CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to get some insight into the possible reading comprehension difficulties faced by primary school students. Although the sample is small, nevertheless, the study will reveal preliminary information on the issues of reading comprehension difficulties which can be used as a stepping stone for more comprehensive investigation into reading comprehension difficulties. In order to do so, relevant information was gathered via tests and a questionnaire. The types of reading comprehension errors and possible causes will also be discussed.

4.1 Findings: Tests

This section presents reading comprehension difficulties faced by nine Year Four pupils from an urban school. In a series of six tests, various types of reading comprehension difficulties such as the inability to decode instructions, inability to answer structured and open-ended questions, grammatical errors that mar the structure of the sentences which in return reflect incorrect answers and nonsensical words that are incomprehensible, were evident in the pupils. Five of the nine subjects' first language was English. All of the nine subjects learnt to read in kindergarten and in school, indicating the subjects'

reliance on teachers to learn English. Hence, the linguistic competency of the pupils is stunted due to time constraints, unsupportive environmental factors and the lack of opportunity to learn outside the classroom setting.   Reading comprehension was formally taught to them in the government schools in Year One.

The tests comprise a variety of texts taken from the Year Four Text book for national schools. They were carried out at the end the second semester after the final exams. There was a variety of non fiction and fiction, a dialogue, a poem and a narrative. Only one subject scored marks which make up 50% of the total marks (see Table 4.1). The other six pupils scored less than 50% of the total marks. Out of the eight subjects, four of them scored less than twenty marks. The highest reading comprehension score is 23.5 marks and the lowest reading comprehension score is 14 marks. In terms of percentage, the highest reading comprehension score is 50% and the lowest reading comprehension score is 29.78%. Reading comprehension difficulties is reflected in the scores presented. The score of 50% in the school based examination in accordance to the school syllabus which is the same as UPSR would place the pupils in Grade C which is a Pass after grades A and B. The D and E grades are recorded as a Fail. The school sets the C grade pass for candidates scoring 40-59 marks. The marking scheme is the same as the one used in the UPSR. Table 4.1 shows the scores obtained from the six tests.

Table 4.1: Reading Comprehension Scores for Tests 1-6:

Subject	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Test 6	Total (%)
S1	2/10	4/7	4/10	2/7	1/7	1/6	29.78
S2	3/10	2/7	7/10	2/7	6.5/7	3/6	50.00
S3	3/10	1/7	3/10	3/7	3/7	2/6	31.91
S4	2/10	5/7	5/10	3/7	6/7	2/6	48.93
S5	3/10	4/7	5/10	2/7	6/7	3/6	48.93
S6	3/10	4/7	5/10	2/7	4.5/7	4/6	47.87
S7	3/10	3/7	5/10	3/7	4/7	3/6	44.68
S8	2/10	2/7	5/10	3/7	2.5/7	2/6	35.10
S9	1/10	2/7	4/10	2/7	5/7	3/6	36.17

All the nine subjects scored below the passing mark of five for Test 1. The reading comprehension scores of the subjects in the first test is the lowest recorded scores among all the six tests. This may be due to the fact that this is the first formal test in this study and pupils may have needed time to familiarize themselves with the tests. The pupils were asked about the test in the questionnaire and they said that Test One made them nervous and uncomfortable.

In Test Two, *The Greedy Crow*, four of the subjects scored one to two marks out of seven marks. One subject had three marks. Four subjects scored four and five marks.

The number of subjects who had the lowest and highest scores is the same while one subject who scored three marks is the median.

Test Three, *Getting Connected,* recorded the highest reading comprehension scores among the six tests. Only three scored below five or fifty percent. The subjects said they liked the text. The possible reason to their scoring the highest may be due o the fact that they were relaxed and confident during the test.

For Test Four recorded, *Everyone is Good at Something,* the reading comprehension scores that did not go beyond three marks. The subjects said they found the reading comprehension text difficult. This may be due to the fact that there were two questions that required the subjects to write their answers without any help words. The researcher was present during the test, but the subjects chose not to ask for assistance. The answers given were nonsensical words. One probable reason may be that the subjects lacked vocabulary skills. The other possible reason may be the reading comprehension text contained punctuation marks and direct speeches which required the subject to decode who the speakers were.

In Test Five, *Poem on Cats* one subject had almost full marks with a score of 6.5 out of 7 marks. Two subjects had six marks out of seven. One subject had five marks and two had four and 4.5 marks. Three subjects scored less than fifty percent of the total marks. The possible high scores of seven and 6.5 out of seven in the test probably shows that

the test was easy for them or the subjects liked the reading comprehension text although the subjects did not indicate that Test Five was easy in the Questionnaire.

In Test Six, *The Elves and the Shoemaker,* one subject had a score of more than fifty percent while the other eight subjects scored fifty percent and below. According to the subjects, they found Test Six the least difficult and the reading comprehension task was easy. However, the test scores revealed that the pupils had not adequately fulfilled the task requirements. This may be an indication that the subjects are not aware of their reading comprehension abilities. Therefore, the subjects' personal perceptions to their performance cannot be taken as valid.

4.2 Findings: Questionnaire

The questionnaire attempts to obtain specific data about the subjects' background, their exposure to the target language outside the classroom, their reading habits and other details relevant to this study. Table 3.1 on page 53 contains details about the subjects.

Two of the subjects speak English and their mother tongue, Tamil at home. The other seven out of nine speak Malay, their mother tongue at home. A total of four out of nine did not attend kindergarten, which prepared them to enter primary school where the core subjects i.e., Mathematics, Science and English Paper 1 and 2 are taught fully in English. The remaining five attended kindergarten. Subject 6 and Subject 9 had their

first formal exposure to English in the primary school they attended. All the subjects attend the same national primary school in an urban setting. Although five of them attended kindergarten in an urban setting, there is no evidence to indicate that attending kindergarten is beneficial in aiding reading comprehension as the remaining two subjects (S3 and S4) who did not attend kindergarten and were exposed to English at home, faced the same reading comprehension difficulties.

All the subjects are Malaysians, with two Indians and seven Malays from the Peninsular and Sabah. A total of four are girls and five are boys. Subject 5 watched English television shows while the other eight subjects watched either Malay or Tamil shows. It is possible the remaining eight subjects are not given the exposure through the mass media in English and there could be a probability that this may be the reason why they lack the schemata. The concept of background knowledge or schemata is necessary in reading comprehension The background knowledge or what is known as schemata a reader already has, is a critical determiner of comprehension (Anderson & Pearson (1984). As pointed out by Anderson and Pearson (1984), background knowledge is significant to instruction and the materials that students read should concentrate on familiar topics or topics already covered in school. This is because only then will this knowledge be readily comprehended. At the same time with seemingly equal force, one could argue that materials should concentrate on unfamiliar topics so as to develop new knowledge. Hence, watching English programs may be useful in the input of schemata in pupils.

A total of seven subjects have a collection of English story books at home, whereby, they spend a substantial amount of time reading and eight use the school library to read English story books. In fact, schools in Malaysia have a record of books read yearly by each pupil in Project Nilam.

Project Nilam is an ongoing reading program from Year One to Year Six in National Schools, whereby, pupils are encouraged to read as many story books as possible. Every book is recorded in a book called Buku Nilam. The record consists of details such as author, number of pages, synopsis and general comments. When the pupil is unable to comment, a drawing is sufficient to express the pupil's assessment of the book read. Books recorded may be in any language. At the end of the school term, pupils with the highest number of books read would be rewarded.

 According to the Project Nilam records, three subjects have read more than 29 English books, another three read 11-16 books, two subjects read 6-10 books and one subject read 17-22 books in 2007. The record of books read is rather low compared to the average number of books read by pupils in Year Four. The highest number of books read can range from two hundred and fifty to three hundred according to the Project Nilam records. The average Year Four pupils in the school would read forty to fifty books per year. The findings in this study revealed that there is no relationship between reading books and test scores because the subjects may have recorded books read in the Project Nilam without actively making sense of the reading materials. When a person

reads, they start with seeing the words with their eyes. However, Smith (1994) says that giving the eyes too much credit for their role of 'seeing' the words during the reading process may be a fallacy. Smith (1994) stresses that in actual sense, the eyes may not see at all in the literal sense. He proposes that the human visual system is characterized by three interesting features. First, people may not see everything in front of them. Second, they may not see anything that is in front of their eyes immediately. Third, they do not receive or decode information from their eyes continuously. In other words, the eyes can only 'look' largely under the direction of the brain, as the eyes are merely the devices collecting information for the brain, and it is the brain that determines what they see and how they see. Although the perceptual decisions they make as they interact with a reading text are based partly on information gathered by their eyes, the decisions become more significant when they are augmented by knowledge they already possess as they approach the text.

In English as a second language in Malaysian schools, measures are taken to improve the level of English through various means. Every Malaysian primary school is supposed to have one day allocated as English Day and pupils are encouraged to speak English on that particular day. Pupils may speak English on other days as they wish. English Day is set aside to encourage those who do not speak English to make a deliberate attempt to do so. Some schools impose a small fine or some of deterrent to remind pupils to speak English. In the case of the subjects' school, Tuesday is the day agreed upon as English Day. According to the questionnaire, two subjects said that

they speak English on English Day, while seven said they speak English sometimes. All of them speak English to either their teachers or friends. A total of six subjects speak English only when tested during Penilaian Lisan Berasakan Sekolah (PLBS or School Based Oral Assessment/SBOA which is recorded in the Report Cards), while one speaks English during English lessons only. A total of three speak English during recess, English lessons and PLBS. A total of three subjects speak Tamil and the Sabah native language to their neighbours while six converse in Malay with their neighbours. The Communication English in ESL is made up of listening and speaking, reading and writing. The four skills complement one another in holistic learning. A good user of the language would be able to use the necessary skills for reading comprehension.

When asked what language they thought in, Subject 3 and Subject 7 said they usually think in English and Tamil or Malay. Subjects 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 said they usually think in Malay. When asked about what additional classes held in English they attended outside school, one did not respond, while eight indicated they attended tuition, Mathematics and self-defense classes. There is no informal use of English outside the school whilst in school, English is used formally. Leseman and Jong (1998) say that to a certain extent, young children acquire knowledge and skills spontaneously in constructive interactions with their environment without explicit, intentional social mediation There could be a likelihood that children need to use a language formally and informally if they are to be prepared for a formal task such as the reading

comprehension task. Hence, the use of the target language in an informal, non-threatening manner may aid to improve the level of linguistic competence.

On their interest in English, six subjects found English interesting, two said they were not sure and did not understand the lesson and one found it boring. When they were asked to suggest what they would rather do during English, three said they were happy with the usual lesson, six said they would like to have more games, dramas and songs, while three said they would like to read and do more written exercises. Cropley (2001) contends that promoting positive attitudes in reading can occur in a mutually responsive teaching-learning environment that offers a wholesome learning experience. Strategies and approaches that promote a favourable setting for reading must first and foremost, be learner friendly. Therefore, a mutually responsive teaching-learning environment suggested by Cropley (2001) may be useful in raising the reading comprehension level of the subjects.

When asked about the Reading Component, three subjects said they did not favour it and six said they enjoyed it. All of them said they liked the teacher to read to them. Perhaps when the teacher reads to them, an interest in the text is created within them. Reading comprehension tasks need a combination of skills which include linguistic competency which is made up of grammar, syntax and vocabulary, prior knowledge and interest in the topic. Since primary school children in Year Four have just made a transition into the abstract stage, it is important that the reading comprehension tasks

matches their interest. Nunan (1991) states that a child's successful comprehension of a reading text depends quite a lot on the child's linguistic competence which includes the successful use of strategies such as linguistic cues and background knowledge to construct meaning and linguistic cues as and when children needed them. Competence in the reading language is one of the prerequisites of learning to read. Pupils with reading comprehension difficulties may not be proficiently equipped to read in the English language, contends Rose Tunku Ismail (1999). Even if the child is exposed to the English language at home says Rose Tunku Ismail (1999), it may not be adequate for him to use it as a frame of reference to comprehend the aural and oral aspects involved in academic reading. Rose Tunku Ismail (1999) further explains that when a child enters primary school at age six, he has mastered much of his native language sounds.. For most Malaysian children, at age six, they are forced to possess a certain level of proficiency in the English Language over a short period of exposure contends Rose Tunku Ismail (1999). Therefore, linguistic competence, prior knowledge and interest in the language are in fact motivating factors that promote reading comprehension.

Prior to the questionnaire, the subjects were given a set of six tests. At the end of the six tests they were asked to comment on the tests. A total of eight found Test One which is based on a story, difficult while one said Test Six was difficult. Test One was presented for the first time to the group of thirty-five pupils to determine the sample who scored three marks and below out of ten. The reason they found Test One difficult could be

that they were unprepared for a reading comprehension test. Most of them appeared confused during Test One, as this was their first formal test for this study. Although they were told that the test scores would not be reflected in their report cards, their anxiety level may have been high. Other contributing factors may be reading comprehension difficulties in completing the task, such as vocabulary and syntax problems. Johnson and Baumann (1984) observe that poor readers often display symptoms of learned helplessness - a persistent belief that they are unable to prevent negative outcomes even when conditions allow them to take control. So, when they approach reading comprehension texts, they are not likely to engage in the very process that is required of them in order to gather meaning from the text, thus, they become passive and fail to complete the tasks set. However, Johnson and Baumann (1984) warn that the task of identifying reasons for the passivity of poor readers and providing possible solutions are not that simple because it is often not clear whether passivity is the cause of poor reading ability or the outcome. Nevertheless, Johnson and Baumann (1984) stress the importance of understanding passive failure in reading as a way of helping students who are poor readers.

The subjects were asked to comment further on the level of difficulty (i.e. if the tests were easy, moderate or difficult.) A total of seven subjects said the tests were moderate. Moderate means that there were a mix of questions that, they could answer with ease and a few that were difficult. One subject said the tests were easy and another subject said they were difficult. When asked how they would like a better

presentation of reading comprehension tests, four subjects suggested that more pictures would aid comprehension, four subjects said the questions could be simplified and one subject said simple words would facilitate better comprehension. In other words, they could not fully comprehend the texts due to lack of vocabulary. When asked how Reading Comprehension would be of use outside the classroom, one did not respond and the remaining eight indicated they could read story books, newspapers, magazines and sing songs.

4.3 Possible Contributing Factors

The possible factors leading to reading comprehension difficulties will be discussed. in this section. All the contributing factors will be discussed in detail, with examples of answers given.

Table 4.3 summarizes the subjects, reading comprehension scores, number of English books read in 2007, monthly combined family income, usage of English materials on a weekly basis and whether or not the pupils owned and used a library of English books. There is no link between family income and the test scores. Subject 1 who comes from a family of higher   socio-economic status (SES) did not consistently score better in reading comprehension despite having the highest SES. In fact, Subject 1 had the lowest reading comprehension score. However, Subject 4 with the lowest (SES) ,who read more English books and used more English materials such as books, magazines,

newspapers and text books scored better in reading comprehension. Subject 4 also spoke English at home.

Eisterhold (1988) and Krashen (1981) say that using local materials, such as school newspapers, local novels and short stories that relate to the readers' life and experiences as reading texts help readers comprehend better. Using texts with a range of familiar topics is also a way to work with the diversity in terms of abilities and background of the reader because the necessary background information can be fairly controlled. Therefore, reading plays a significant role in the comprehension aspect of pupils. Socio-economic status has no bearing on the reading comprehension abilities of pupils.

According to Steffensen (1984), the essence of knowledge is its organization or structure. Therefore, they propose that the manner in which comprehension is affected through the text being related to the particular background knowledge is an important part. Hence, reading and speaking in the target language might help in reading comprehension.

Table 4.2: Test Scores, Books Read and Socio-Economic Status

Subject	Total RC Scores (%)	No. of Books Read in 2007	Combined Family Income (RM)	Personal Library of English Books	Average Usage of English Story Books/ Text/ Workbooks/ Newspaper in a Week
S1	29.78	More than 29	4,000	Yes	2x
S2	50.00	6-10	1,700	No	2x
S3	31.91	17-22	800	Yes	2x
S4	48.93	More than 29	609	Yes	3x
S5	48.93	More than 29	1,600	Yes	Less than 1
S6	47.87	11-16	1,640	Yes	2x
S7	44.68	6-10	1,600	Yes	2x
S8	35.10	11-16	1,600	Yes	2x
S9	36.17	More than 29	3,000	Yes	More than 8x

4.3.1 Reading For Direct Information

Analysis of the subjects' responses in the tests revealed that they were not able to answer questions that require a change in the use of possessive pronouns. In order to answer open ended questions in the absence of multiple choice responses a sound knowledge of grammar, syntax and vocabulary is needed to answer reading comprehension text. In the UPSR English Paper 2, pupils are required to write all the

answers in grammatically correct sentences. Grammar is part and parcel of the construction of good sentences.

Reading comprehension that tests reading for direct information from the text is one of the sub skills tested in the syllabus.

For example:

Question :

Who is Jothi?

Answer by the subjects:

Jothi is *my* neighbour.

Subjects were not able to differentiate from the writer's tone and the written text. The writer says "my neighbour" but the reader is required to comprehend that the word "my" means the author's or writer's neighbour. Hence, the reading comprehension difficulty subjects face is the inability to read for direct information and inability to use the correct possessive noun.

4.3.2 Reading to Infer

Subjects were unable to infer due to lack of inferential skills. In primary school, especially in Year Four where pupils have just moved from Phase One (Years One, Two and Three) to Phase Two (Years Four, Five and Six), reading to infer is not

explicitly spelt out in the syllabus (See Appendix B). This may be due to the fact that the pupils are at the transition from the concrete to the abstract stage. Hence, Skill 3.8.3 which is 'read and obtain meaning by making reference to words within the text' is the inferential skill introduced in the English Year Four syllabus.   Several factors, as pointed out by Williams (1986) and based on the test and questionnaire, such as lack of the ability to write suitable answers , inability to express themselves and inability to read effectively may be significant to their inability to read to infer. For example:

Question:

Why is Jothi's house empty?

Pupils give answers that are logical such as:

a. Jothi's house in Bandar Jaya.

This leaves the examiner or reader to assume that Jothi might have moved to Bandar Jaya.

b. Jothi's house is empty.

This possibly indicates non-comprehension or direct lifting from the text in order to produce an answer. The text does not inform the readers directly that Jothi has moved, thus, there is a need to infer on the readers' part to complete the reading comprehension process.

4.3.3 Schemata

Whenever something previously learned has an influence on current learning or when solving an earlier problem affects how you solve a new problem, transfer has taken place (Mayer and Wittrock, 1996). In order for the above mentioned to take place, prior knowledge is necessary as an input. Without prior knowledge, comprehension can prove to be a difficult task as seen in the example provided below:

Question:

What would you do if you were in the cable car?

Subjects' answers were:

S1: The boys shouted and dfeel.

S2: I can't do everythings.

S3: The boys culd not see the branch.

S4: I will.

S5: sitting

S6: I will sit and shto.

S7: We must not making the cable car go to the side to side.

S8: I will sit and watch.

S9: I will sit and watch.

The responses by Subjects I, 2, 3 and 4 indicate a lack of prior knowledge on the topic. The responses given by S5, S6, S7, S8 and S9 were taken as correct answers although they are not accurate. The responses were taken as correct due to the reason they were logical answers. The reason pupils could not answer correctly may be due to the inability to connect previous knowledge to the current situation, their inability to recall factors presented in earlier learning or lack of previous knowledge.

According to schema researcher, Carrell (1987), the more you know, the more you can learn. Teachers often think that the schema variety needs background information. However, the schema theory indicates the answer is "no". This is not the reasoning for the variety in the first place. In most cases the variety is built in to interest the readers to motivate to read.

This means, if the text is not interesting, the reader would not go on reading effectively. On the other hand, forcing the reader to constantly read the unseen, the remote and the bizarre, results in depriving the readers of the use and development a good reader's prime strategies in the top-down processing. This process is useless when reading something outside the experience of the reader. Forced to take the information bit by bit, the reader would slow down, thus, reinforcing the bad habit of reading word by word. When the reader does this, he fails to make the link between prior learning and current information due to the lack of interest.

4.3.4 Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills in reading comprehension include defining and clarifying the problem as well as making judgments about characters in the texts. These judgments are based on facts presented in the text. For example, when pupils were asked the following question:

Question:

What can you learn from this story?

None of the pupils were able to give relevant answers. This may be due to non-comprehension of the text, the inability to transfer thoughts into words, or fear of making mistakes or unknown factors. Johnson and Baumann (1984) observe that poor readers often show symptoms of learned helplessness, which is a persistent belief that they are unable to prevent negative outcomes even when situations allow them to take control. Hence, when they approach reading comprehension texts, they are not likely to engage in the process that is required of them to gather meaning from the text. As a result, they become passive and sink deeper into failure. One interesting aspect of critical thinking is the emotional quotient factor represented in reading comprehension. Johnson and Baumann (1984) contend that among the questions that require more attention to comprehension strategies is the interaction of comprehension strategies with motivation. It is unclear whether individuals fail to comprehend because they fail to

allocate sufficient effort to the task, lack strategic knowledge, or have other deficiencies. Children tend to persist in comprehension tasks relative to topics that are of interest to them, so comprehension measures contain an element of interest and task motivation as well as measures of the target skills. The poem about a Daddy Cat eating up one of the parrots irked the subjects. Pupils were asked what they thought about Daddy Cat. These were some of their reasoning about Daddy Cat's behaviour.

1. *Daddy Cat is strong.*

2. *Daddy Cat should not eat his neighbours.*

3. *Daddy Cat is in big trouble.*

None of the pupils thought that Daddy Cat's behavior was praiseworthy. This is a good sign that the subjects have wholesome emotions even when presented with a formal reading comprehension task. As pointed out by Rosenbalt and Langer (1994), during the aesthetic reading, the focus of the reader is on the reading experience itself. As the reading act proceeds, the reader draws on remembrance of things past, senses relationships with other things and savours the artistry of the author. Aesthetic reading is the type of experience children should have with poetry, picture books and novels. By reading aesthetically, children can realise the full artistic potential of literature.

4.3.5 Errors in Reading Comprehension Answers

One of the most common types of errors in answering reading comprehension questions is omission. This could be due to lack of exposure to reading as well as poor grammar. In the UPSR, grammar is marked stringently. According to the school syllabus set by the Ministry of Education, grammar is to be taught in context. Pupils are expected to answer in grammatically correct sentences in school based tests and the UPSR. However, pupils with lack of schemata or exposure to grammar may exhibit low comprehension level in reading comprehension tests by writing down grammatically incorrect sentences. Problems with grammar, syntax and vocabulary are summed up as linguistic incompetence. Grammatically incorrect sentences had lower marks and hence, the overall reading comprehension scores are low.

There are several types of commonly occurring grammatical errors when answering:

1. in the simple present tense:

    a. Omision of the copula *be*.

An example of this type of error can be found in the data:

Jothi ^ good. (is)

    b. Omission of the main verb

For example:

We ^ up the hill. (jog)

2. in the simple past tense:

    a. Omission of the copula *be*.

An example from the data:

Our neighbour ^ excited. (was)

    b. Omission of the main verb.

For example:

We ^ a cab to town. (took)

3. in the present progressive tense.

    a. Omission of the auxiliary *be*.

For example:

I ^ not wrong. (am)

    b. Omission of the am+ ing form.

For example:

He is <u>cry</u> aloud. (crying)

Another type of commonly occurring error is the inability to express themselves and the inability to infer due to the lack of vocabulary. Examples from the data are as follows:

Question: How do you feel about this poem?

Answers by the subjects are as follows:

S1: I feel bout this poem is I can see the cat is eat the baidtheop cat is the bard is fit.

S3: It is verytoin.

S4: no answer

Subject 1 appears to understand the question because the beginning of the sentence " I feel bout this poem" indicates the subject comprehends but is unable to express or produce the correct answer due to the inability to express it in a good sentence.

Subject 3 uses "verytoin". It is unclear what the subject intends to express as it appears that S3 has problems with vocabulary.

Leseman and Jong (1998), contend that vocabulary at age seven is determined by age four vocabulary. As pointed out by Leseman and Jong (1998), word decoding at age seven, is determined by early vocabulary. Hence, poor vocabulary exposure in the early years of the learner may hinder the learner from carrying out reading comprehension tasks.

Grammatical and structural errors are common occurring errors in the subjects' written responses.

Examples from the data are as follows:

Question: What does Wei Jet do in Lagang's house?

S1: Because I go to Lagang house to study computer game.

S2: Wei Jet go to Lagang's house to study or to play computer games.

S3: Go to Lagang houe to stufyd.

S4: Wei Jet go to Lagagn's house id to play or study.

S5: Wei Jet do in Lagang's house is to study or play computer games.

S6: We go to school together.

S7: The boys do together to do homework and plays.

S8: The boys do together ois go to school.

S9: were play and study.

All the responses show comprehension, but are marred by grammatical and structural errors. In the UPSR as well as the school based examination, marks will be deducted for such errors. According to the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, it is important that pupils write grammatically and structurally correct answers for the purpose of grading. Some subjects who ,perhaps are unable to write grammatically correct answers, have been found to have copied the stem of the question.

There are instances where subjects have the right idea but have problems with grammar and spelling problems.

For example in Test 4, Question 5, the subjects were asked:

How did the boys feel when they heard the noise?

The responses were as follow:

S1 : (wrong answer)

S2: (wrong answer)

S3: (wrong answer)

S4: the bo fell and shouted and fell at the floor of the car.

S5: (wrong answer)

S6: Gary and Martin could spuak, the boys heard a loud noise.

S7: they fed very scared when they heard a loud noise.

S8:feel when they heard the noise they shouted.

S9: (correct answer)

From the responses by the subjects, for example S4, S6, S7 and S8 had some idea on how to answer the question but lacked spelling and grammar skills. S4 for example, uses the word "fell" to mean "felt", perhaps, and does not continue with the next adjective, for example " afraid" or "frightened". The word " boy "is spelt as "bo".

S6 uses "spuak". It is a non-word which may mean " scared".

S7 uses the word "fed: instead of "felt". It may be a careless spelling mistake or an error in the vocabulary used.

S8's response indicates the subject understands the question, but lacks grammar and spelling ability to express.

When tested skill 3.8.3 in T6 Q1, all the responses of he subjects were marked as wrong due to non comprehension and grammatical errors.

Question: What did the shoemaker buy with the money?

S1: he worked very hard but still did not have money to buy food.

S2: the shoemekar buy food.

S3: wht he did.

S4: the shoemekar is very good to do shoe,

S5: md whore leather.

S6: he buy the lether sho.

S7: the shomake buy food.

S8: the shoemaker buy with the money is some food a food buy.

S9: the shoemaker using the money to is the food and and leather.

The correct answer is: The shoemaker used the money to buy more food and leather to make shoes.

From the responses, S1, S3 and S4 provided wrong answers, whereas, S2, S5, S6, S7, S8 and S9 had grammar, spelling and syntax errors. S2, S5, S6, S7 S8 and S9 show comprehension but are unable to express themselves due to linguistic incompetency.

4.3.6 Aesthetic and Efferent Readers

Rosenbalt and Langer (1994) help us understand the different purposes of reading in reading comprehension. They are aesthetic and efferent readers. In aesthetic reading, the focus is on drawing on remembrance of things past, senses relationship with other things and savours the artistry of the author. Efferent readers read with the sole purpose of extracting information and have no emotional attachment to the reading

material. In the tests given to the subjects, they were required to read aesthetically a reading comprehension text in Test 6 and provide the answer. For example:

Question:

Why do you think the elves never went back to the workroom again?

Answers:

> Subject 5: *They <u>was</u> very happy and never went back to the room.*

> Subject 7: *I think the shoemaker does have money.*

Their answers did not reflect drawing connection of things past or savouring the artistry of the author. The subjects did not have prior knowledge on the matter based on the answers given by the subjects. They were unable to infer why the elves never went back to the workroom.

4.3.7 Efferent Reading

Test 3 is an example of efferent reading comprehension text. Subjects were required to read and source for answers without making any connections to the artistry of the author.

 In skill 3.9.3 , T6, Q6, the subjects were asked the following:

Question: What can you learn from this story?

S1: I can learn from this stoy is the shoemaker.

S2: We need do homewrok.

S3: The elves were helping the shoemaker.

S4: helping trhe shoemaker.

S5: The frisrt not rich and the last not rich.

S6: I learn I don't want give up.

S7: We should help people if thyer had problemn.

S8: We must help each other we need.

S9: We must help each other that need help.

From the responses given by S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6. Subject 5 attempts to describe something but it is unclear what is meant by S5. It could be that the shoemaker never became rich. The other subjects, S7, S8 and S9, exhibit problems in syntax, although their responses may be logical, showing some comprehension.

The top-down model, views reading as a linear process moving from the top, the higher-level mental stage, whereby, the readers have some knowledge about the text. In this model, the reading process is driven by the reader's mind at work on the text. Therefore, it is called the reader-driven model also. The reader uses his general knowledge of a particular text component to make intelligent guesses about what might come next in the text (Goodman, 1968) and (Smith, 1994). In this case, the subjects guess what might be the outcome of the elves helping the shoemaker.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the presentation and analysis of data from the tests and the questionnaires. The major findings are that pupils face reading comprehension difficulties in the areas of extracting direct information, schemata or prior knowledge, and poor use of language skills which includes grammar and syntax and inability to answer comprehension questions. The next chapter deals with conclusions drawn from the study and recommendations for further research.