CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The ability to read plays a significant part in the daily lives of most human beings. Although we cannot deny the fact that the era of technological advancement is well and truly upon us, reading has lost none of its impact on our world. Thus, this chapter will include a discussion on reading, especially critical reading and higher order comprehension skills which form part of the critical thinking skills, the use of narrative and expository texts in the teaching of these skills and factors which may affect students’ critical reading ability.

2.1 Reading

The reading of books or certain academically based magazines may have lost a notable following due to this era of technological explosion, reading of materials in other forms such as through the computer is still a crucial part of the ability to extract information from written materials which is fundamentally what reading is all about. In view of this development as well as the fact that information users are deluged with all kinds of information, learners need to be equipped with sound critical reading skills and thinking ability in order to be able to make reliable decisions and find viable solutions to problems.
Reading was once regarded as a passive language skill where learners only soaked up knowledge or information given in the text and stored those pieces of information or knowledge in some corner of their brain. However, reading is now no longer considered a passive skill as it is deemed necessary for learners to interact with the text so as to maximise the processing of the information to facilitate its comprehension. According to Safiah Osman (1989: 73 – 74), "...reading is not only a cognitive but also an active and reconstructive process" whereby the reader is able to integrate whatever information he has gathered from the text with the background experiences that he is already equipped with.

The skill of reading does not merely involve the reader's eye movements alone. It includes the mental faculty and at times their emotional responses as well. In actual fact, reading would seem to be more of a mental exercise rather than a physical one (Bensly, 1980: 23). Readers do not carry out the act of reading in a vacuum nor is it a totally separate entity from other skills. Reading is in fact a unique process whereby it involves many complex mental processes and some unique elements (Gray, 1984: 18). Thus, it also involves elements such as readers’ background knowledge or schemata which would enable learners to interact with the information or storyline (Palmer, 1981: 63) as well as personal experiences so as to interact with the information or storyline given. Many a times readers are put in a position where personal opinion has to be dealt with and sometimes the readers' ideas or judgements regarding the same issues may alter as they become older or more mature. This may be due to the fact that the readers would have undergone different experiences and thus the texts, even if it is the same texts they had encountered earlier would evoke different kinds of responses which
may be an extension of their earlier ideas or a radically different perspective.

Hepburn (1987: 64) quoted Goodman’s description of reading as “...a psychological process by which the reader reconstructs as best as he can, a message which has been encoded by the writer as a graphic display.” Thus a reader with different background knowledge and experiences would reconstruct the message based on his view of things. Because of this, sometimes different readers can read different meaning into the same text.

Consequently, reading includes not only the mental and communicative aspects but the social factor as well where “... the text authors are the invisible and often neglected participants in classroom interactions” (Vacca & Vacca, 1989: 6). Reading where comprehension is an essential component, requires complex mental processing, yet it enriches the person intellectually if only the person is willing to delve deeper into the sometimes hidden message that may delude the unsuspecting minds.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

The reader’s task in his attempts to read is to ensure that he understands the writer’s message. The main purpose of the writer is to communicate his intention in writing effectively so that the readers can understand the message he is trying to send out. A reader who is not proficient in a particular language would not be able to get the message. As Goodman (1973: 251) said, ...”unless he can process the language”, he would not be able to gain much from his reading. Having an ability to break the code
of the message, so to speak, may not be sufficient for a reader to really understand the message because there are other factors such as experience, background knowledge as well as cultural information which can lead him towards a better understanding of the text.

Thus, it is true that meaning may not be clearly understood by just knowing the graphic symbols alone or knowing how to interpret these symbols correctly. The reader may be the supplier of the meaning to a text himself “...as he processes the symbolic system of language.” (Goodman, 1973 : 251). Reading is therefore, now seen by most researchers in this area as being more than just mouthing words appropriately or identifying symbols correctly.

Hence, reading would not have taken place without comprehension which forms an essential part of reading. In fact if learners or readers cannot comprehend what the author has written, he cannot be said to be reading (Friedman & Rowls, 1980 : 144). Many different views have been offered regarding reading comprehension skills. Friedman & Rowls, 1980 : 147 quoted Barrett (1968) as saying that reading comprehension skills consist of “…a five-level structure including literal comprehension, reorganisation, inferential comprehension, evaluation, and appreciation” and Nila Banton Smith (1969) as seeing reading comprehension as “… a four-level structure that is comprised of literal, interpretive, critical and creative comprehension.” Teachers with a knowledge of the different comprehension taxonomies will be able to prepare different kinds of questions to cover the different levels of comprehension skills. This can stimulate students to interact more actively
with the text and draw on their schemata knowledge to help them answer the questions.

Due to the fact that readers do not just decode print but must also infer in order to comprehend the written message, teaching of reading comprehension has gone through a great change. Durkin (1983 : 290) quotes Johnston's view where he states that

"...reading comprehension is (now) viewed as the process of using one's own prior knowledge and the writer’s cues to infer the author’s meaning. This involves a considerable amount of inferencing at all levels as one builds a model of the meaning of the text."

It can be concluded that reading research has gone a long way and emphasis is now on the ability of readers to gather meaning from materials that they read or simply put to be able to comprehend what is written by the writer - to make reading a really meaningful activity. A reader is said to have absolutely comprehended whatever he has read when he is left in no doubt as to the implication of the message conveyed by the writer. According to Smith (1982 : 85), "comprehension is not a quantity, it is a state – a state of not having any unanswered questions". Thus a person who is uncertain about any particular part of the text would have been regarded as not having comprehended totally in Smith's view. Nonetheless when a student answers correctly a given question it "does not assure that the student understand the material being taught". (Phillips, 1994 : 50).

Based on the above views with regards to comprehension, it can be seen that the teaching of reading would be better accomplished if the learners are able to locate answers to explicit questions as well as being taught to think about issues that have been raised through implicit questions and to be able to express opinions about them.
A major portion of literal comprehension questions require learners to locate answers to basic literal level comprehension where the responses are usually "...circumscribed: it involves the more-or-less accurate answering of a random set of questions" (Whitaker, 1983: 330). This way of teaching reading "...is commonly endured, sometimes with despair, sometimes with resignation, sometimes with appreciation of the security it offers" (Ibid, 1983: 330). Whitaker (1982: 332) goes on to quote Lukmani (1982: 224) who condemns "the traditional type of comprehension question" as being uncritical because it "...cuts short all speculation and enquiring reading" where the expected answers are normally found directly from the text. There is no doubt that teachers have to move beyond concentrating on just literal questioning levels in order to avoid receiving factual or "...literal responses with little or no creative thinking...." on the part of the learners (Hammes, 1996: 83). All they need to do is to regurgitate whatever is taught to them without stopping to question their logic or validity. In addition to this, asking literal questions alone could convey a distorted representation to the learners that not only that is exactly what good readers do, but also the fact that the reading process consists singularly of answering literal comprehension questions (Durkins, 1983: 292). If teachers could begin to ask more questions of the higher level, then reading comprehension might be better fostered by students (Cooper, 1986: 9). Styles and Cavanagh (1980: 25) too had earlier claimed that "... the type of thinking the student is motivated to use is triggered by the kind of questions asked". Thus, if only the literal comprehension questions are asked, then only factual thinking is required which is inadequate to prepare learners for higher levels of education.
Thus, the reading lessons need to bring learners to higher levels of the comprehension taxonomy. Learners who are exposed to these levels in the Barrett’s taxonomy will not be passive recipients of any given information nor would they be too gullible and easily misled by the persuasion power of the written word. Sacco (1987: 57) confirms this when he says that

“critical thinkers are not swayed by clever communicators who appeal to one’s emotions or sense of patriotism nor are they influenced by messages without adequate supporting evidence or by arguments loaded with faulty reasoning.”

Friedman and Rowls (1980: 155) consider comprehension as “...a production of thinking” and “thinking enables readers to comprehend what they are reading”. Thus these two skills are necessary complements in the reading lesson. Without the use of thinking skills, reading comprehension cannot be achieved because the ability of merely getting the correct answers to given factual questions alone cannot be perceived as reading comprehension. Recent research regarding reading comprehension has included cognitive monitoring strategies, mostly in the form of think-aloud protocols, besides the already established methods of answering basically multiple-choice or open-ended questions of given texts. Although other methods of gauging comprehension are being established, such as the use of cognitive monitoring strategies, answering open-ended questions can still be useful in providing insights into learners’ critical reading ability from their responses to the questions. This is confirmed by Charnock (1977: 271) who still finds “...the written questions/answers approach superior” to multiple choice questions especially those with clear answer choices. In his study, Govindasamy (1998: 54), too, found that the frequent use of higher level questions have actually help students to perform better in their studies.
Thus, it is appropriate to say that open-ended questions are useful to elicit responses from students because they are less restrictive. This means that students can give logically relevant and creative answers to questions without the restrictiveness of any given choice of answers where the answers and distractors are thought out by the person who is setting the questions. Students in reading lessons may, consequently, be able to explore and discuss other than the expected answers to a given open-ended question without the restriction of giving only one correct answer. Besides, the students have less chance of guessing at the answers in comparison with multiple-choice questions although proficient learners normally do not resort to guessing and also that this type of questions may not be effective enough for developing higher level reading comprehension skills. However, due to the amount of time needed for analysis, the number of questions must be restricted. Needless to say, open-ended kind of questions can be a basis for encouraging original thinking.

Applegate, Quinn and Applegate (2002:178) conducted a study regarding the type of questions that are largely used in comprehension lessons and discovered that “nearly two thirds of the items..” were of the literal level which merely required readers to recall information explicitly found in the texts. One of the implications drawn from the study was that open-ended questions are better to help students to develop higher level thinking and response skills.
2.3 Critical reading and critical thinking

Critical reading is important because it is the basis for critical as well as creative thinking. A learner who can read critically will be able to analyse the information that he has acquired. Based on what he might have already known, and his own previous experiences and knowledge, he will have enough input to help him to deliberate critically in his mind the validity of the information. On top of that, it will also cause him to think critically as a follow-up to what he had just learnt.

In our daily living, each person may be bombarded with problems to solve and decisions to be made which may require the use of the critical thinking skill. Ennis (1987) in (Commeyras, 1989 : 7) defines critical thinking as an ability to reflect logically with the intention of believing or doing something. Critical reading is then a pathway on the roadway to developing critical thinking and it has been defined by Robbins (1996 :208) as “...judging the truthfulness, significance, or worth of written material on the basis of criteria developed through experience.” The proposition regarding the teaching of such skills has been raised sometime ago but according to Robbins (1996 :208) “...interest, research, and actual teaching have not kept pace with each other.” She continues to say that “... interest and need are very high at present, but research and teaching are still dragging far behind.” This could also sum up the scenario of the teaching of such skills in Malaysia today.

The ability of learners to grasp the higher order skills in comprehension will invariably lead to the acquisition of critical reading skills. Ennis (1985 : 47) believes “...that
critical thinking incorporates a good deal of the directly practical side of higher-order thinking” which corresponds to some aspects of the reading comprehension skills. A critical reader is a thinking reader. He will be able to pour all his experiences and background knowledge into his reading and thus he would also be able to sometimes come up with his own valued judgement. Critical thinking would then be a natural extension to this ability. The learner who has acquired this ability would “…be able to evaluate the effect the author wishes to produce and the reason…” the author chooses to do so (Ferguson, 1973 : 29 – 31). Thus he would be able to judge based on his experience and knowledge the validity of the information he has received in his reading.

However, students have to be guided towards critical reading by being exposed to questions that demand more than just recalling information or facts from texts. Raphael’s (1984) research as mentioned by Erickson, Hubler, et al (1987 : 432) indicated that students give better quality answers to the questions that go beyond recalling of information from the texts. They also refer to Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) work whereby questions are classified as being text explicit when the answer given is extracted directly from the text, text implicit when the students have to search for and weave information from various parts of the text to answer the question and script implicit if the answer is arrived at based on information given from sources within the text and the reader’s background knowledge. These categories of questions-answer relationships were referred to by different terms by Raphael (1984) in his research. Questions that were considered as text explicit by Pearson and Johnson (1978) were categorised as “right there on the page” while text implicit questions were named as
“think and search” and script implicit questions as “on my own”. Thus, answers to the different levels of comprehension questions can also be categorised with the terms used by Pearson and Johnson (1978) or Raphael (1984).

Consequently, answers to questions of the different comprehension levels based on these categories would provide the teachers with an indication of their students’ critical reading ability. Learners who have developed critical reading skills would be able to see things more reasonably as well as logically and would not be easily influenced by whatever they hear or read. Each piece of information that they receive would be thoroughly scrutinised from every perspective before they made any value judgement and as Sacco (1987: 57) says “the ability to think critically is one of the most crucial surviving skills in today’s world” and many learners have yet to grasp the importance of possessing such skills.

The problem that many learners are not reading critically enough is an issue among many educators not only in Malaysia but also in America. This is confirmed in a report on the status of American education where it is reported that “…(m)any 17-year-olds do not possess the higher order intellectual skills we should expect of them…”(Sacco, 1987: 57). It is discovered that many American children are not able to perform well when assessment is given on critical reading while students seem to perform well in normal reading assessment. Students see reading as boring and are often unable to make connections between what they know and what they read (Applegate, Quinn and Applegate, 2002: 174).
Truly in today’s world, learners are inundated with a surge of information that can cause an uncritical learner to be ‘lost’ in the sheer magnitude of this information that is circling the globe. There is also no doubt that “much of the information that we receive about the world is filtered through the perceptions of others” (Cioffi, 1992 : 48) who may have vested interest or ulterior motives in doing so. Thus learners need to be equipped with this skill so as to act responsibly because “…critical thinking is skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment…” (Lipman, 1988 : 39).

Nonetheless, it must not be forgotten that proficiency at the literal level is also necessary in order to facilitate learners’ ability to read critically since it is the very foundation of reading comprehension both in the understanding of narrative and expository texts.

2.4 Text types: Narrative and expository texts

As narrative and expository texts are used for this study, it is relevant to discuss about these types of texts here. According to Gillespie (1982 : 29) “narration is story telling,…” and “…is frequently combined with persuasion to make arguments more compelling…” while exposition is seen by Arena (1975 : 95) as “…that type of discourse whose final purpose is to explain, to state, or to support a subject, idea, event, or some factual information”. Longacre (1976) in Kent (1984) sees narratives as being people oriented while expository texts are not too concerned with people but more with facts and if there are mentions of people, they do not hold centrestage in such types of writing. Heffernan (1984 : 197) says “…expository writing is explanatory writing”
where facts and ideas are presented directly.

Chronology is an essential consideration in a narrative text while logical connectors form the basis of the expository text. Both narrative and expository texts need "knowledge of text organisation..." in order to enable "...highly efficient top-down text processing in the meaning-construction process" to take place although sometimes a misreading of the text can happen due to the "...organisation schemata..." (Ruddell, 1994). Both these kinds of texts contain differences as is seen in the table below which is reproduced from an article by Kent (1984) who adapted Longacre's (1976) work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Expository</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>First or third person</td>
<td>No necessary person reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Agent (actor)</td>
<td>Subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Accomplished in a time frame</td>
<td>No temporal focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage</td>
<td>Chronological links</td>
<td>Logical links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some differences between narrative and expository discourses

Thus, they are rich in providing learners with opportunities to facilitate critical thinking. The structure of the narrative texts such as the story grammar can give rise to a wide scope for learners to discover 'loopholes' in the information given and thus the learners could find that they may have to revise their opinions at the end of the story or form new ones. In fact in many instances, learners may have to make endless amount of inferences before they could gather a complete picture of what is actually narrated or what the writer singularly wants to say or imply.
Expository texts too provide learners with a good amount of instances to develop critical reading. However, learners need to have sufficient information or knowledge of certain issues before they can begin to question the materials they are presented with. Learners with a knowledge of the world would be better able to judge whether the information presented to them is acceptable and logical or is it being twisted to mean what the writer or speaker intended for it to mean.

2.5 Barrett’s Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension Skills.

The comprehension questions used for this study include questions on literal, reorganising, analysing, synthesizing, evaluating and appreciating levels from Barrett’s Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension Skills. A taxonomy of cognitive difficulty of questions listed in Barrett’s Taxonomy found in Tollefson (1989 : 7 – 8) is reproduced below:

1.0 *Literal comprehension:* Requires the student to focus on ideas and information explicitly stated in the text.

1.1 Recognition: Requires the students to locate or identify information explicitly stated in the text.

1.11 Recognition of details.

1.12 Recognition of main ideas

1.13 Recognition of a sequence

1.14 Recognition of comparisons

1.15 Recognition of cause-effect relationships

1.16 Recognition of character traits
1.2 Recall: Requires the student to recall from memory information explicitly stated in the text.

1.21 Recall of details.

1.22 Recall of main ideas.

1.23 Recall of a sequence

1.24 Recall of comparisons

1.25 Recall of cause-effect relationships

1.26 Recall of character traits

1.27 Recall of author’s organization

2.0 Reorganization: Requires the student to analyze, synthesize, or organise information; involves both quotation and summary and paraphrase.

2.1 Classifying

2.2 Outlining

2.3 Summarizing

2.4 Synthesizing

3.0 Inferential comprehension: Requires the student to use information explicitly stated in the text along with personal experience and knowledge in order to conjecture and to form hypotheses.

3.1 Inferring supporting details: Requires the student to conjecture about information that might have been included in the text.

3.2 Inferring the main idea.

3.3 Inferring sequence: Requires the student to conjecture about what might have occurred in addition to explicitly stated
events; includes conjecture about extending events beyond the completion of the text.

3.4 Inferring comparisons.

3.5 Inferring cause-and-effect relationships

3.6 Inferring character traits

3.7 Inferring author’s organization

3.8 Predicting outcomes: Requires the student to conjecture about the outcome of the text after considering a portion of it.

3.9 Interpreting figurative language.

4.0 **Evaluation:** Requires the student to compare information and ideas in a text with material presented by the instructor or other authorities and with the student’s own knowledge and experience in order to form judgments of various kinds.

4.1 Judgments of reality and fantasy: Require the student to answer the question “Could these events really happen?”

4.2 Judgments of fact or opinion: Require the student to evaluate the author’s or speaker’s ability to provide support for conclusions and the author’s or speaker’s intent (to persuade, inform, etc.).

4.3 Judgments of adequacy and validity: Require the student to compare the text to related materials in order to express agreement or disagreement.

4.4 Judgments of appropriateness: Require the student to determine which part of the text is most important (e.g., in defining
characters, in determining outcomes, etc.).

4.5 Judgments of worth, desirability, and acceptability:

4.6 Require the student to make judgments based on value systems, moral codes, personal experience, etc.

5.0 Appreciation: Requires the student to articulate emotional and aesthetic responses to the text according to personal standards and to the text according to personal and professional standards of literary forms, styles, genres, theories, critical approaches, etc.

5.1 Emotional response to the text: Requires the student to articulate feelings of interest, boredom, excitement, etc.

5.2 Identification with characters or incidents.

5.3 Reactions to the author’s or speaker’s connotative and denotative use of language

5.4 Reactions to imagery

As this study actually deals with how learners with different examination scores answer open-ended questions dealing with higher-order comprehension questions based on narrative and expository texts, a review of research regarding reading comprehension is regarded as appropriate

2.6 Related studies on reading comprehension

Interest in the area of teaching reading has gone beyond the mere recognition and correct pronunciation or even answering simple literal level comprehension questions.
Another area of interest in teaching reading comprehension is reader constructed questions that move from the traditional answering of teacher or text constructed questions to reader constructed questions. Rosenshine, Meister and Chapman (1996 : 195) found that when students are taught to construct their own questions they stand to gain in their understanding of the texts read. Lynch (1991 : 209) quoted Pica, Young, and Doughty’s (1987 : 754) findings when he said that everyone involved in the teaching and learning process should ask questions so as to enable information to be easily understood.

Robinson (1972 : 243 – 244) quoted Rogers’ (1960) study of 30 high-school students’ ability to read critically that compared how students respond to questions based on texts from three issues of the USSR magazine. She used a descriptive rating scale to enable her to ascertain her subjects’ critical responses. Three conclusions drawn from this study include the fact that the subjects were more prone to remember facts rather than use evaluative thinking skills in answering the questions, the students also showed a tendency to accept information from the text without question especially when the fact was not questioned and students attempt to be evaluative only when questions that were asked required them to do so.

Guszak’s (1967) study which was reported by Smith and Barrett (1974: 51 – 52) was about the kind of oral reading comprehension teachers were conducting. In this study he discovered through his observations and tape recordings over a three-day period of reading groups, that most of the teachers’ questions were of the literal recognition or recall variety. He transcribed the recordings into written protocols and the teachers’
questions were evaluated and labeled according to a Reading Comprehension Question Response Inventory which contained six classifications. Evaluation questions were the next most frequently asked but the results were discouraging because they only required ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ responses. He was of the opinion that this kind of questions were less asked because the teachers did not know how to teach them without the guidance of a framework regarding reading comprehension to work from.

Gardner and Smith (1987) carried out a study on twenty “good readers” and twenty “poor readers” of different races in an urban high school in Salt Lake City, Utah. They were given a Selman’s interpersonal understanding technique to evaluate their perspective taking ability. Besides this, they were given four short stories to read together with fifteen questions to answer for each story. The comprehension questions were of three kinds including text implicit or factual/literal questions, text explicit or organisational questions and script implicit or inferential questions. The number of correct answers to the different types of questions to all the four stories was taken as a measure of students reading comprehension while the total number of correct answers for all four stories was taken as the total comprehension score. These measures were then related to students’ perspective taking levels which was measured using a t test to compare the results of good readers and poor readers.

The results demonstrated that perspective taking ability, was related to reading comprehension as measured by the students’ answers to given questions. It was, however, found that perspective taking ability did not play a significant part as determiner in answers to text implicit and text explicit questions but there was a
significant correlation between students perspective taking ability and inferential questions. This was due to the fact that this type of questions required students to go beyond the text and perspective taking was essential to the understanding of the text. The implications of this study is that English Language teachers need to provide students with the opportunities to take the perspective of others as an effort to develop their inferential abilities.

In another study, Goh (1991: 31 - 40) replicated Hillocks and Ludlow’s (1984) research on Singapore school students to find out if the students were able to go beyond the literal comprehension level and their use of higher order skills in understanding literary texts. The study was administered to between seventy-seven to one hundred and twenty-seven students from grades seven to twelve.

The study was piloted before being fully carried out. Three short stories were selected for the study where seven open-ended questions were asked of each text. The qualitative analysis done showed that many of the partial responses seemed to depend more on students’ prior knowledge than on textual information. The results also show that lower secondary students needed more help with inferential type of questions. While the teachers were aware of this problem, they are not certain of how to teach inferential comprehension skills. Although many of them thought that their students were struggling with basic reading comprehension problems due to low language proficiency, the results showed that the opposite held true as most of the students could answer literal questions quite successfully.
According to the study, many students were unable even to answer the lower order inferential questions. Only 51.5% of them answered the questions correctly which demonstrates that they were incapable of making the transition from responding to literal questions to inferential ones.

In another study by Pikkert and Foster (1996: 56 – 64) on thirty-one third year students of an Indonesian university to determine their critical thinking skills, the researchers raised two hypotheses:

1) There is no difference in the perception of American and Indonesian students of comparable educational levels with regards to critical thinking.

2) Mother tongue does not make a difference in critical thinking ability.

The subjects were selected based on their English proficiency level and their understanding of the Cornell Critical Thinking Test questions. The Cornell Critical Thinking Test consists of 52 questions which measure skills of deduction, semantics, credibility, judging conclusions, planning experiments and identification of definition and assumption.

Findings from the data pointed to the fact that race, language spoken at home, parents’ education background and the types of school they went to did not feature greatly in the students’ critical thinking ability. The results indicated that the subjects scored more than 50% in deductive reasoning and the ability to judge conclusions. Other skills showed a lower score with the lowest being semantics with 31.8% and identifying assumptions and definitions with 48% which was the third highest after deduction and judging conclusions.
The conclusions drawn from this study disproved Hypothesis 1 as the critical thinking of these students was much lower than that of the secondary students from America. Hypothesis 2 where mother tongue was thought to make no difference in critical thinking ability was not conclusive due to linguistic overlaps of the only two languages, Javanese and Indonesian, being compared.

Meanwhile at the local front, Rajendran (2001: 42 – 65) conducted a study on the teaching of higher-order reading skills in Malaysia. He carried out an investigation into the Malay and English Language teachers’ knowledge, teaching skills and attitude towards the teaching of Malay or English and higher-order reading skills. He discovered from 104 teachers representing a large percentage of Form Two teachers of these two languages in one of the school districts in Malaysia that they were better prepared to teach the two languages that they were qualified to teach higher-order skills as part of their language lessons. These teachers also indicated that they rather prepare students to memorise facts for examinations than teach them thinking skills. They also felt insufficiently prepared nor have adequate pedagogical content knowledge to teach higher-order thinking skills in the class.

2.7 Conclusion

It can be seen that in order for learners to be able to read critically, teachers need to pay more attention to the asking of higher order comprehension questions so as to lay the basic foundation for learners to read as well as to think critically. Although literal questions play an essential role in thinking, the development of critical readers and
thinkers cannot merely depend on answering questions of this nature alone. On the other hand, higher level order comprehension questions as well as non-text dependent literal questions can help students to develop critical and creative thinking skills which may be of assistance to them in making decisions as well as solving problems that they may encounter later in their life.

Thus teaching higher-order reading skills can be seen as necessary in order to enable students to be better prepared to find answers to questions beyond depending on explicit information found in the texts read regardless of narrative or expository texts.