CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of a summary of the findings and conclusions that can be drawn from this research regarding the learners' critical reading abilities as well as recommendations that could be made including implications for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this study, the critical reading ability of the Form Five Science students were investigated from their answers to the given reading comprehension questions which were set based on the Barretts Reading Taxonomy of reading comprehension. These answers were analysed according to four basic categories: text explicit, text implicit, text script implicit and irrelevant or incomplete answers. The analysis included an examination of whether the students' PMR English Language examination scores had any relation in giving different categories of answers to the questions asked.

The findings indicated that:

1) all the different scoring groups had little difficulty extracting information directly from given texts. In fact the highest percentage of answers to literal comprehension questions were of the text explicit category. The number of students whose answers
indicated the use of inferencing or speculative skills was very low, mainly appearing in expository texts.

2) in inferential comprehension questions, it was discovered that the different groups did give answers which include text explicit, textually implicit as well as text script implicit types. Nonetheless, the data did not specifically show that only the A scorers were able to give text implicit and text script implicit kinds of answers. In fact, in some instances, C scorers performed better in giving text script implicit kind of answers as can be seen in Question 3 of Expository 2 with 91% of them doing so in comparison to only 81.8% of the A scorers.

Thus, the finding for this type of comprehension question indicates that students from other scoring groups were also able to give text implicit and text script implicit types of answers.

3) as for the appreciative level comprehension questions, however, A scorers used more text script implicit type of answers compared to the B and C scorers. The C scorers seemed to be the least able to give text script implicit type of answers. Here, the examination scores of the students seemed to indicate that proficient students are better able to give text script implicit kind of answers in comparison to the other groups.

4) as in appreciative level kind of comprehension questions, A scorers on the whole give more text script implicit type of answers in the evaluative level kind of
questions over the other two groups. This could again indicate that students with better English Language examination scores seemed to use more of some thinking skills in answering questions than those with weaker scores.

5.2 CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the discussion of the data that generally for literal level comprehension questions the students did not find much difficulty in answering them since basically the answers are drawn from the explicit information found in the texts given. However there are some irrelevant or incomplete answers given which may be due to students' carelessness in interpreting the requirements of the questions or poor command of the English Language which may have caused them to misunderstand the questions. Nonetheless it cannot be denied that some of the students also gave text implicit or text script implicit answers. However, the general picture of usage is not very conclusive, in the sense that it is not always necessary that proficient students have a better ability to give this kind of answers compared to the other two groups of students.

Inferential comprehension questions also elicited similar conclusions where it is quite difficult to say that proficient scorers give more text script kind of answers as compared to the other two groups. Sometimes the most proficient group which is the A scoring group and the least proficient group which is the C scoring group have similarly high percentages as can be seen in Question 3 of Narrative 1. The A scorers had 72.7% followed by the C scorers with 63.6% while the average scoring B group has lower
percentage of 35.7%. Another example could be seen in Question 5 of Expository 1. Here the A scorers had 100% with text script implicit answers followed by 72.7% of the C scorers doing so but only 42.9% of the B scorers had this type of answers. Thus, this again shows that not only proficient students are able to use their schemata knowledge and their critical reading abilities to infer for ideas from the texts to help them arrive at the answers.

Nevertheless the analysis of data regarding appreciative and evaluative level of comprehension questions indicates that more often it is the more proficient A scorers provide more text script type of answers than the B or C scorers. Furthermore most of the irrelevant or incomplete answers are found among the C scorers for these two levels of reading comprehension questions. It thus seems that students who are more proficient would be able to answer both literal and inference questions quite well in comparison to less proficient students who would perform better in explicit type of questions (McCormick, 1989: 219-239).

5.3 IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study show that most of the students regardless of their proficiency level seem to find it easy to locate answers from the text for the comprehension questions regardless of the comprehension question levels. Thus to disengage students from being overly dependent on locating answers by directly extracting information whether relevant or irrelevant from given texts, teachers should guide the students to discuss possible answers and then to refer to the texts to find out
whether the answers are logically acceptable or not.

Not only that, the students would be more confident in giving their own opinions and are not easily persuaded by surface arguments. They would thus be trained to be more alert and detect information that is false as well as to think for themselves.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings from the research, it is recommended that:

1) teachers be better equipped with appropriate training for the teaching of critical reading skills in comprehension lessons.

2) reading comprehension questions should include questions relating to students’ personal experience and the world at large (Supramani: 1998) where she quoted Fielding and Pearson (1994) who stressed that “comprehension inherently involves inferential and evaluative thinking”.

3) students be trained to interact with the text given by framing their own questions regarding any debatable issues or even about information given in the text itself. By practising on the skill of questioning, students can relate to the texts more confidently.

4) students be taught to do comparative reading (Smith and Barrett, 1974:73 – 74) where they are exposed to different kinds of reading materials rather than being dependent on just one textbook for reading comprehension.

5) students be asked more higher level questions during reading in order to stimulate them to think about the text or issue read about. They have to be trained to raise
questions when they encounter things or issues that are not the accepted norm in their immediate environment. When students offer conclusions and opinions, teachers should offer help by invoking the use of hypothetical phrases.

6) students carry out group work whereby answers to higher level comprehension questions are discussed in the group and where necessary contextual proof or other kinds of proof are given to substantiate the reason or reasons given. By doing so, students can learn to be more confident and skilful in attempting higher level comprehension questions even if it involves unusual ideas or perspectives.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings could be used as a basis for further research probably by providing more varieties of text types and having more questions being attached to each text especially questions of the higher level order kinds such as analysing, synthesizing, evaluating, appreciating and inferring. Both implicit and explicit types of questions should be included and a wider coverage of students inclusive of highly proficient, average as well as the below average students.

It could also be a longitudinal research which, because of the availability of time, takes into consideration other factors that may or may not affect their ability to employ higher order skills to deal with problems that they may encounter later in their life.

Through this study, it is hoped that teachers and others with an interest in education in general and second language learning in Malaysia in particular may consider the idea of
asking more questions of the higher levels of reading comprehension skills to help stimulate students’ critical reading abilities.