocabulary. More emphasis should be placed on teaching the vocabulary learning strategies and more time should be spent on teaching high frequency vocabulary that relates to business.

There was a small group of students who felt that the materials were uninteresting, difficult and a little useful. The majority of the lecturers also gave negative remarks on the level of difficulty, language and interest of the materials. Generally the materials were of the standards required by the CIMA examinations and were useful to the students.

With regard to the reading skills taught, the 3 skills that students seldom used were “locating topic sentence”, “recognizing connectors” and “referencing skill”. On the whole, predicting skill is the least used skill. Based on these comments, the following changes are necessary.

- **Selection Of Materials**

For the purpose of encouraging students to read, the reading component should include shorter, simpler and less technical materials extracted from Malaysian Business, Malaysian Enterprise and Asian Business. Besides that the chosen materials should also be interesting and contain the correct level of language.

One of the ways to overcome the problems of foreign settings in the reading texts extracted from books meant for native speaker is for the lecturers to produce materials with local content. (Thonis: 1970; Block 1991) advocate using materials produced by teachers specifically for their students to compensate for those which are dated and written for mass consumption. Besides that the lecturers should be encouraged to participate actively in the selection of textbooks or materials for the Business English Courses.

- **Time Allocation**

The total hour spent on completion of reading component will remain as 40 hours. Within this time, there is a need to increase the time spent on teaching high

frequency words because the vocabulary was the main hindrance to students' comprehension of business texts. The students should also have a lesson on dictionary skills so that students will be able to know which word in the lists in the dictionary matches the meanings of unknown words in the texts.

There is a proposal to conduct 2 extra lessons on reading skills for weaker students and students who are learning the reading skills for the first time.

- **Range Of Skills Taught**

Two skills that the majority of the students seldom used ("predicting what will follow" and "recognizing connectors") can be omitted from the next English Course.

"Locating topic sentence" is important in answering comprehension questions and summarizing text or note making. Based on the comments that students made in the interviews regarding their difficulty in identifying topic sentence when the texts contained complex sentences and lengthy paragraphs, more detailed explanations on this skill and more practice need to be given in order to help students learn this skill.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE READING COMPONENT

Based on the summary of the findings, it is clear that the following changes and modifications could improve the reading component.

Care should be taken to find out the topics that interest students and ensure the inclusion of these materials after realizing that interesting materials motivate the students to read them. Besides this, the materials selected should be of the right level so that the input is comprehensible to the students. As a whole, the presentation of the materials in the reading component can be improved by having colourful pictures and well-typed passages.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In general, the reading component, which focuses on nine reading skills, is perceived as useful and helpful in assisting CIMA students improve their reading ability.

All the lecturers cited teaching the reading skills formally as a merit. The lecturers felt that the reading component helped to remove the negative perception of reading as a difficult task by eliminating the barriers to comprehension through application of reading skills. The application of reading skills enabled the CIMA students to have a higher level of comprehension within a relatively short period.

Both the students and lecturers agree that the reading component is relevant and a necessity in Business English Courses. It is through this component that the students' are taught the reading skills and the reading process. The learning of these skills improves the students' reading and comprehension. As reading is one of the four skills pertinent to language learning and academic achievement, the mastery of reading skills will certainly improve their grades in assignments and in examinations.

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