CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings from the data collected. The findings are presented under two sections. The first section deals with the data collected through the trainees' questionnaires and the second section deals with the information collected from the lecturers using the structured interview.

4.2 DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

4.2.1 The socio-economic status based on the parents' salary, education, occupation and types of schools attended by trainees as contributing factors to reading problems

A number of studies have shown that the socio-economic status (SES) of learners does have some influence over learning. In a study done by Lee (1994) it was suggested that there was a lot of evidence to show that socio-economic status has a considerable effect on academic achievement. This view is supported by others like Rubin (1993:31) who had stated that factors like socioeconomic status and parents' education shape the children's home environment. As such, some data was collected in this study to look into the general position of the SES of the respondents and their parent's educational background. The data was obtained from section 1 (questions 3, 6 and 7) of the questionnaire.

4.2.1.1 Parents' salary

Table 1 below provides information regarding the salary of the trainees' parents.

Table 1: Salary of parents of the English option trainees in semester 2

Salary of parents (RM)	No. of trainees	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
< 400	4	8.5%	8.5%
401 - 800	17	36.2%	44.7%
801 - 1200	10	21.3%	66.0%
1201 - 1500	5	10.6%	76.6%
> 1500	11	23.4%	100%
Total	47	100%	
(Total N = 47)			

This salary range was adapted from a study by Rajeswary (1984). From the analysis of the data collected as shown in Table 1, it was observed that 44.7% (N=21) of the trainees came from families whose income was RM 800 and below and 21.3% (N=10) from families whose income was between RM801 and RM1200. Only 23.4% (N=11) of them came from families earning more than RM1500.

4.2.1.2 Parents' education level

Data was also collected on the academic background of the trainees' parents. Table 2 below provides information on this.

Table 2: Parents' education level

Parents' education level	Mother		Father	
	No. of trainees	%	No. of trainees	%
1. Nil	1	2.1%	-	-
2. Primary	19	40.9%	8	17%
3. Secondary (1-3)	10	21.3%	14	29.8%
4. Secondary (4 -5)	11	23.4%	12	25.5%
5. College	6	12.8%	11	23.4%
6. University	-	-	2	4.3%
(N = 47)				

It can be seen in Table 2, that most of the trainees' parents also did not have high academic qualification. 63.8% (N=30) of the trainees' mothers were found to have lower secondary education and below. Out of this, 40.9% (N=19) of the trainees' mothers only had primary school education. It was noted that only 4.3% (N=2) of their fathers were graduates and only 23.4% (N=11) of the trainees came from families where the fathers had attained college education. 29.8% (N=14) of the fathers had lower secondary education, that is, up to form three only. About 25.5% (N=12) of the fathers had studied until form five and this shows that a total of 55.3% (N=26) of the fathers attained only secondary school education.

4.2.1.3 Parents' occupation

Information was also collected regarding the occupation of the trainees' parents and this is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Parents' occupation

Occupational class	Occupation	Mother		Father	
		No.	%	No.	%
Skilled / semi-skilled manual (low SES)	Housewife	35	74.5%		
	Typist	3	6.4%		
	Farmer			12	25.5%
	Driver			2	4.3%
	Labourer			5	10.6%
Supervisory, lower professional, technical, clerical, sales (average SES)	Clerk	5	10.6%	9	19.1%
	Nurse	1	2.1%		
	Supervisor			3	6.4%
	Policeman			2	4.3%
	Non-graduate Teacher	3	6.4%	8	17.0%
Professional, semi-professional, managerial, high executive (high SES)	Businessman			4	8.5%
	Customs Officer			1	2.1%
	Government Officer			1	2.1%
TOTAL		47	100%	47	100%

The SES grouping in the table above had been done according to the occupational class. This categorization was based on a study done by Rajeswary (1984) in which she had referred to three occupational classes. These occupational classes were suggested by Singh (1973) and they were;

- professional, semi-professional, managerial and high executive jobs which comprise the high socio-economic group,

- supervisory, lower professional, technical, clerical and sales jobs which comprise the average socio-economic group,

- skilled, semi-skilled and manual jobs which comprise the low socio-economic group.

From Table 3 it is found that a majority of the mothers, that is, 74.5% (N=35) were housewives and 6.4% (N=3) were typists. Therefore, 80.9% (N=38) of the mothers belonged to the low SES group and 19.1% (N=9) of the mothers belonged to the average SES group. 40.4% (N=19) of the fathers were farmers, drivers and labourers, that is, they belonged to the low SES group. 46.8% (N=22) of the fathers belonged to the average SES group and 12.7% (N=6) belonged to the high SES group.

On the whole, the data gathered from Tables 1, 2 and 3 indicated that most of the trainees were from families with average to low income, that is, an income of below RM1500. The general education level of the parents ranged from the primary to secondary level only. Campbell et al. (1991) in Renchler (1993) had also stressed that low SES parents had a negative influence over their children's achievement levels in reading. In addition, in a study carried out by Lee (1994), it was said that low SES may have led to an environment which was not conducive to motivate learning. Eggen and Kauchak (1994) believed that SES influences the background experiences that children bring to school. It is possible that low SES and a lack in background knowledge may have contributed to the problems in reading based on the view that 'relevant background knowledge of the reader has been considered necessary to interpret or interact with a text' (Bransford J.D et al. 1992). Similarly, in the present study, the trainees from low SES may be limited in the background knowledge necessary to enable them to handle the English course. In addition, Rubin (1993) had emphasised that parents of high SES tend to provide their children with books, the necessary encouragement and also read to

them . It was added that this would promote both literacy development and a positive value for reading.

4.2.1.4 Types of schools and size of classrooms

The table below summarized the information regarding the types of schools attended by the trainees and the size of the classrooms. The discussion of this information could help to determine whether these factors contribute to reading problems.

Table 4: Types of schools and size of classrooms

School	Classroom size			School Type		
	Small (10-20 pupils)	Medium (21-30 pupils)	Large (>31 pupils)	Rural	Urban	Residential
Primary School	2 4.3%	20 42.6%	25 53.2%	22 46.8%	24 51.1%	1 2.1%
Secondary School	-	21 44.7%	26 55.3%	11 23.4%	20 42.4%	16 34%

The data in Table 4 above shows that 46.8% (N=22) of the trainees attended rural schools while 51.1% (N=24) attended urban schools during their primary education. Only 2.1% (N=1) attended residential school. During their secondary education, about 42.6% (N=20) of the trainees attended urban schools. About 23.4% (N=11) of the trainees had their secondary school education in residential schools. According to Asmah Hj. Omar (1983:239), the level of English proficiency of learners "does not only vary according to the choice of an English or Malay-medium type of education but also according to urban and rural type school". She noted that the English proficiency in Malay-medium urban schools is generally higher than the Malay-medium rural schools. This had been

confirmed by the UMESPP research project carried out at University Malaya in 1975 (Chitravelu.1975). Other studies such as those done by Kamalanathan (1999) and Elley (1992) had noted that rural schools may not be well equipped with facilities like resource centres. Well equipped resource centres mean availability of more reading materials. Rubin (1993:307) regarded the library, if properly utilized, as the students' storehouse of information and 'a reservoir of endless delight' for them. Elley (1992:293) had given importance to the size of the school library in a study done on L2 reading difficulties in Fiji. It was stated that schools with large libraries (having more than 400 books) produced consistently higher mean reading scores than those with smaller libraries or those with no libraries at all. This Fijian study also concluded that many rural students suffered from lack of good models in the classroom and the community. The trainees in the present study, too, may have faced a similar situation, especially in the unavailability of good teachers as models in the rural community.

More than half of the trainees, that is, 53.2% (N=25) attended large primary classes. These classes were made up of more than 31 pupils. About 42.6% (N=20) of these trainees attended medium sized (between 21-30 pupils) classrooms. Thus, 95.8% (N=45) of the trainees attended primary schools where the classroom had more than 21 pupils. During their secondary school education, 55.3% (N=26) of them were in large classrooms and 44.7% (N=21) attended medium sized classes. Chitravelu et al. (1995:294) estimated that a teacher would only have one to two minutes for each student in a classroom of 40 in a 40-minute lesson and thus, the students too may not have enough opportunity for active

participation. As such, in the present study, large classrooms may have made it difficult for the teachers of most of the trainees to pay attention to their difficulties in reading and English in general.

Furthermore, large classrooms, according to Chitravelu et al. (1995), may tend to contribute towards a high noise level and difficulty in managing the movement of students during student-centred activities. It was also stressed that creation of a motivating learning environment with reading corners, class libraries and group areas may be hampered. As such, large classroom situations while schooling may have had an effect on the learning and reading success of the trainees under study. Another problem in large classrooms, they added, would be the lack of physical space. It was also emphasised that these limitations would lead to inability on the part of the teacher in 'managing the teaching-learning experience'.

4.2.2 Academic background of trainees and its relationship to reading problems

Data was collected on the academic background of the trainees and this information is shown in Tables 5 and 6. Table 5 provides data on the academic achievement of the trainees under study and Table 6 provides data on the trainees' SPM English results. The data collected was from section 1 (questions 4 and 5) of the questionnaire.

4.2.2.1 Academic achievement of the trainees

Table 5 below shows data regarding the SPM and STPM achievement of the trainees under study.

Table 5: Academic achievement of the semester 2 English option trainees

Academic qualification	No. of trainees	Percentages
SPM - Arts Stream	30	63.8%
- Science Stream	16	34%
- Vocational	1	2.1%
Total	47	100%
STPM - Arts Stream	8	17%
- Science Stream	0	0%
- Nil.	39	83%
Total	47	100%

Looking into the academic background of the trainees, based on Table 5, 63.8% (N=30) of them studied in the arts stream at the SPM level and 34% (N=16) of them were in the science stream. Only 17% (N=8) of these trainees managed to obtain passes in their STPM. About 83% (N=39) of them did not have the STPM qualification. All 17% (N=8) of those who had their STPM qualification were in the arts stream. Their results in the SPM examination did not qualify them to continue in the science stream at the STPM level.

4.2.2.2 Trainees' SPM English results

Information was collected on the SPM results of the trainees and this is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Trainees' SPM English results

Results	No. of Trainees	Percentage
A1	2	4.3%
A2	7	14.9%
C3	14	29.8%
C4	11	23.4%
C5	13	27.7%
TOTAL	47	100%

Referring to data in table 6, it can be seen that at the SPM level, most of the trainees obtained a credit for their English. It was noted that 29.8% (N=14) of them obtained a credit 3, 23.4% obtained a credit 4 and 27.7% (N=13) of them obtained a credit 5. This makes a total of 80.9% (N=38) credit holders. Nine trainees, that is, 19.1% of them managed to obtain a distinction. Two of them obtained A1 and seven of them obtained A2. However, this does not reflect their reading comprehension performance in college. These results indicate that the respondents most probably have an average to good level of English proficiency as none of them failed their English at the SPM level. However, based on the researcher's observation and experience with the respondents, their English proficiency is not good. This can also be seen from the results of the prognostic test (Chapter 4.2.5.2) discussed later in this chapter. The SPM examination is a standardized examination. West (1960) expressed his concern at how teachers were judged by their success in passing students on to the higher stages of education. He regretted that exams were often measures of fitness for further study rather than measures of whether the learner knew anything of use at that time. More importantly, Chitravelu (1985) had held that the grades of the SPM English paper were not considered a reliable indicator of proficiency. In a study

by Fransson (1992), a student actually remarked that he obtained 100% on the questions in a reading comprehension test but did not understand the passage he had read. Therefore, it is possible that although the trainees had managed to score average grades for English, they in fact, do not have the required proficiency levels to handle the reading assignments in the English course and, as such, will not become good teachers of the English language.

4.2.3   Attitude of the trainees regarding English and their perception of their reading skill

The data collected concerning the attitude of the trainees regarding English, the English course and their perception of their reading skill have been analysed and presented in the tables below. The data was collected from section 1 (question 8), section 3 (questions 12, 14, 15 and 16) and section 4 (questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22) of the questionnaire.

4.2.3.1 Importance of English to trainees

Table 7 shows the importance the trainees had given to English through the various views mentioned. The data was collected from questions 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the questionnaire.

Table 7: Importance given to English by trainees

Variable	5 Strong- ly agree No. / %	4 Agree No. /%	3 Unsure No. / %	2 Disagree No. / %	1 Strongly disagree No. / %
Knowledge of English meant availability of more information	26 55.3%	19 40.4%	1 2.1%	1 2.1%	-
English will help develop my country	19 40.4%	26 55.3%	2 4.3%	-	-
English is of great importance today	34 72.3%	12 25.5%	1 2.1%	-	-
To be successful professionally I need English	30 63.8%	16 34%	1 2.1%	-	-
I feel I can survive without English	-	4 8.5%	9 19.1%	19 40.4%	15 31.9%
(N= 47)					

Looking at the importance given to English by the trainees, in Table 7, it can be said that, on the whole, they have a positive attitude towards the English language. Most of them, that is, 95.7% (N=45) agreed that knowledge of English meant availability of more information, 95.7% (N=45) agreed that English will help develop the country, 97.8% (N=46) agreed that English is of great importance today and 97.8% (N=46) agreed that to be successful they would need English. Only 8.5% (N=4) of them felt that they would survive without English. However, 72.3% (N=34) of them felt that they would need English to survive in the world today. This showed that these trainees did indeed perceive that English was an important language.

4.2.3.2 Trainees' attitude to the English language

Information was gathered regarding the trainees' perception of the English language and is presented in Table 8 below. The data collected was from questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the questionnaire.

Table 8: Trainees' perception of the English Language

	5 Strong-ly agree	4 Agree	3 Unsure	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
	No. / %	No. /%	No. /%	No. / %	No. / %
English is associated with the British colonization.	7 14.9%	12 25.5%	19 25.5%	9 19.1%	-
I've never liked studying English in school.	-	-	6 12.8%	14 29.8%	27 57.4%
There are too many difficult words in English.	3 6.4%	28 59.6%	4 8.5%	11 23.4%	1 2.1%
If I speak English my friend won't like me.	2 4.3%	6 12.8%	12 25.5%	18 38.5%	9 19.1%
People who speak English are snobbish/proud.	-	3 6.4%	5 10.6%	16 34%	23 48.9%
If I had a choice I won't learn English	-	-	5 10.6%	9 19.1%	33 70.2%

Table 8 provides data regarding their perception of the English language. It showed that 19.1% (N=9) of the trainees did not actually associate English with British colonization and 25.5% (N=19) were unsure. Most of the trainees, that is, 87.2% (N=41) of them indicated that they actually liked studying English in school. In addition, 82.9% (N=39) of the trainees did not feel that people who spoke English were snobbish and 57.6% (N=27) disagreed that their friends will

dislike them if they spoke English. About 89.3% (N=42) of them disagreed that if they had a chance they would not learn English.

All the above data seemed to imply that the trainees under study viewed the English language positively. Therefore, generally their attitude towards English may not be a contributing factor towards their reading problems in English. Richek, List and Lerner (1989) had highlighted the influence of cultural values on language learning. They found that, although the common view is that learning is enhanced if a second language is perceived positively in the students environment, this is not always the case. They stressed that a second language is often taught in school only and has little value in everyday life. This is indeed the situation for English in the Malaysian context presently.

On further analysis, 66% (N=31) of the trainees perceived that there were too many difficult words in the English language, while 25.5% (N=22) disagreed with this. Since many of them already perceive or have a preconceived idea that English has difficult words, this may affect their willingness or readiness to try to read an English text and understand it. Meeks (1987) who proposed a model of 'affective metacognition', stressed that affect and metacognition (students thinking aloud what they do and do not know) are so interwoven that they cannot be artificially separated. This model had four key elements which were, the child, the teacher, the task and the text. Regarding the text, one of the subelements was 'perception of difficulty'. He said that students 'cannot' perceive the text in a negative way, as being too difficult to comprehend. The text has to be 'user friendly', that is, readable and enjoyable or else, the readers will not achieve

success in comprehension. Sinatra (1986) had theorized that feelings, like language, are linked to the brain and that the brain systems which regulate feelings, emotion and attentiveness are tied to the very learning of information and, thus, perception of difficulty plays an important role in comprehension.

4.2.3.3 Trainees' perception of their reading skill as compared to actual achievement

The actual achievement of the trainees with regard to English proficiency was measured based on the reading comprehension results of the prognostic test and the Semester 1 and Semester 2 final exam English papers.

There was some data collected on the trainees' perception of their own reading skills in English. This data was collected from question 8 of the questionnaire. This data is presented in Table 9a below.

Table 9a: Trainees' perception of their reading skill

Description of reading skill	No. of Trainees	Percentage
Very good	-	-
Good	10	21.3%
Average	36	76.6%
Poor	1	2.1%
Very poor	-	-
TOTAL	47	100%

The data in Table 9a, showed that 76.6% (N=36) of the trainees felt that they had average reading skills and 21.3% (N=10) actually felt that they were good. Only one trainee, that is 2.1%, felt that his reading skill was poor. In the study by Lee (1994), it was suggested that the perceptions of the Malay-medium students regarding their competence may have been possibly based on their

performance in the SPM English paper. An interesting factor brought up by Brown (1994) is regarding 'inhibitions' under the affective domain. 'Inhibitions' refers to the acute consciousness of self-identity and the fear to expose too much self doubt. Self-identity , he said, is bound with language and ego development. Guiora et al. (1972 b) referred to this as 'language ego' which may account for the difficulties that adults have in learning a second language. The analysis of the reading section of the prognostic test results and the reading comprehension results of the Semester 1 and Semester 2 papers reflect that the trainees did not have good reading skills. This analysis is shown in the table 9b below and table 9c in the following page.

The information on the trainees' prognostic test reading comprehension results is presented in Table 9b.

Table 9b: Prognostic Test results - Reading Section

Marks	No. of trainees	Percentage	Grade
60 - 63	3	6.4%	C+
50 - 59	5	10.6%	C
40 - 49	12	25.5%	D
31 - 39	18	38.3%	D
< 30	9	19.2%	D
Total	47	100%	

On the whole, the trainees are weak in their reading comprehension. 83% (N=39) of the trainees failed their prognostic test in the reading section. They obtained less than 50 marks. Of these, 25.5% (N=12) obtained marks between 40 and 49, 38.3% (N=18) obtained between 31-39 marks and the rest obtained less than 30 marks. Only 17% (N=8) managed to pass this test. 10.6% (N=5) of the passes obtained were borderline passes between 50 to 59 marks; that is, grade C

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and only 6.4% (N=3) of them managed to obtain marks between 60 to 63, that is, grade C+. The highest mark obtained was 63. This data based on the prognostic test results indicate that their reading comprehension is generally poor.

The actual achievement of the trainees was also based on the Semester 1 and Semester 2 final exam English paper.The analysis of the trainees' English paper results during their semester 1 and semester 2 final examinations is shown in the table below.

Table 9c: Results of the Reading Comprehension Section in the 'English Major' final examination for semester 1 and 2

Marks	Semester One			Semester Two		
	No. of trainees	%	Cumulat- ive	No. of trainees	%	Cumulat- ive
10	1	2.1	2.1	2	4.3	4.3
20	-	-	2.1	12	25.6	29.9
30	2	4.3	6.4	9	19.1	49
40	8	17.1	23.4	9	19.1	68.1
50	9	19.1	42.5	9	19.1	87.2
60	15	31.9	74.4	6	12.8	100
70	9	19.1	93.5	-	-	-
80	2	4.3	97.8	-	-	-
90	1	2.1	100	-	-	-
100	-	-		-	-	-
Total	47		100	47		100

In semester one, 23.4% (N=11) of the trainees scored below the passing mark of 50 in the reading section of their final examination. About 51% (N=24) of them scored an average range of between 50 to 60 marks. The rest , that is, 25.5% (N=12) of the trainees scored between 70 to 90 marks. Only one trainee obtained 9 correct answers (90 marks) out of 10 and only two trainees scored 8 correct answers (80 marks).

In the second semester final examination, 68.1% (N=32) of the trainees scored below the passing mark of 50 in the reading section. Only 31.9% (N=15) of the trainees scored between 50 to 70 marks. No one scored above 70 marks.

This showed that the level of reading proficiency based on the reading comprehension results from the table above, was only average or below average for most of the English option trainees under study.

Based on the analysis of the prognostic test and the Semester 1 and Semester 2 English papers it is obvious that the trainees in the present study have low to average reading proficiency levels. The analysis of the trainees' perception of their reading skills showed that 97.9% of the trainees felt that they were between average and good. This does not give a true picture of the actual situation.

Thus, the trainees' false perception that they generally had good to average reading skills may be a factor that has indirectly contributed towards their reading problems. As the trainees felt that their reading skills were already good, they may not be taking the necessary steps to improve their reading skills or even see it as necessary to do so. Rosenholtz (1984) suggested that the perception of reading ability translate into judgements of the 'worth' of other students in relation to themselves. It was found that reading ability was a 'status characteristic' where readers of higher reading ability were thought as brighter than those with lower reading ability. Perceptions of reading ability are consistently found to be strong influences on student behaviour. Mcneil (1987) had said that learners had perceptions and feelings about themselves that affect their performance and that

the perceived inability to overcome failure is also self-defeating. The perception the readers have of themselves create or destroy a positive attitude towards reading. The view was that if readers regarded a reading assignment as within their reach, they will probably approach it positively and those who considered it as out of their grasp will probably approach it negatively.

4.2.4   Attitude towards the English Course and their confidence on being good English teachers as contributing factors to reading problems

Data was collected concerning the general attitude of the trainees towards the English course. This is presented in the tables below. This data was collected from section 5 (question 23) and section 6 (question 32) of the questionnaire.

4.2.4.1 Trainees' confidence on being good English teachers

The table below shows data gathered on the trainees' confidence on being good English teachers.

Table 10: Trainees' confidence on being good English Teachers

Confidence	No. of Trainees	Percentage
Yes,	33	70.2%
No, we have no confidence	14	29.8%
TOTAL	47	100%

The data from Table 10 above showed that 70.2% (N=33) of the trainees had the confidence that they would be good and effective English teachers. In addition, they cited that they would have this confidence after attending and completing the English course. However, the data collected from the open-ended

question number 32 of the questionnaire, indicated that more than half of them, that is, 51.1% (N=24) did feel that there was a lot of room for improvement. The data also showed that 19.1% (N=9) seemed to have the confidence that they would be able to learn and improve their English proficiency by the time they graduated as teachers of English. It was noted that 29.8% (N=4) of these semester two English option trainees had no confidence on being good English teachers. Confidence is defined as assurance, self-reliance or courage.

Self-confidence is closely related to motivation. In a report by Crites and McKenna (1993) it was stated that 'as self-confidence grew, so did student motivation'. Thus, the teacher trainees in this study should be motivated by their own self-confidence. A report by Mavros (1999) stated that 'self-confidence involves a determination that one is able to do what is expected of him. This determination is the result of his past experiences'. Mavros said that the development of attitude and confidence is directly related to what one has experienced. It is believed that if a person feels that he can perform well then he will learn to expect to accomplish another set of goals and will learn to select some other set of goals which he can accomplish. Thus, in the development of self-confidence, one develops a feeling of being able to do and accomplish his goals.

The data which indicates that 70.2% of the teacher trainees have confidence in being good English teachers shows that these trainees are positively motivated. As such, this may not be a contributing factor towards their reading problems.

4.2.4.2 Trainees' attitude towards the English course

In order to study their attitudes towards the English course, information was obtained regarding the trainees' reasons for taking up the English course and this is shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Trainees' reasons for taking up the English course

Attitude I'm taking up this course because:	5 Strong- ly agree No. / %	4 Agree No. /%	3 Unsure No. /%	2 Disagree No. / %	1 Strongly disagree No. / %
I chose to become an English Teacher.	22 46.8%	17 36.2%	7 14.9%	-	1 2.1%
I would like to teach English.	19 40.4%	24 51.1%	4 8.5%	-	-
I was not offered the course I wanted.	2 4.3%	4 8.5%	4 8.5%	20 42.6%	17 36.2%
I was advised to take up this course.	9 19.1%	17 36.2%	5 10.6%	8 17%	8 17%
I don't know what else to do.	1 2.1%	1 2.1%	7 14.9%	15 31.9%	23 48.9%

In general, the data in Table 11 showed that the trainees' attitude towards the English course was on a positive note. About 83% (N=39) of the trainees had chosen to become English teachers and 91.5% (N=43) of the trainees agreed that they would like to teach English. This showed that most of them were willingly attending this course. About 15% (N=7) of them were unsure and only 2.1% (N=1) said that they did not choose to do the English course.

In addition, more than 88% (N=37) agreed that they were offered the course they wanted. However, approximately 55.3% (N=26) admitted that they were advised to take up this English course. About 34% (N=16) of them

indicated that the decision to take up the course was their own. Further data showed that about 90% (N=38) of them disagreed they did not know what else to do. This showed that most of the trainees willingly applied for the English course with the intention of becoming English teachers. Based on the data gathered, it can be said that the respondents in this study generally have a positive attitude towards the English course.

In general, the data collected indicated that the trainees have 'extrinsic motivation' which is instrumental in nature. Extrinsic motivation, according to Wilkins (1980) is the desire to learn the language to achieve some purpose and the motivation comes from external factors like wanting to pass an examination and not from within the learners themselves. That is, the desire to learn English is in order to complete assignments and to use English in their job situations and not because they are interested in knowledge about the language or mingling with people who speak English. The trainees in the present study are aware of the importance of English to ensure a job as English teachers. Thus, they are instrumentally motivated. Wilkins (1980:184) found that, compared to integrative motivation, instrumental motivation is 'strictly utilitarian', that is, the desire is solely to achieve an end. In other words, it is wanted for a practical purpose or in anticipation of rewards like money, prizes, grades and even some types of positive feedback like praises (Brown, 1994). This was considered as 'bad motivation'. It has been found that the trainees in this study want to learn English for the purpose of doing their assignments and to graduate as English teachers. Data from Table 7 (page 73) showed that 63.8% (N=30) of the trainees strongly agreed and 34%

(N=16) of them agreed that to be successful professionally they need English. Further data from Table 16 (page 93) showed that 87.3% (N=41) of the trainees agreed that they sometimes, usually or always read in order to complete assignments. This can be considered as instrumental motivation. On the other hand, integrative motivation, where the learner sees himself as a 'potential member of the L2 group' and has liberal attitudes, is considered as 'good motivation'. There is a lot of evidence from research to show that 'integratively' motivated learners are the most successful as in research done by Spolsky (1960), Maslow (1970), Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and others. Therefore, since the trainees in the present study are found to be motivated instrumentally, which is considered as 'bad motivation', this may have resulted in them being unsuccessful learners of English and unsuccessful readers.

4.2.5   English usage as a contributing factor to reading problems

The results of the analysis of the trainees' usage of English has been summarised in the table on the next page. The data was collected from section 2 (question 9, 10 and 11) of the questionnaire.

4.2.5.1 Speaking English with family members, friends and lecturers

Some data were collected on how frequently the trainees speak English with family members, friends and lecturers. This information is shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Trainees speaking English with parents, siblings, friends and lecturers

Frequency	Father No. / %	Mother No. / %	Siblings No. / %	Friends No. / %	Lecturers No. / %
1 Never	15 31.9%	24 51.1%	3 6.4%	1 2.1%	-
2 Seldom	17 36.2%	11 23.4%	12 25.5%	5 10.6%	8 17.0%
3 Sometimes	11 23.4%	7 14.9%	26 55.3%	29 61.7%	19 40.4%
4 Usually	2 4.3%	3 6.4%	5 10.6%	10 21.3%	13 27.7%
5 Always	2 4.3%	2 4.3%	1 2.1%	2 4.3%	7 14.9%
Mean	2.1	1.9	2.7	3.1	3.4
(N = 47)					

From table 12, the data collected indicated that most of the trainees only sometimes spoke English with siblings, friends and lecturers and seldom or never used English when speaking with their parents. Out of the forty-seven trainees, thirty-two of them, that is 68.1% either seldom or never spoke English with their fathers. Thirty-five or 74.5% of them seldom or never spoke English with their mothers. Only 2 trainees admitted to usually or always speaking English with both parents. However, 55.3% (N=26) of the trainees sometimes spoke English with their siblings. Fifteen trainees, that is, 31.9% either seldom or never spoke English with their siblings. 61.7% (N=29) of the trainees claimed that they sometimes spoke English with their friends. Only twelve trainees indicated that they usually or always spoke English with their friends and one trainee never spoke English with friends. Nineteen trainees, that is, 40.4% sometimes spoke English with their lecturers, thirteen of them or 27.7% usually did and seven or 14.9% of them always did. Eight or 17% of them indicated that they seldom spoke English with their lecturers. In the study by Lee (1994), it was revealed that when

the students from the Malay-medium of education said that they spoke English with their siblings and friends, what they actually meant was 'frequent insertions of English phrases and expressions in their normal Malay speech'. Lee did not consider this as communicating in English. In the present study, although the trainees were not interviewed, the researcher had observed a similar situation when the trainees communicate among themselves, with their friends and lecturers. Therefore, as in Lee's study, when the trainees in the present study indicated that they use English when speaking to their family members, friends and lecturers, they may not have been communicating in English. They were most probably inserting English words, phrases or expressions in their normal daily communication in Bahasa Melayu.

On further analysis of the data, the mean calculation showed that with their parents, the trainees seldom spoke English and with their siblings, friends and lecturers they only spoke English sometimes. This lack of English use may be a factor contributing to poor reading comprehension. Rubin (1993:13) had stated that there was ample evidence to conclude that children who have oral language problems also seem to have reading problems. She added that a child who has difficulty in speaking will have difficulty with reading and other skills. Loban (1976) noted that many studies show that high-achieving readers come from enriched verbal environments, whereas, low-achieving readers come from homes in which little conversation takes place with the parents.

Furthermore, Cooper (1992) found in his study that readers from the Malay-medium of education were poorly motivated to improve their English.

They saw very little immediate need for the use of English because their main medium of communication in social and educational settings was Malay. In addition, West (1960) had expressed that if a person does not go on speaking the language, then, he or she will not go on learning it and will soon forget what he or she has learnt.

4.2.5.2 Reading of English materials

Data was collected based on the reading frequency of the trainees. This information is tabulated below.

Table 13: Trainees reading English materials - Newspapers, Novels, Academic books, Magazines and Journals

Frequency	English Newspaper	English Novels	English Academic books	English Magazines and journals
	No. / %	No. / %	No. / %	No. / %
1 Never	-	1 2.1%	-	-
2 Seldom	3 6.4%	6 12.8%	9 19.1%	5 10.6%
3 Sometimes	22 46.8%	23 48.9%	19 40.4%	21 44.7%
4 Usually	12 25.5%	14 29.8%	14 29.8%	17 36.2%
5 Always	10 21.3%	3 6.4%	5 10.6%	4 8.5%
Mean	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.4
(N = 47)				

Table 13 above shows data on how frequently the trainees under study read the English materials mentioned. The mean indicated that on the average the trainees only sometimes read these English materials. However, most of the trainees did read English materials at some time or other. One trainee had never

read English novels. 21.3% (N=10) of the trainees indicated that they always read English newspapers while 25.5% (N=12) of them did this usually.   Therefore, 46.8% (N=22) either usually or always read English newspapers.

40.4% (N=19) of the trainees did read English academic books sometimes and 29.8% (N=14) of them usually did. Only 19.1% (N=9) of them had indicated that they seldom read English academic books. However, only 10.6% (N=5) always read English books. From this data, it was also seen that 36.2% (N=17) of the trainees usually read English magazines and journals.

On an average, about 6, that is, 12.8% of the trainees indicated that they were in the habit of always reading all the English materials mentioned in the table. An average of 21 trainees or 44.7% had indicated that they only sometimes read newspapers, novels, academic books, magazines and journals in English. No one had indicated that they never read English newspapers, academic books, magazines and journals.

4.2.5.3 Exposure to media
Data was also gathered based on the trainees' exposure to English media like the television and the radio. This is presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Trainees' exposure to English media

Frequency	English television programmes		English films and videos		English radio programmes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Never	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 Seldom	-	-	-	-	4	8.5%
3 Sometimes	1	2.1%	3	6.4%	12	25.5%
4 Usually	16	34.0%	14	29.8%	16	34.0%
5 Always	30	63.8%	30	63.8%	15	31.9%
TOTAL	47	100%	47	100%	47	100%

Table 14 above shows that 97.8% (N=46) of the trainees always or usually watched English television programmes, 93.6% (N=44) usually or always watched films and videos. The rest of them sometimes watched these. However, 65% (N=31) of these trainees usually or always listened to English radio programmes. According to Rubin (1993:476), television viewing affects reading negatively, as, most would rather watch television than read. She had cited a survey done by Elam, S.M and Gallup, A.M (1989) in which the public ranked the educational value of television lower than family, school or peers and perceived it as having the least positive influence. This is also supported by Stradinger (2000) who stated that a child's television time should be limited. According to Stradinger, studies showed that children who watched fewer than three hours of television a day scored higher on 'the national reading test' than those who watched more.

However, television can be a positive force in encouraging students to read if used by teachers in a positive way. Rubin (1993:97) had highlighted an action research carried out by a teacher Ms. Hart, who had used the television to stimulate reading. She had used it as a part of the communicative process among

children. Some of the suggestions were watching educational programmes, discussing what they had watched, analysing commercials, comparing television news with newspapers, plays with novels, role-playing favourite characters and presenting certain scenes while the others guessed the show. It was felt that television viewing could be integrated with reading and other language skills with teacher guidance.

Based on the trainees' exposure to listening, speaking and reading in their daily lives, the data from Tables 12, 13 and 14 implies that the use of English was only on an average scale. According to Rubin (1993), there is a fundamental interrelatedness between listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is stated that if children have difficulty with a concept in listening and speaking it will also carry over to other areas like reading. For example, in order to be able to recognise expressions in print, students must have heard the phrases correctly in the past. This means that they must have had satisfactory exposure. Jolly (1980) had said that listening and reading have some important similar skills and help in one area usually enhances the other. However, it is possible for students to have excellent listening comprehension while not achieving well in the area of reading. In addition to listening, speaking is also a factor to be considered when relating to reading. Rubin (1993) adds that a person who has difficulty in speaking will also have difficulty in areas like reading, writing, spelling and phonics. She emphasised that oral language problems led to reading problems as well. This view is also supported by Newcomer and Magee (1977) who viewed that language problems and reading problems seem to coexist. That is to say that

problems in other skills like listening, speaking and writing coexist with problems in reading too.

Another issue brought up by Wilkins (1981) was that language knowledge is limited to the time available in the classroom. Wilkins said that the limited time available in the classroom makes it difficult for learners to have sufficient exposure to the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, usage of a language in the classroom alone is not enough. It is necessary to use language outside the classroom in order to improve it. Wilkins also stressed that language acquisition is based on rich, varied and intensive exposure to language and, as such, usage of English should be more than just average in order to bring about higher proficiency especially in reading. Furthermore, Rubin (1993:9) had stressed that reading is an integral part of the 'language arts' or skills.

4.2.6   The reading strategies employed by the trainees as a contributing factor in reading problems

To obtain an overall picture of the reading strategies employed by the respondents, data from 28 variables were analysed.   The analysis of the data collected and its summary is presented below. The data was obtained from section 6 (question 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29) of the questionnaire.

4.2.6.1 Trainees' basic skills related to reading

Some information was gathered concerning certain basic skills related to reading and this is shown in Table 15. Richardson and Morgan (1994:334) have stressed on the importance of study skills to enhance reading. In order to be able to be a successful reader, the reader should possess the basic study skills. These skills have been identified as special study-reading comprehension skills, information location skills and study and retention skills.

Table 15: Trainees' basic skills related to reading

| | Yes | | No | |
Skills	No.	%	No.	%
1. Library research	29	61.7%	18	38.3%
2. Note-taking in English	24	51.5%	23	48.9%
3. Project work in English	28	59.6%	19	40.4%
4. Using the English dictionary	46	97.9%	1	2.1%

The skills mentioned in Table 15 were in the areas of information location skills, such as, library research and dictionary skills, study and retention skills , such as, note-taking in English and other skills include project work in English. It was observed that 61.7% (N=29) of the trainees had exposure or training in library research. Almost half of them had no training in note-taking skills in English. Approximately 60% (N=28) of the trainees have had some exposure to English project work and almost all of them had been exposed to dictionary skills or know how to use the English dictionary.

It is pertinent that these study skills be given appropriate emphasis. Elliot and Wendling (1966) substantiated over two decades ago that 75% of academic failure is caused by poor study and examination skills and strategies. Richardson

and Morgan (1994) have also said that convincing students of the value of study skills will both promote student achievement and ensure that their use of these skills is maintained. These basic skills will assist in solving problems in reading which are related to locating information, retention and comprehension.

4.2.6.2 Trainees' reading frequency for various purposes

The data collected on how frequently the trainees read for various purposes is shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Trainees' reading frequency for the various purposes

Purpose	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Usually	5 Always
Before lecture, to prepare for new topic.	13 27.7%	19 40.4%	14 29.8%	1 2.1%	-
To prepare for discussion in class.	1 2.1%	15 31.9%	18 38.3%	10 21.3%	3 6.4%
After lectures, to fill gaps in notes.	2 4.3%	11 23.4%	28 59.6%	5 10.6%	1 2.1%
To expand on notes taken in class.	3 6.4%	12 25.5%	22 46.8%	7 14.9%	3 6.4%
To clear doubts.	2 4.3%	11 23.4%	18 38.3%	14 29.8%	2 4.3%
To write an assignment.	-	6 12.8%	10 21.3%	17 36.2%	14 29.8%
Interest in the content, for knowledge.	1 2.1%	6 12.8%	20 42.6%	17 36.2%	3 6.4%

Data from Table 16 indicated that 29.8% (N=14) of the trainees sometimes and 68.1% (N=32) seldom or never read their articles or reference books before lectures for the purpose of preparing for a new topic. 38.3% (N=18) of them only

sometimes and 34% (N=16) seldom or never read articles or reference books to prepare for discussion. For the purpose of filling gaps in their notes after lectures, 59.6% (N=28) of them read articles and references only sometimes and 27.7% (N=13) seldom or never did this. 46.8% (N=22) of the trainees sometimes and 31.9% (N=15) seldom or never read to expand notes taken in class. 38.3% (N=18) of the trainees read their articles and references to clear doubts sometimes, 27.7% (N=13) seldom or never did this and only 34.1% (N=16) had indicated that they usually or always read for this purpose.

About two thirds of the trainees, that is, about 66% (N=31) usually or always read their references in order to be able to write their assignments. The analysis also indicated that 42.6% (N=20) of them sometimes read for knowledge or because they were interested in the subject matter and 42.6% (N=20) of them usually or always read for this reason.

In general, the information obtained from Table 18 indicated that most of the trainees did not see the necessity to prepare themselves for a new topic before lectures. On an average, 40.4% (N=19) of them had indicated that only sometimes and 31% (N=15) seldom or never felt it necessary to read for all the purposes mentioned in Table 16. Most of the trainees felt they had to read only if they had an assignment to do. A matter of concern was that 12.8% (N=6) of them actually indicated that they seldom read; not even to do their assignments.

4.2.6.3 Trainees' strategies when required to read a book or article

Data collected on the strategies employed by the trainees while reading a book or article is presented in the table below.

Table 17: Trainees' strategies when required to read a book or article

Strategy	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Usually	5 Always
Start reading straightway.	3 6.4%	7 14.9%	22 46.8%	10 21.3%	5 10.6%
Study the title, sub-headings and displays to get rough idea of what it is about.	1 2.1%	3 6.4%	21 44.7%	15 31.9%	7 14.9%
Go through the table of contents and/or the index to decide which parts are relevant to your purpose.	-	6 12.8%	12 25.5%	22 46.8%	7 14.9%
Count the number of pages to plan how long you'll take to read it.	12 25.5%	11 23.4%	10 21.3%	6 12.8%	8 17.0%
(N = 47)					

When the trainees were required to read a book or article in English, 46.8% (N=22) said that they started reading straightway sometimes and 31.9% (N=15) of them indicated that they did this usually or always. About 44.7% (N=21) of them sometimes studied the title, sub-headings and graphic displays and 46.8% (N=22) of them usually or always used this strategy. Almost 51.7% (N=29) of the trainees usually or always went through the content to see which part was relevant to the purpose of their assignment and 25.5% (N=12) used this strategy sometimes. About 48.9% (N=23) of them indicated that they seldom or never counted the number of pages to plan how long it would take to read the

article. 21.3% (N=10) did this sometimes and 29.8% (N=14) of them usually or always counted the pages before reading. The overall picture here is that whenever the trainees are required to read they sometimes read straightway or studied the title but they usually went through the contents.

The data collected here portrayed that there was no general pattern followed by the trainees. The trainees did not seem to have a definite strategy for reading or handling their reading assignments. Most of them had indicated that they sometimes employed a particular strategy and at other times employed other strategies. The study by Lee (1994) on Malay-medium students also produced similar results.

4.2.6.4 Strategies employed by trainees while reading

Some data were collected on the strategies employed by the trainees while reading. This is presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Strategies trainees employed while reading

Strategy	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Usually	5 Always
Underline or highlight all the parts you consider important.	2 4.3%	2 4.3%	16 34.0%	15 31.9%	12 25.5%
Make notes in the margin or in a piece of paper.	-	11 23.4%	19 40.4%	14 29.8%	3 6.4%
Take down only those points that are relevant to your task.	-	1 2.1%	12 25.5%	26 55.3%	8 17.0%

Strategy	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Usually	5 Always
Try to understand every word.	-	3 6.4%	19 40.4%	18 38.3%	7 14.9%
Use a bilingual dictionary to check all the words you don't know.	2 4.3%	5 10.6%	13 27.7%	19 40.4%	8 17.0%
Ignore difficult words or phrases and only look up the meaning of some really important ones.	3 6.4%	12 25.5%	20 42.6%	10 21.3%	2 4.3%
Try to guess the main idea of each paragraph.	1 2.1%	4 8.5%	16 34.0%	21 44.7%	5 10.6%
Try to guess the meaning of some of the difficult words.	-	2 4.3%	13 27.7%	23 48.9%	9 19.1%
Write down the meaning of some of the difficult words.	16 34.0%	19 40.4%	8 17.0%	3 6.4%	1 2.1%
Go on reading even if something isn't very clear because you expect the meaning would get clearer as you read.	-	2 4.3%	15 31.9%	23 48.9%	7 14.9%
Keep in mind the purpose of reading the assignment.	1 2.1%	4 8.5%	21 44.7%	17 36.2%	4 8.5%
(N=47)					

The data in Table 18 showed that, while reading English materials, 34% (N=16) of the trainees sometimes underlined or highlighted certain parts and 57.4% (N=27) of them usually or always did this. Therefore, underlining or

highlighting was noted to be a common strategy used among the trainees. About 40.4% (N=19) of them sometimes made notes in the margin or on a piece of paper, 36.2% (N=17) of them did this usually and 23.4% (N=11) said they seldom made notes. Almost 72% (N=34) of them usually or always took down the points that were relevant to their task usually or always. 25.5% (N=12) of the trainees did this sometimes. On the whole, taking down relevant points was another common strategy employed by these trainees.

While reading , 40.4% (N=19) of the trainees sometimes and 38.3% (N=18) of them usually tried to understand every word in the text being read, 27.7% (N=13) sometimes while 57.4% (N=27) usually or always used the bilingual dictionary to check all the words that they did not know. A study done by Hosenfeld (1977 b) found that reading text in small chunks or concentrating on individual words 'was a characteristic of unsuccessful language learners'. She said that by concentrating on words or by doing word-by-word reading, the respondents in her study were 'perpetuating their problems'. Thus, in the present study, trying to understand every word may be a contributing factor towards the trainees' reading problems as it may not be an effective strategy. It was also noted that about 31.9% (N=15) of the trainees seldom or never ignored difficult words and looked up important words in the dictionary and about 63.9% (N=30) of them sometimes did this.

There was also indication that 34% (N=16) of them sometimes and almost 55.3% (N=26) of them usually or always tried to guess the main idea of each paragraph. 27.7% (N=13) of the trainees sometimes and 68% (N=32) of them

usually or always tried to guess the meanings of some of the difficult words. Chitravelu (1980) said that readers may be more successful if they are slowly led away from obsession with words and encouraged to 'exploit their innate powers on inference and prediction from linguistic evidence', that is, they should look at the larger context or should look for clues from the text. In the present study, looking at the higher percentage of trainees trying to guess the meanings of words or make inferences and predictions they should be more successful readers. However, this is not so. Therefore, this may not be contributing towards their reading problems. Further data showed that about 31.9% (N=15) of the trainees sometimes and 63.8% (N=30) usually or always continued reading even if they were not clear about what they were reading because they expected the meaning to get clearer as they went on. Thus, this is another strategy commonly employed by the trainees.

Furthermore, almost 44.7% (N=21) of them sometimes and 44.7% (N=21) usually or always felt it necessary to keep in mind the purpose of reading. This was an effective strategy for successful reading as stressed by both Hosenfeld (1977 b) and Chitravelu (1980). They were of the view that emphasis should be given to the 'purpose' for reading in order to achieve success in reading.

4.2.6.5 Strategies employed by trainees when faced with problems in understanding an English reading assignment

Some information was collected concerning the strategies used by the

trainees when they are faced with problems in understanding an English assignment. This is shown in Table 19 below.

Table 19: What trainees did when facing problems understanding an English reading assignment.

Strategy	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Usually	5 Always
Give up reading	8 17.0%	13 27.7%	23 48.9%	3 6.4%	-
Get friends who have read it to tell you what it is all about	-	2 4.3%	11 23.4%	29 61.7%	5 10.6%
Discuss the assignment with course-mates and get help from them.	-	1 2.1%	12 25.5%	24 51.1%	10 21.3%
See the subject lecturer for help.	7 14.9%	13 27.7%	19 40.4%	4 8.5%	4 8.5%
(N = 47)					

Table 19 indicated that if the trainees incurred problems when reading for an English assignment, 48.9% (N=23) of them sometimes gave up reading and 44.7% (N=21) seldom or never did this. Cooper (1992:124) discovered that this was a problem in his study too, where, the students from the Malay medium of education also gave up reading when they found the English text too difficult. In the present study, when faced with problems, about 72% (N=34) of the respondents usually or always referred to their friends who had read the text to explain to them. It was also observed that 72% (N=34) of them usually or always discussed their assignments with their course-mates. It was also noted that 42.6% (N=20) of the trainees admitted that they seldom or never referred to their lecturers for help and only about 40.4% (N=19) of them sometimes did.

Referring to their lecturers when faced with problems could provide them with the correct guidance towards achieving success in their reading assignments. The fact that they did not go to their lecturers for guidance may be a contributing factor towards their reading comprehension problems.

4.2.6.6 The procedural steps indicated by trainees while carrying out a reading assignment and their contribution to reading problems

Analysis of the data collected from the open-ended question number 29(b), which asked the trainees to list down the steps involved in their strategies while doing an assignment, led to the results shown in Table 20. This portrayed the main steps in the strategies employed by the trainees when carrying out a reading assignment. A reading assignment refers to any task carried out by trainees based on an academic reading text given to the trainees. Out of the forty-seven trainees only twenty-three, that is, 48.9% (N=23) of them admitted to having some kind of strategy. The others, that is, 51.1% (N=24) indicated that they did not employ any particular strategy when tackling a reading assignment.

The various steps taken by the trainees when doing a reading assignment were analysed. These steps were written down and categorised accordingly. The steps were described and listed down so as to enable easier analysis.

The description of the general steps taken by the trainees is summarised as follows ;

1.   Read and understand the question or task.

2.   Look for materials/notes and read.

3.   Complete assignment.

4.   Discuss completed answers with friends.

5.   List down difficult words.

6.   Refer to dictionary.

7.   Take down main points and write short notes.

Table 20: Steps taken by trainees when carrying out a reading assignment

Strategy/ Steps in sequence	Number of trainees	Percentage
1, 2, 3	3	6.4%
1, 2, 3, 4	2	4.3%
1, 2, 5, 6, 3	5	10.6%
1, 2, 7, 3	13	27.7%
Total	23	49.0%

In Table 20, the numbers in the first column refer to the sequence in which the various steps listed above are followed by the trainees. The data in Table 20 shows that all the 49.0% (N=23) of the trainees who admitted to having some strategy started off by reading and understanding the question or task. This is considered a productive strategy as it gives them the 'purpose' for the reading activity. The importance of 'purpose' has been given support by many researchers like Chitravelu (1985), Hosenfeld (1992) and others. As a second step, all of them looked for materials or notes related to the assignment and read the materials.

Five of the trainees, that is, 10.6% went on to do the assignment straightway. Of these five, 4.3% (N=2) of them discussed their answers with their friends as a fourth step.

Of those remaining, 27.7% (N=13) of them took down the main points and made short notes as a third step. Then they went on to do their assignment as a fourth and final step.

The remaining 10.6% (N=5) stated their third step as listing down the difficult words, the fourth step as referring to the dictionary for the meanings and finally, the fifth step as completing their assignment. Chastain (1981) observed that readers often failed to realise that the typical dependence upon the dictionary not only prevents them from really learning to read but also slows their reading. These readers were referred to as dictionary 'cripples'. Thus, referring to the dictionary too often may be a contributing factor to the reading problems of the trainees in the present study.

In the present study, the fact that 51.1% (N=24) of the trainees had admitted that they had no particular strategy when carrying out their reading assignment may be another factor contributing towards their reading problems. In the case of those who did admit to having a particular reading strategy some strategies may have been ineffective. The study done by Lee (1994) produced similar results. Only 50% of the students in that study claimed to have had employed a strategy when faced with a reading task. Furthermore, their reading strategies, Lee claimed, were inadequate for academic reading.

4.2.7   The problems faced by the trainees in reading English

materials

The data gathered on the problems faced by the trainees in reading English materials have been analysed and presented in the tables below. The data was obtained from section 6 (questions 30 and 31) of the questionnaire.

4.2.7.1 Degree of text difficulty faced by trainees when   reading   various English materials

The data on the text difficulty faced by the trainees when reading English materials are presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Trainees' degree of difficulty when reading English materials

Material	1 Very difficult No./%	2 Difficult No./%	3 Some difficulty No./%	4 Easy No./ %	Mean
English articles from professional journals	12 25.5%	28 59.6%	6 12.8%	1 2.1%	1.9
Textbooks in English	1 2.1%	2 4.3%	30 63.8%	14 29.8%	3.2
Sections / chapters from English reference books	1 2.1%	12 25.5%	32 68.1%	2 4.3%	2.7
Lecture notes	2 4.3%	3 6.4%	34 72.3%	8 17%	3.0
English Magazines/ newspapers	-	3 6.4%	32 68.1%	12 25.5%	3.2
(N = 47)					

From Table 21, it was found that when reading English articles from professional journals 85.1% (N=40) of the trainees found it difficult or very difficult to handle. When reading English textbooks, about 63.8% (N=30) of

them seemed to have some difficulty and 29.8% (N=14) of them, surprisingly, found it easy. When reading chapters or sections from English reference books, about 96.7% (N=45) of the trainees have had difficulty of some kind and 4.3% (N=2) of them found it easy. When reading magazines or newspapers in English, 68.1% (N=32) of the trainees found that they had some difficulty too and 25.5% (N=12) found it easy. Only 17% (N=8) of the trainees admitted that they found their lecture notes easy and 83% (N=39) of them had difficulty of some kind.

Alderson (1992) expressed that most readers failed to learn to read adequately in the foreign language and that, very frequently, readers in a foreign language seemed to read with less understanding than one might expect them to. Furthermore, research findings also supported the view that reading in a language which is not the learner's first language, is a source of considerable difficulty. This seems to be the case in the present study as English is not the first language for the trainees. In a study by Macnamara (1970) on Irish English bilingual students, the students had difficulty understanding the text despite knowing the words and structures and the main factor of concern in their poor reading proficiency was grammar and vocabulary.

4.2.7.2 Factors that hamper reading of English academic texts

In the present study, other problems faced by the trainees were concluded from data gathered concerning their reading of academic materials. This is shown in Table 22 on the next page.

Table 22: Factors that hamper reading of English academic text

Factors	5 Strong- ly agree No. /%	4 Agree No. /%	3 Unsure No. /%	2 Disagree No. /%	1 Strongly disagree No. /%
The subject matter is new.	10 21.3%	30 63.8%	4 8.5%	3 6.4%	-
The concepts are too abstract.	10 21.3%	23 48.9%	10 21.3%	4 8.5%	-
The subject matter is uninteresting.	7 14.9%	29 61.7%	3 6.4%	8 17.0%	-
There are too many difficult words.	11 23.4%	23 48.9%	8 17.0%	5 10.6%	-
The style of writing is too complex with too many long sentences.	8 17.0%	18 38.3%	17 36.2%	4 8.5%	-
The reasoning is often too difficult to follow.	9 19.1%	21 44.7%	13 27.7%	4 8.5%	-
The text is too dense - too many ideas one after the other	9 19.1%	21 44.7%	13 27.7%	4 8.5%	-
There is not enough practice in reading in English.	15 31.9%	24 51.1%	1 2.1%	6 12.8%	1 2.1%
(N = 47)					

When reading academic texts in English, it was indicated that 85.1% (N=40) of them found the subject matter new and were unfamiliar with it. For success in learning, Cooper (1992), stressed on the importance of ensuring that the text which is being read contained enough known information for the reader to use in order to interpret the unknown. This shows that it is important for the reader to have a substantial degree of familiarity with the text or the subject

matter. This was also supported by Vacca and Vacca (1996:15) who stated that the reader needs to be familiar with the 'language of a discipline, or else, the text will begin to create trouble for the reader'. Most of the trainees in the present study were unfamiliar with their text and this probably created serious problems in comprehending the text.

On analysing the data gathered regarding the problems faced by these trainees, it was observed that 70.2% (N=33) of the trainees agreed that the concepts in the academic materials were too abstract and almost 76.6% (N=36) agreed that there were too many difficult words. It must be noted here that having limited or poor vocabulary is a disadvantage. This view had been supported by Cooper M.C. (1992:133) in his study on students in the Malay medium of education. His study indicated that poor or inadequate vocabulary is a severe handicap where success in reading is concerned. This 'deficit', he viewed, led to a deficiency in understanding relationships between words and thus the coherence of sentences. Therefore, a deficient vocabulary among the trainees in the present study may be a contributing factor towards their reading comprehension problems too.

Furthermore, about 55.3% (N=26) of the respondents found the style of writing in the English academic materials too complex with too many long sentences. More than 63.8% (N=30) of the trainees found the texts too dense, the reasoning often too difficult to follow and having too many difficult ideas one after the other. On the whole, most of the trainees found it a problem understanding the English academic materials. The results from a study by

Urquhart (1992:176) suggest that texts are made difficult by containing hard words, complicated sentences, complex ideas and a complex ordering of ideas. The general view given was that ' a text that is not easy to follow is hard to read'. The factor of 'readability' was also considered. It was noted that, just like studies which have examined word length or syntactic complexity in readability studies, the organization of statements making up a text have also been investigated. It was consistently stressed that the text and the reader were important in understanding the reading process and that textual factors are especially important when reading in a foreign language. Urquhart also added that there was accumulating evidence to reveal that one of the sources of text difficulty was 'intrasentential' linguistic factors. In the present study, Table 22 indicates that the nature of the text which the trainees are exposed to in MPBP probably contributes to the problems faced by the trainees in reading comprehension.

In the present study, more than 82% (N=39) of the trainees also indicated that there was not enough practice in reading in English. This implied that the trainees themselves felt a need for more reading practice. Richek, List and Lerner (1989) had viewed reading as a continuously developing activity which constantly improves through reading. According to them, reading cannot be mastered once and for all. Thus, it is important that the reader has sufficient opportunities to practice and engage in the process of reading from the very beginning.

4.3   ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

<u>**4.3.1   Views of English Unit lecturers concerning reading**</u>

Through the structured interview the views of the English unit lecturers were gathered and they have been presented below. The data was collected from questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the interview schedule.

4.3.1.1 Importance of reading English materials for the English option trainees

All the five lecturers interviewed, unanimously agreed that reading in English was very important to the English option trainees. The general opinion was that English option trainees needed to read in English and that the reading skill was more important compared to listening, speaking and writing. The lecturers also indicated that the trainees needed to read to obtain further knowledge on the methodology component and other fields of study.

The lecturers added that if the trainees did not read they would not be able to do their assignments which actually required knowledge from the reading materials. In addition, they would also face problems when answering examination questions. This is because, based on their previous experience from marking past year examination papers, the lecturers had observed that English option trainees would have had to understand their academic texts in order to be able to apply what they had learnt to answer the questions.

One lecturer was of the strong opinion that improving reading skills will lead to improvement in the other skills too. This lecturer referred to 'silent

reading' and 'reading aloud'. He supported his views with reference to his experience in New Zealand where, he said, reading was a core subject in the early years. If after one year the students had not mastered reading they would have to attend special classes. He felt that reading in English was of utmost importance to the trainees involved in the present study.

In addition, the lecturers also felt that reading in English was the very basis for acquiring proficiency in the English language. They said that reading was a means of acquiring knowledge, vocabulary, correct sentence structures and correct grammar items. As one lecturer put it, improved reading would enhance English language proficiency. This view is supported by Richek, List and Lerner (1989) who noted that many readers who had reading problems do have underlying language difficulties. They referred to reviews on a research on the 'Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children'. The reviews revealed that learners who have problems in reading have significantly more difficulties with verbal subtests than with performance subtests (Spache, 1981; Moore and Wielan, 1981). In addition, Daneman (1991) was of the view that good readers tend to be good listeners. Hoffman (1978) found that reading and listening involve similar thinking skills. Regarding writing, according to Rubin (1993), readers who lack higher order thinking ability in reading would also lack this ability in writing. She stressed that reading helps to acquire knowledge, to develop vocabulary and a language sense as well as become familiar with a variety of sentence structures used in both speaking and writing. Lyon (1985) reported that studies carried out by the U.S. Department of Education had shown that almost 80% of children with

learning disabilities have their main educational problem in the area of reading. A critical report entitled 'A Nation at Risk' (1983) was noted by Richek, List and Lerner (1989:5) to have alerted educators that poor reading levels was causing the mastery of basic skills to deteriorate dangerously. Knutson (1997) regards reading as a valuable input for general language acquisition. Thus, the lecturers' views in giving importance to reading, are justified.

4.3.1.2 The reading proficiency of the English option trainees

All the lecturers interviewed were of the view that the reading proficiency of the trainees was low or below average. The trainees had a number of problems. The lecturers had noted that the trainees could not understand both academic and non-academic texts. The trainees, they said, were also unfamiliar with many of the terms in the texts. The lecturers felt that some of the words that the trainees found difficult were words they should have already been exposed to by the time they completed their SPM. In the case of the trainees under study, they only knew very simple words. To add to that, it was observed that the trainees had poor reading fluency, intonation and pronunciation when reading aloud.

In addition, the lecturers were also of the view that the respondents did not have enough background knowledge to be able to relate to the text and so they found the texts too difficult. They said that this was obvious with their academic texts especially. It was noted by three of the lecturers that these trainees needed line by line coaching. The trainees had not mastered reading skills like inferring,

predicting and others. They had not mastered grammar items and this, the lecturers felt, definitely impedes understanding of the text being read.

Furthermore, the lecturers added that the trainees had an attitude problem with regards to reading. They were of the opinion that the trainees were lazy to read as they were not actually interested in improving their proficiency in the English language. They observed that the trainees found too many difficult words in their texts and so they refuse to read further and to attempt to understand the texts. The lecturers also felt that most of the trainees did not attempt to look up words that they did not understand or were unfamiliar with.

When asked to comment on the reasons for the problems faced by the trainees in their reading comprehension, the lecturers felt that one main contributing factor was their limited vocabulary of the English language. They added that the trainees did not have enough reading practice. The trainees lacked exposure to reading and did not have a healthy reading habit. Due to this, the trainees were not familiar with many words and the pronunciation of these words. Another contributing factor, they said, was that the trainees hardly used English inside or outside lecture hours. The lecturers attributed this to a lack of confidence. As such, the trainees did not find it necessary to read in order to increase their vocabulary for usage in daily activities. The lecturers further observed that another reason was that the trainees did not have a positive attitude towards reading. The trainees did not perceive that reading was important to improve their proficiency of the English language. The trainees only aimed at passing the examination and not at doing well in it. So, although the trainees

knew that they were weak in reading, they did not perceive it necessary to improve it.

According to the lecturers, other reasons for their poor reading proficiency included the usage of wrong strategies for reading or not employing the correct strategies. They also lacked exposure to the type of text in college. The academic and non-academic texts used during the English DPM course may be very different from other texts the trainees had been exposed to previously.

4.3.1.3 Suggestions to overcome reading problems

In order to overcome the problems faced by the trainees, the lecturers suggested that the trainees read more. They needed to do more extensive reading of novels, magazines, newspapers, journals, professional articles and others. This, the lecturers felt, would ensure more exposure to wider vocabulary, correct sentence structures, the different reading skills and correct grammatical items. The trainees should not only read for the purpose of doing their assignments. The lecturers said that the trainees needed to develop a healthy reading habit and develop a positive attitude towards reading which, in turn, will lead to more reading. Knutson (1997:50) had cited Krashen (1982) as having argued that 'pleasure reading' is an important source of comprehensible input for acquisition and in order to encourage light reading, there should be availability of books, magazines and other reading material of personal 'interest' to the readers. Knutson added that personal 'interest' would include factors like motivation and reading purpose.

Other suggestions included steps like trainees identifying their own reading problems, listing them down and solving them systematically. Other than this, the lecturers also said that the trainees should be encouraged to make vocabulary lists, develop the habit of referring to dictionaries whenever necessary and use these words in their assignments.

The lecturers suggested providing model answers to provide guidelines for the trainees. One lecturer considered this as spoon feeding but it was suggested that it may be done at the initial stages only. The lecturers felt that they themselves should always keep stressing on the usage of English at all times. They strongly voiced that trainees should not be allowed to use other languages as this, in their opinion, would 'force' the trainees to improve their English and gain more confidence in its usage. Furthermore, it was also suggested that the trainees always refer to the lecturers in the English Unit for ideas to better their reading strategies. The lecturers would act as language role models too.

4.3.2 Suggestions to improve the present training programme for the English option trainees

Some suggestions were given by the lecturers to improve the present training programme for the English option. This information was obtained from question 7 of the interview schedule.

4.3.2.1 Proficiency component

The lecturers, having had a minimum of seven years of teaching experience in teacher training colleges, felt that in order to attain an acceptable level of English proficiency among English option trainees, it was necessary to stress on the proficiency component. They were of the opinion that the reading and writing aspects needed more attention. They suggested that during the first and second semesters, three quarters of their contact hours should be targeted on proficiency. This was to improve the English proficiency of the English option trainees and to lay the groundwork for them to be effective English language teachers when they graduate. Only after the trainees had mastered their proficiency should they be introduced to the methodology component. It was further suggested that stress be placed on the methodology component only in semester three. For those trainees who had not acquired the required level of proficiency, it was suggested that they attend remedial classes to improve their English proficiency for as long as it is necessary.

In addition, it was suggested that, in order to provide the necessary coaching or guidance to improve English proficiency, the trainees should be grouped in bands based on the SPM English grades or, as one lecturer suggested, that this banding could be based on an English Language Placement Test (ELPT) which can be administered on admission into the English course. It was suggested that they should then be given coaching according to the levels of the different bands they are in.

4.3.2.2 Intake requirements

The lecturers also took this opportunity to comment on the issue of trainee intake requirements. They suggested that the intake of the English option trainees should not be based solely on their academic qualification at the SPM level. It should be ascertained that the trainees do indeed have a high level of English proficiency, that is, in all the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. The lecturers voiced that the trainees selected for the English course should have the basic ability to read, speak and write legibly.

4.3.2.3 Major and Minor studies

The lecturers suggested that the Ministry of Education do away with major and minor studies for the English course. The suggestion was that the English option trainees major only in English and be given no minor studies. Any other studies should be done as electives. It was also suggested that if possible the electives be taught in English. These suggestions were directed towards focussing on the usage of English language only.

4.3.2.4 Classroom size

The final suggestion put forward was to reduce the size of the classrooms. This was advised so that lecturers will be able to pay attention to the trainees' problems in English, generally, and reading, specifically. They suggested that the classrooms do not exceed 20 trainees per class as the present classroom size of approximately 30 trainees makes it difficult to focus attention on their weaknesses

in English proficiency. Large classrooms, they said, complicated matters when handling proficiency problems of individual trainees. The lecturers felt that smaller classes would enable more effective teaching on the part of the lecturers and this would result in more effective college-trained English teachers in the future.

4.4   Summary of findings

In summary, it can be seen from the findings that reading is considered by many as very important and, as such, the reading problems faced and the strategies used are equally important. The findings in this chapter revealed a number of varied problems and strategies with regards to reading comprehension of the trainee teachers in the present study. All the problems mentioned obviously have to be addressed some how or other. However, the extent to which the suggestions in this chapter will help is not definite as the factor of individual differences have to be taken into consideration at all stages.

Generally, the findings indicated that the trainees came from an average to low SES and many studies have shown that the SES has a strong impact on reading especially. This effect of SES is supported by Anderson et al. (1985) in Eggen and Kauchak (1994). The respondents also indicated a general positive attitude towards English and the English course. The common problems were, poor vocabulary and difficulty in understanding the text, not having reading strategies or having ineffective strategies, lacking background knowledge,

unfamiliarity with the text and the perception that they had average to good reading skills.

From the structured interview, it was found that the English unit lecturers placed a lot importance on the reading skill and its usefulness to the English option trainees. It was found that the trainees were weak in reading proficiency as well as fluency, intonation and pronunciation. Other problem areas indicated were that the trainees had insufficient vocabulary and background knowledge, poor attitude, unsuitable reading strategies and a lack of confidence.

The English Unit lecturers had also given some constructive suggestions towards achieving a more effective English programme for teacher training and they have been concluded in the next chapter.