

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of CBI in enhancing students' understanding of the aesthetic and the language aspects in a literary text. The effectiveness of CBI using a prescribed text 'Clever Katya' was based in Year 6, ESL reading class in an urban Primary School. This chapter summarizes the components presented in the previous chapters and arrives at implications based on the findings, and provides recommendations for future research.

5.2 Summary of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate, how effective was CBI in enhancing students' understanding of the aesthetic aspects and the language aspects of a prescribed literary text in an urban primary school. The study attempted to answer two research questions:

- 1) How effective was CBI in enhancing students' understanding of the aesthetic aspects in a literary text?

2) How effective was CBI in enhancing students' understanding of the language aspects in a literary text?

To gather the data for this study the quantitative method of collecting data was used and the researcher used 8 sets of instruments which were teachers' checklist (see Appendix 3.0), students' 3 questionnaires (see Appendix 3.1, 3.3 and 3.5) and 3 tests, one pretest (see Appendix 3.2) and 2 posttests (see Appendix 3.2 and 3.6). The researcher also used 10 content-based activity instructions with teachers guide (see Appendix 3.4:1 to 5) in the form of task-based worksheets. The instruments were all in English. The tests were conducted to assess the performance of students who read the prescribed text in English with the help of CBI or without CBI.

The findings from the CBI-based activities were used to supplement the data obtained in the three questionnaires. These three questionnaires were assigned to 60 students in Year 6. The 60 students who were the sample of this study were all from Sekolah Kebangsaan Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur. The data obtained from the questionnaires were used to triangulate with the scores of the three tests. The teacher-checklist was used as an instrument to gather information about the teaching experiences and background of the teachers who were to be chosen to teach two groups involved in this study. One teacher was assigned to teach the control group in the traditional way and another to use CBI with the experimental group, selected teacher by the researcher. The researcher helped the selected teacher to understand various characteristics of CBI.

The first questionnaire was used to get background information of all participants in the study. In order to do this they were asked to read the prescribed text in their normal reading classes for 3 lessons. After, they were assigned to their 2 groups using pretest scores. With the pretest scores findings, 30 students with high scores were assigned to the control group and another 30 who scored medium high -low scores were assigned to the experimental group. This issue has been explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1.4, p.55). This is a norm that goes against the classic feature of experimental group hence this is a non-equivalent control group study. However, the school authority insisted that the researcher distributed the students in this way. Ideally they should be separated into more or less equal groups.

Next, the CBI lessons were conducted with the experimental group by the selected teacher over a period of 5 weeks with 10 content instructional activities. The activities were in the form of task-based instructional worksheets, based on the text 'Clever Katya'. A posttest, which was the same as the pretest was given to both groups after the experimental group had done reading with CBI and the control group had done using the traditional method.

Another newly designed posttest was assigned to both groups to further validate the scores with the earlier posttest results and findings. An interval of two weeks, were given between the tests. All data obtained were analysed using the frequency count technique and percentages. With the use of scree plot, 6 factors were obtained. By running Pearson's Product Moment Correlation it was found there was statistically significant positive relationship existed between the respondents' perceptions and their actual achievement ($r=.35$). The significance of

the responses was then discussed after the data were tabulated. The findings from the questionnaires would be furnished by the data gathered through the tests.

In general it was evident that 50% of the students who strongly agreed that they liked to read (see Chapter 4; Table 4.1, Item 1, p. 66) in Year 6, probably faced no problem in the reading classes as they had not only a high proficiency level in English but also a positive attitude towards reading. Whereas another 50% of the students did not strongly agree that they liked to read (see Chapter 4; Table 4.1, Item 1, p.66). This was further evident with the results of the pretest scores (see Chapter 4; Table 4.7, p.90) where there was great difference in the mean whereby the experimental group was 27.10 and the control group was 45.53. The positive-negative attitude among these Year 6 students were also evident when the pretest scores equally indicated almost 50-50 results in high scores and medium high to low scores when the pretest was conducted before students were assigned to their groups by the researcher.

Therefore, it seemed that the higher proficiency students with more positive attitude in the reading classes faced no difficulty to follow up with the literature programme. As such they were already independent or autonomous learners on their own. Perhaps a 'linguistic threshold' could have been posited and shown to have existed for the readers who liked reading and familiarity with appropriate cultural knowledge of target or second language on a more cognitive level, could have lowered the linguistic threshold (Alderson and Urquhart, 1984). Through the findings it was in a way clear that the student's proficiency level had an effect on student's perception towards reading in the ESL classes.

Yet, the concern by the researcher was for students who did not strongly agree to reading and scored medium and low scores in the pretest. As such the experimental group which in a way comprised of 30 students of medium high and low scores in the pretest which were earlier 32 but due to authority, totalled to 30 as 2 had problems in attendance in school (see Chapter 3; p. 56) were chosen to undergo treatment through 5 CBI lessons.

The introduction of the CBI lessons, were well-received by all 30 students of the experimental group. It is generally believed that acceptance is an important factor in determining the successful introduction of CBI into the literature-based ESL reading classes. Data shows that this was further evident through the positive responses in the post-reading questionnaire (see Chapter 4; Table 4.5, p 78-79 and 4.6, p.86) and high test score results (see Chapter 4; Table 4.8, p.91). The study from the two posttests showed significant results in students' achievement and the results correlated with their perception, with both their understanding and the effectiveness of CBI in the ESL reading classes. The results of the present study had shown that the students in the experimental group had focused on both content and language according to the tasks they had performed, as they did show a statistically significant mean difference in their posttests performance and statistically significant mean difference between the control and the experimental group.

5.2.1 Students' Understanding of the Aesthetic and Language Aspects

Generally, the students who were involved in CBI lessons felt the use of the activities, had helped them to enhance their understanding of both the aesthetic and language aspects, and seemed to have improved their second language skills as well. In a way both the aesthetic and language aspects were learnt implicitly rather than explicitly. The content-based activities though were not introduced in isolation as aesthetic or language aspects to the students, the reason being, generally, CBI brought about the understanding of 'literariness' where linguistic elements were underplayed through the use of content via task-based activities, through interactive communicative interaction between the learner, the text and the second language. Such communicative interaction through content and language created avenues for second language acquisition. The avenues created through the activities could have provided opportunities to enhance students' understanding of aesthetic and language aspects, confined to the text alone which was read. It was even clearer, when the aesthetic aspects were assessed in 25 different aspects in the posttests, results from the data showed (see Chapter 4; Table 4.8, p.91) that students had acquired, perhaps not completely but some knowledge of the aesthetic aspects of the content within the story being read.

The improvement of language aspects was more secondary, as they had only learned more content knowledge through the use of the language. The activities did not completely involve all the four skills explicitly but rather implicitly. Varieties of interactive activities through listening, reading and speaking were all involved with the purpose of solving the tasks related to the content of the text. As opportunities arise in identifying the language embedded within the context of the text, students identified language forms and functions informally through the language content of the text that the tasks demanded. Though again the language or

efferent aspects were not taught formally, yet in a way, students understood that they were exposed to certain grammatical items, forms and functions. Probably, this understanding they could have brought along with them from their prior or past learning experiences.

5.2.2 Students' Attitude Towards the Effectiveness of CBI

Hall (2005) had put forward his views for the need of an approach to literature as discourse or as a social practice from an applied linguistic point of view which would ask what learners of literature learnt through the discourses in which they participated. This viewpoint could perhaps be made possible in the literature-based reading classes with the introduction of CBI. In this study the data showed that 83.3% of the subjects acknowledged the fact that they understood the text read better through the activities (see Chapter 4; Table 4.6, Item 18, p. 86). 83.3% of them generally accepted they were encouraged to learn English (see Chapter 4; Table 4.6, Item 19, p 86). This showed how much of an influence CBI had over the attitude of second language students in a particular reading class with a particular text explored.

Through observation, confidence was in a way obvious among students in reading, extracting information and applying the information in completing tasks from a second language text, read and re-read. The data clearly shows (see Chapter 4; Table 4.6, Items 1 to 20, p. 86) that CBI had been largely effective in enhancing especially these young students in the reading

classes, the understanding of both content and language and its implementation in the reading classes.

5.3 Implications

This study investigated the effectiveness of the literary and the language aspects of the literary text 'Clever Katya'. The results of the study showed that experimental group which comprised of those who could be considered as struggling readers, made some improvement after 5 CBI lessons. Data shows the improvement via the two posttests which the students of the experimental group had attended. Hence, automaticity that relates to Anderson's Theory that supports sustained improvement among the students was obvious in the study.

In this study the understanding of meaning was derived through the content of the prescribed text or story book and as such content came with language. Language was then related to form and function rather informally through activities. The results of this study could to a certain extent be supported by Long's 'Interaction Hypothesis' which in a way derives from Vygotsky's 'Socialcultural Theory' that supports social interaction among students in order for learning to take place. Modified interaction through CBI intervention promoting reading and communication among peers shows that student-centred task-based communicative interaction might have promoted reading and acquisition to go on naturally. Long's view that interaction and input are seen as two major players in the process of acquisition in a way supports the way CBI used the texts, the tasks-based activities as a basis for interaction among groups and pair

work. Therefore, conversation and other communication are according to him in second language classes are the basis for development to linguistic rules.

It needs to be understood that interaction via communication alone among students without much thinking to solve tasks is not enough. Preferably, students need to use their cognitive ability to solve not only tasks but equally interact with their peers through discussions and correct responses. As such the much acclaimed 'Anderson's Cognitive Theory supports this study as the students in the content-based reading classes, to a certain extent, developed their language skills through the required CBI tasks. Next, in a way they were, able to associate the tasks with the content and improved. And as they improved they arrived to autonomous stage in order to be able to perform the tasks automatically and autonomously. With the support of these theories the literature-based ESL reading classes could be considered to have used CBI effectively to bring about understanding of the aesthetic and language aspects among struggling readers in the second language that is English.

However as the study emphasized mostly on the understanding of the effectiveness of the aesthetic and language aspects of the text being read, in a way great emphasis was on the achievement of the reading skill based upon the two aspects of the content. The reading skill which was the main objective of the Literature Component of the English Language Syllabus was in a way seen to some extent achieved. As reading was an on-going process in order to explore the content to accomplish the tasks during the CBI lessons, students were reading in groups, with peers and even aloud to gather and share information while accomplishing their tasks. In a way this contradicts with Swain's (1993) who suggested that not all content teaching

were necessarily good language learning as input and output might be functionally restricted as the linguistic focus was dependent on the content focus. This in way contradicts with this study as data from posttest scores shows that the students of the experimental group were tested upon grammar though done informally found to have been somehow shown progress. Although the grammar was related to the understanding of language and solely as grammar per se, yet it was found through this study that students had no problem in identifying the grammatical features found within the language content of the text read.

This study nonetheless, suffers from a few shortcomings. Although the results of the study to some extent supports those of Lightbown and Spada (1990) whereby they claimed that in foreign or second language classes with the integration of CBI with respect to language learning, developed high levels of fluency and communicative ability in their target language but still had problems with linguistic accuracy and complexity. The data shows that some of the students were still under achievers in the experimental group as they had low scores in the posttests. This supports the claim, why there is a need for more CBI in the literature-based ESL reading classes.

Furthermore, most studies conducted on CBI were on a long term basis of not less than 4 months, such as the one done by Papai (2000). Such long term studies were necessary in future studies of CBI especially in the Malaysian reading classes at primary level. Perhaps, for these reasons in Malaysian Primary schools, a single text prescribed for the ESL literature programme by the Ministry of Education was to be read and explored over a period of 4 months and not less.

Studies done in the Malaysian classes related to CBI and its effectiveness in ESL classes such as Mohamed Shah's (2003), on error feedback could be conducted at primary level as well in the literature-based ESL reading classes. Study done by Thang and Paramarane (2006), using CBI with environmental topics in the English Language perhaps could be done at primary level based on prescribed literary texts. In this way the results of CBI could measure further areas such as longitudinal studies in sustained interest, in reading literary text from primary to secondary education. A particular group of students or particular students with particular prescribed texts at particular levels perhaps can be considered. In such a way, literature-based ESL reading programmes, introduced, would not go ignored but its implementation, progress and success would be recognised and promoted through supported studies and research at all levels.

5.4 Recommendations

The data (see Table 4.5, p. 78 and 4.6, p. 86) shows that the impact on the effectiveness of CBI itself as the main objective of the reading class which was 'reading' (see Chapter 1; 1.3.1, p.8) in accordance to the objectives of the Literature Programme had been to a certain extent, achieved. Yet, the most alarming of all was the fact that ever since the literature component was introduced at primary level in 2004, the reading habit had not been successfully instilled among the young learners at upper primary level till today.

The data in this study shows (see Chapter 4; Table 4.1, p.66) that 51.6% of the total number of students in Year 6 in this school read at least one book a month on their own. Findings from pretest results in this study too showed that in this urban school with at least 50%

of students out of the total students in Year 6 were good in reading and understanding a text yet among these students only 8.3% borrowed at least one book a month from the school library. Therefore CBI which promotes understanding of the effectiveness of the content of the text read could be successfully implemented to instil reading and inculcate the reading habit through extensive reading, at the primary level to a certain extent. CBI in this way could provide many alternatives to unanswered questions and bring results to endless effort taken at different levels to overcome problems in instilling the reading habit among students.

The data (see Chapter 4; Table 4.6, p.86) also shows that a few students had, negative attitude towards CBI reading classes. There were always responses of at least 1 or 2 students who found it not easy to understand the story better or encouraged to learn English though they liked the CBI activities. There were at least 2 students who were unsure about their commitment. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002: 89) usually through attitudes' research, it was found many language students were relatively unconvinced of the point or value of literature in second or foreign language learning. As this study was not a longitudinal one it was not possible for the researcher to investigate such cases yet these cases might be unique samples for future research in literature-based ESL reading classes.

Yet, the prevailing issue of having seen the overall results in performance of the students who were equally weak in the second language showed that some improvement seem to have taken place through the use of CBI. Through testing (see Appendix 3.6), the progressive success and sustained interest in the story read by the students to solve task-based CBI activities seem to have sustained some knowledge and interest, over time.

The results of Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 (see Chapter 4; Table 4.8, p.91 and 4.9, p.92) when compared showed vast improvement by the experimental group. This showed that by enhancing students understanding in two of the main aspects that were the aesthetic and language aspect, as done in this study through the use of CBI, could have brought about significant changes in the students attitude, promoted reading of a particular text and created a certain level of interest for reading. Furthermore, data (see Chapter 4; Table 4.6, Item 12, p.86) showed that 96.6% of the students agreed or strongly agreed the lessons were interesting with CBI activities in comparison to 33.3% (Chapter 4; Table 4.4, Item 10, p.76) found the reading lessons without CBI either always interesting or most of the time interesting.

Since in this study, CBI was catered to a particular group of students involved in a particular programme with a particular text, as such it did not cater to all texts that had been introduced in the Year 6 classes or other classes nationwide. Yet the results which had been hypothesized in this study revealed the impact of CBI upon students' understanding especially among those who were struggling readers. This study was done in an urban school among students who were both of high ability and of medium-low proficiency level. However, it can be simulated or adapted to meet students of average or low proficiency level or struggling readers in any schools in any reading ESL classes as CBI's main purpose or goal is to promote learning and reading in second language classrooms.

Since CBI is context-specific, it needed to be tailored with a particular disciplinary programme or even instructors. In this study the researcher helped the teachers initially to

understand various features of CBI-based instructions. Instructors or teachers need to be given enough exposure to material adaptation, learner-centred activities, pedagogical principles of CBI its appropriate modules and their advantages in the second language reading classes. With such exposures instructors or teachers could contribute to the enhancement of student understanding of both aesthetic and language aspects of a particular text read. Thus create a love for reading and understanding a text and simultaneously encourage second language acquisition to develop further.

Teacher training is another concern that need to be looked into when comes to the use of CBI and its flexible approach that is found to bring effective results through research done in ESL or EFL classes. It is imperative to accommodate diverse student population and language teachers need to know how to integrate academic language and content better in their classrooms (Crandall, 1992). This would be possible perhaps with more studies carried out by second language teachers teaching literature themselves and share their success stories with other language teachers to help in the positive move towards CBI and its implementation especially in the Year 6 reading classes. With an understanding of the effectiveness of reading and its benefits for the next five years at secondary level students might enjoy reading and be prepared for any form of text or assessment.

The result of this study in a way shows that ESL students with limited vocabulary even in reading classes in an urban primary school equally need attention. Many a times ESL researchers in second language tend to focus attention to rural schools but the fact that within the context of 'urban school' many students themselves are 'rural' to ESL. Moreover the CBI

activities did not specifically cater to students who had clinical problems such as autism with same group of students. Therefore studies with the use of CBI that contributes to students with particular clinical problem such as autism (see Chapter 3; p. 57) perhaps can be encouraged.

With the introduction of CBI among students in the reading classes, it was to some extent evident through the data findings that understanding of language and literature aspects were enhanced, thus promoting learning as well as acquisition of the target language, English. With CBI, could have to a certain extent brought about a changed attitude among struggling students and regard reading classes as valuable avenues for improvement in their second language academic skills. Though language and literature were learned over a short period of time through reading and exploring of the content, yet it could in a way created joyful learning, enthusiasm and interest for the text and confidence in reading among the students. It was observable that when students had a purpose to fulfil a task and this purpose made reading, fun and enjoyable with peers through meaningful discourse, then, reading and understanding of content made learning and acquisition to take place naturally via communication, literature and literacy.

5.5 Conclusion

It is hoped that this study would encourage more challenges to be undertaken at earlier level in education than later in literature-based ESL reading classes at primary level. The challenges perhaps solved at primary level in the ESL classes would benefit students and

teachers as well as policy makers. This might make reading of literary texts through the Children's Contemporary Literature Programme a success not only in theory but equally in practice at different school levels. With CBI in the reading classes, perhaps students at primary level nationwide, who are struggling with their second language, might find reading literature, painlessly pleasing in every way from primary till the last years of secondary level of education. Perhaps in future with such undertakings, all effort taken to create a reading society might be in a way successfully accomplished among the future generation in the country.