

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected from two questionnaires: one distributed to 236 students and the other to 30 teachers. The data was analyzed to find out the following;

- the reading background of the students;
- their attitude towards reading in English;
- their reading problems;
- their reading interests

The purpose of the data analysis was to come up with a reading interests inventory that is learner-centred and that could be used as a general guide for teachers in selecting materials that would motivate their students to read.

To cater to differences in reading interests and to ensure a comprehensive reading interest inventory, the respondents were organized into distinct groups for each of the four comparisons of their reading interests, and data was collected and analyzed for each group. The numbers in brackets represent the number of students in each of the groups.

- Comparison by Setting

Rural school (95); Urban school (141)

- Comparison by Gender

Boys (130); Girls (106)

- Comparison by Stream

Science stream (80); Arts and Commerce streams (156)

- Comparison by Language Proficiency

Students with Grade A for English in the PMR (64); with Grade B or C (117); with Grade D or E or did not sit for the PMR (55).

The purpose of such an organization of data collection and analysis is to seek answers to the following research questions.

1. Do setting, gender, stream (science and arts/commerce) and language proficiency contribute towards differences in reading interests among students?
2. What type of text topics would motivate students to read?
3. Is there any mismatch in the ranking of text topics by students and by teachers?
4. How far do the text topics in the reading section of the Form Four KBSM textbooks reflect the reading interests of students?

The chapter will look first at the data pertaining to the students' language background and attitude towards reading. Reading is essentially a language activity. The kind of language background that a student comes from affects his attitude towards learning English which in turn affects his attitude towards reading in English. The data will be analyzed in order to present a reading profile of the students. If the reading profile of the students appears familiar to the teachers, that is, they recognize these same attitudes in their students, the reading interests inventory will, therefore, be more relevant in providing teachers with a guide to selecting reading materials that would appeal to their students.

4.1 THE LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Table 4.1a shows the language used most by the students at home, at school and in public. What is significant here is that only a small percentage (9.3%) comes from homes where English is used. Mandarin is the most widely used language. This is not surprising as almost 100% of the students from one of the two participating schools are ethnic Chinese.

Language used most	Malay (N = 236)	Mandarin (N = 236)	Tamil (N = 236)	English (N = 236)	Others* (N = 236)
At home	7.6% (18)	65.3% (154)	11.0% (26)	9.3% (22)	25.8% (61)
At school	31.7% (75)	79.7% (188)	9.7% (23)	10.2% (24)	5.1% (12)
In public**	25.0% (59)	64.4% (152)	7.6% (18)	15.7% (37)	22.5% (53)

Table 4.1a – Languages Used Most

*Others – this includes dialects (such as Cantonese) and other languages (such as Punjabi) not listed in the table.

**In public – this refers to the language used most outside the home and the school, for example, in shops, cinemas and restaurants.

However, the low percentage of 9.3% students coming from an English-speaking home environment does not necessarily mean that the rest i.e. 90.7% would have problems with the language. This is reflected in Table 4.1b which shows that 27.1% of the students scored Grade A in the PMR English paper. This indicates that although English may not be the language used most at home, this need not pose a major handicap if students have a positive attitude towards learning the language.

Total : N = 236	Good (High Proficiency)	Average (Average Proficiency)	Weak (Low Proficiency)
	Grade A	Grade B or C	Grade D or E, or did not take the PMR
	27.1% (64)	49.6% (117)	23.3% (55)

Table 4.1b – Grades obtained for English in the PMR

For ease of analysis and comparison, the above three categories of respondents would, henceforth, be referred to as Good, Average and Weak based on the grades obtained in the PMR.

4.1.1 REASONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

With this language background, how do the students feel about learning English? How motivated are they in learning the language? The answers to these questions are reflected in Table 4.1c which presents the data in response to the question of whether they would take English in the SPM if given a choice. It is apparent that a higher percentage of the weak students (27.3%) would opt to drop English in the SPM, compared to only 7.8% and 18.8% respectively for the good and average students.

	Good (N = 64)	Average (N = 117)	Weak (N = 55)
I would choose to take English in the SPM	92.2% (59)	81.2% (95)	72.7% (40)
I would choose not to take English in the SPM	7.8% (5)	18.8% (22)	27.3% (15)

Table 4.1c – Option to take / not to take English in the SPM

In a study conducted by Ho (1998), it was found that one of the reasons for Taiwanese students' low motivation in learning English was that it is a compulsory school subject. Furthermore, despite the importance of English in the business world and in pop culture, it has little to do with the daily life of the high school students. In Malaysian schools, a similar situation exists. Not only is English a compulsory school subject, it is also a compulsory examination subject. As in Taiwan, students here, especially those in schools outside the main urban areas, view English as having little relevance in their day to day activities. This could explain the overall low motivation of Malaysian students in learning English and their low language proficiency.

As for their reasons for learning English, the students were given five reasons to list in order of importance to them. The five reasons were selected from an original list of ten reasons used in the pilot study. The data in Table 4.1d indicates that 39.2% of the students viewed better job opportunities as their most important reason for learning English. This is contrary to the general assumption that students are very examination-oriented. Only 13.9% chose preparation for the SPM as their reason for learning English, making this the third most important reason. The second most important reason is to have access to more knowledge (26.8%). The fourth reason is to enjoy entertainment in English (11.5%), and the fifth and last reason is to make friends with English-speaking people (7.7%). When these figures are compared with those for a similar question posed to the teachers, it is obvious there is a mismatch as 78.5% of the teachers chose preparation for the SPM as the most important reason they think their students are learning English. This mismatch has significant implications for both students and teachers. The percentages within brackets denote the teachers' responses to the items.

N = 209* (N = 30)*	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
To enjoy entertainment in English	11.5% (0.0%)	11.5% (10.7%)	12.9% (25.0%)	19.6% (42.9%)	44.5% (21.4%)
To have better job opportunities	39.2% (7.1%)	27.3% (46.4%)	15.3% (28.6%)	9.6% (17.9%)	8.6% (0.0%)
To have access to more knowledge	26.8% (10.7%)	29.2% (25.0%)	17.7% (32.1%)	19.1% (17.9%)	7.2% (14.3%)
To make friends with English-speaking people	7.7% (3.6%)	13.9% (0.0%)	21.5% (10.7%)	35.9% (21.4%)	21.0% (64.3%)
To prepare for the SPM English paper	13.9% (78.5%)	18.7% (17.9%)	31.6% (3.6%)	16.7% (0.0%)	19.1% (0.0%)

Table 4.1d – Reasons for Learning English
(from the perspectives of students and teachers)

*The percentages within brackets denote the teachers' responses to the items.

**Some of the responses to this question were rejected as the respondents ticked the reasons instead of numbering them according to their importance.

The figures show that the students' reasons for learning English were more instrumental than integrative. Gardner and Lambert (1985) define instrumental motivation as learning a language for functional reasons as in attaining goals like better job prospects and passing required examinations, and integrative motivation as learning a language in order to identify with the culture of the target-language people. According to them, integratively-motivated learners are more successful because they are active learners compared to instrumentally-motivated learners.

4.2 THE READING BACKGROUND

As indicated by the data in Table 4.2a(i), the communicative skills of listening and speaking take precedence over the literacy skills of reading and writing. And if the last two columns are merged, it becomes even clearer that of the four language skills, the students do not consider reading and writing as important as the aural-oral skills. A combined total of 25.0% regarded reading and writing as either Not Very Important or Not Important, compared with only 14.9% for the listening and speaking skills. Overall, reading is viewed as the least important skill, with speaking as the most important skill.

N = 236	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not Important
Listening	50.0% (118)	43.2% (102)	4.7% (11)	2.1% (5)
Speaking	61.8% (146)	30.1% (71)	6.4% (15)	1.7% (4)
Reading	36.0% (85)	52.1% (123)	10.6% (25)	1.3% (3)
Writing	36.5% (86)	50.4% (119)	11.0% (26)	2.1% (5)

Table 4.2a(i) – Students' View of the Importance of Reading in relation to the other Language Skills

However, as shown in Table 4.2a(ii), the views of the teachers differ significantly from those of the students. To them, the literacy skills of reading (66.7%) and writing (63.4%) are more important than the aural-oral skills of listening (50.0%) and speaking (60.0%). This mismatch could explain to some extent why teachers have limited success in encouraging students to read as students regard the speaking skill much more important than the reading skill.

N = 30	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not Important
Listening	50.0% (15)	36.7% (11)	13.3% (4)	0.0% (0)
Speaking	60.0% (18)	33.3% (10)	6.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
Reading	66.7% (20)	30.0% (9)	3.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
Writing	63.4% (19)	33.3% (10)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (1)

Table 4.2a(ii) – Teachers' Views of the Importance of Reading in relation to the other Language Skills

A look at Table 4.2b reveals an interesting point. Only a very small percent of the students felt they were very good in the four skills. Indeed, the majority considered themselves only fair in the four skills, with speaking, which they regarded as the most important skill, turning out to be the skill they were least proficient in. For reading, only 5.5% felt they were very good in reading, 36.9% good in reading, 44% fair, and 13.1% poor in reading.

N = 236	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Listening	3.4% (8)	36.9% (87)	49.1% (116)	10.6% (25)
Speaking	3.4% (8)	18.2% (43)	54.2% (128)	24.2% (57)
Reading	5.5% (13)	36.9% (87)	44.5% (105)	13.1% (31)
Writing	1.7% (4)	16.9% (40)	60.2% (142)	21.2% (50)

Table 4.2b – Students' Self-Rated Proficiency in Reading in relation to the other Language Skills

4.2.1 THE READING ENVIRONMENT

It can be noted from the data in Table 4.2c that environment plays a significant role in affecting attitude towards reading, particularly early encouragement from parents and also from the peer group. According to Khemlani-David (1992:31), “the desire to read is not born in a child. It is planted by parents and teachers.” Children who are constantly exposed to an environment that is supportive of reading will most likely enjoy reading. As the data clearly shows, the Good students (those with high proficiency) received more encouragement from their parents and friends than the Weak students (those with low proficiency). Teachers are professionally obliged to encourage their students to read, and this is indicated by the high percentages attributed to encouragement from teachers.

	Good (N = 64)			Average (N=117)			Weak (N=55)		
	Yes	No	Some-Times	Yes	No	Some-times	Yes	No	Some-times
Parents	70.3% (45)	7.8% (5)	21.9% (14)	57.3% (67)	12.8% (15)	29.9% (35)	34.5% (19)	34.5% (19)	31.0% (17)
Teachers	79.7% (51)	0.0% (0)	20.3% (13)	80.3% (94)	3.4% (4)	16.2% (19)	54.6% (30)	12.7% (7)	32.7% (18)
Friends	25.0% (16)	29.7% (19)	45.3% (29)	15.4% (18)	41.9% (49)	42.7% (50)	16.4% (9)	49.1% (27)	34.5% (19)

Table 4.2c – Encouragement in Reading

4.2.2 READING IN L1 AND L2

The responses to the question of whether the students enjoyed reading in their first language and in English are presented in Table 4.2d. It can be seen that the majority

enjoyed reading in their first language, but this high percentage is not reflected in their attitude towards reading in English. For comparison, the data is arranged according to their proficiency in English based on their PMR grades. From the data, it can be concluded that language proficiency affects their enjoyment of reading in English. 78.1% of the students in the Good category enjoyed reading in English. This percentage decreases to only 50.9% for those in the Weak category.

	Good (N = 64)		Average (N = 117)		Weak (N = 55)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you enjoy reading in your first language? (L1)*	87.5% (56)	12.5% (8)	85.5% (100)	14.5% (17)	70.9% (39)	29.1% (16)
Do you enjoy reading in English? (L2)	78.1% (50)	21.9% (14)	57.3% (67)	42.7% (50)	50.9% (28)	49.1% (27)

Table 4.2d – Attitude Towards Reading in L1 and L2

*L1 here refers to the vernacular i.e. Malay, Tamil or Mandarin.

The data in Table 4.2d also clearly shows that a fairly high percentage of the students do not enjoy reading in English. 21.9% of the students who were good in English did not enjoy reading in English. This figure climbs even higher to 42.7% for the Average students and an alarming 49.1% for the Weak students. The data supports the views of Alderson (1984), Carrell (1991) and Taillefer (1996) that L2 reading is both a reading problem and a language problem, and that for learners with low language proficiency, L2 reading is very much more of a language problem.

4.2.3 READING PROBLEMS

In order to examine why such a large percentage of the students do not enjoy reading in English, they were asked to identify their reading problems from a given list. They could tick more than one problem or omit this section if they felt they did not have any major problems with reading in English. Table 4.2e(i) shows the majority of the students in each of the three groups were just too lazy to read. This can be interpreted as a lack of motivation towards reading in English. While this cannot be taken as a reading problem per se, there is a need to find out the underlying causes behind this seeming lack of motivation. Pumfrey (1997:164) maintains that "attitudes towards reading and motivation to engage with texts are complementary processes." If students do not view reading as important, there is little incentive for them to want to read. The importance of motivation in successful learning has also been extensively studied in earlier research by Rivers (1983), Skehan (1989), Spolsky (1989).

Apart from a lack of motivation to read, the students also felt that an inability to understand what they read in English hampered any enjoyment they might otherwise have derived from the reading materials. This means that the reading materials given to them to read were probably not appropriate to their reading level. In other words, the readability of the materials affected their understanding of the materials, and this in turn affected their enjoyment in reading the materials. These two problems, namely, lack of motivation and inability to understand what they read, are by far the most important of the students' reading problems, regardless of their level of language proficiency.

Reading Problems	Good (N = 64)	Average (N = 117)	Weak (N = 55)
I cannot concentrate on what I have read as I have a short attention span.	29.7% (19)	40.2% (47)	36.4% (20)
I am usually too lazy to make an effort to read and understand the text.	60.9% (39)	62.4% (73)	45.5% (25)
I find reading boring because it is a silent, solitary and passive activity.	21.8% (14)	31.6% (37)	29.1% (16)
I have little interest in reading because whatever I read in class is not tested.	14.1% (9)	30.8% (36)	29.1% (16)
I have difficulty understanding what I read unless the teacher guides me.	42.2% (27)	63.2% (74)	61.8% (34)

Table 4.2e(i) – Students' Reading Problems

In Table 4.2e(ii), the teachers' response to the question regarding what they considered were their students' reading problems also listed the same two problems as the top two problems. However, whereas the students had listed their laziness or lack of motivation to read as their foremost problem and inability to understand what they read as their second problem, it was the other way round for the teachers. 62.1% listed readability as their students' main problem and 58.6% listed lack of motivation as their students' second problem

Students' Reading Problems (as viewed by teachers)	N = 29
They cannot concentrate on what they have read as they have a short attention span.	20.7% (6)
They are usually too lazy to make an effort to read and understand the text.	58.6% (17)
They find reading boring because it is a silent, solitary and passive activity.	41.4% (12)
They have little interest in reading because whatever they read in class is not tested.	6.9% (2)
They have difficulty understanding what they read unless the teacher guides them.	62.1% (18)

Table 4.2e(ii) – Students' Reading Problems as Viewed by Teachers

4.2.4 READING FROM THE TEXTBOOK

In a related question, the students were asked if they enjoyed reading the passages in their English textbook. Those who answered in the negative were required to identify any complaints they might have with the passages. As the data in Table 4.2f(i) indicates, the percentages for those who did not enjoy reading from their textbooks are even higher than for those who did not enjoy reading English materials in general. 64.1% of the Good students said they did not enjoy reading the passages in their textbook. For the Average students, it was 77.8%, and for the Weak students, it was 74.5%. In Table 4.2f (ii), the percentages taken from the teachers' response to this question also confirmed this view. 83.3% of the teachers agreed that their students had an aversion towards reading from their textbook. These figures testify to the fact that the reading passages in the textbook do not motivate the students to read.

Do you enjoy reading the passages in your textbook?	Good (N = 64)		Average (N = 117)		Weak (N = 55)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	35.9% (23)	64.1% (41)	22.2% (26)	77.8% (91)	25.5% (14)	74.5% (41)

Table 4.2f(i) – Reading from the Textbook

N = 30	Yes	No
Do you think your students enjoy reading the passages in their textbook?	16.7% (5)	83.3% (25)

Table 4.2f(ii) – Reading from the Textbook (Teachers' Views)

As indicated by the data in Table 4.2g, both the Good and Average students as well as the teachers considered boring topics as their number one complaint about the passages in their textbook with the figures at 73.2%, 65.9% and 52.2% respectively. As for the Weak respondents, this complaint was a close second at 51.2% behind lengthy passages at 53.7%. In recent studies conducted by Bintz (1993; 1997), Rönqvist & Sell (1994), it was found that content appears to be the most significant contributory factor for reading motivation. Other major complaints include difficult vocabulary, especially for the Average and Weak students. This supports Anderson's (1984) own research findings that for learners with low language competency, L2 reading is more a language problem than a reading problem. A fairly large number of the students, particularly from the Good group, also complained about the irrelevancy of the contents of the passages to their needs. This could be interpreted as an inability to see how the information contained in the passages could be of use to the respondents. Put another way, these respondents appear to approach reading with functionality in mind rather than knowledge. They would be more likely to

read something if they felt they could apply the information to their needs. As Bintz (1997:20) says, “Students don’t read because they do not find school-based reading personally meaningful or socially relevant.” The complaint that received the least votes was that concerning the lack of pictures to accompany the reading passages. This could be viewed as a step towards being weaned from the copiously-illustrated textbooks commonly used in primary and lower secondary textbooks.

Complaints about the Reading Passages in the Textbook	Good (N = 41)*	Average (N = 91)*	Weak (N=41)*	Teachers' Views (N=25)
There are too many new words.	34.1% (14)	53.8% (49)	46.3% (19)	36.0% (9)
There are few or no pictures.	4.8% (2)	10.0% (9)	29.3% (12)	20.0% (5)
The passages are too long.	29.3% (12)	45.1% (41)	53.7% (22)	32.0% (8)
The contents of the passages are not familiar to me / my students.	22.0% (9)	34.1% (31)	24.4% (10)	32.0% (8)
The topics are generally boring.	73.2% (30)	65.9% (60)	51.2% (21)	68.0% (11)
The information in the passages is not relevant to my needs / my students' needs.	41.5% (17)	38.5% (35)	36.6% (15)	40.0% (10)

Table 4.2g – Complaints about the Reading Passages in the Textbook

*Only those students who did not enjoy reading from the textbook were required to answer this question regarding their complaints about the passages in the textbook.

4.2.5 READING BENEFITS

A comparison of the data in Table 4.2g and in Table 4.2h reveals an interesting point. Although the majority of the students did not enjoy reading from their textbook, they agreed that there were many benefits to be derived from reading the passages in the textbook. This finding is in keeping with Cho and Krashen’s (1993) views that reading is a

powerful means of developing second language competence, that those who read more have larger vocabularies, do better on tests of grammar, write better, spell better and are more competent in the oral/aural skills. However, being aware of the benefits of reading does not necessarily result in having the motivation to read as the data in Tables 4.2d and 4.2f show. The overriding factor here seems to be the reading materials themselves. As long as students regard the materials as boring, they would be reluctant to read those materials unless coerced into doing so for one reason or another such as for an assignment or for a test/examination.

S.A. = Strongly Agree; A. = Agree; U. = Undecided;
D. = Disagree; S.D. = Strongly Disagree

Reading the passages in the textbook would help me to	(N=236) S.A.	(N=236) A.	(N=236) U.	(N=236) D.	(N=236) S.D.
learn new words	38.6% (91)	47.5% (112)	11.0% (26)	2.1% (5)	0.8% (2)
improve my grammar	28.8% (68)	53.4% (126)	12.7% (30)	4.7% (11)	0.4% (1)
improve my spelling	28.8% (68)	50.0% (118)	14.8% (35)	5.1% (12)	1.3% (3)
improve my pronunciation (by reading aloud)	19.9% (47)	41.1% (97)	29.7% (70)	8.0% (19)	1.3% (3)
improve my essay writing	28.8% (68)	45.8% (108)	18.2% (43)	5.1% (12)	2.1% (5)
increase my knowledge	24.6% (53)	45.3% (107)	22.5% (53)	6.8% (16)	0.8% (2)
learn and apply moral values	7.6% (18)	31.5% (74)	34.7% (82)	18.2% (43)	8.0% (19)

Table 4.2h(i) – Reading Benefits (Students' Views)

The figures in Table 4.2h(i) clearly show that most of the students either strongly agree or agreed with each of the benefits that can be derived from reading the passages. However, one glaring exception to this is the last benefit, which is, reading the passages in the textbook would help them to learn and apply moral values. Only 7.6% strongly agreed with this, 34.7% were undecided, 18.2% disagreed and 8.0% strongly disagreed. A similar pattern is reflected in the teachers' response to this item in Table 4.2h(ii) below. This has very important implications as the reading component of the language syllabus (Appendix C) stipulates that students should read and understand stories based on moral values so that they would develop high moral values. It is evident that both the students and the teachers do not fully subscribe to this view.

(N = 30) Reading the passages in the textbook would help my students to	S.A.	A.	U.	D.	S.D.
learn new words	66.7% (20)	30.0% (9)	3.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
improve their grammar	23.3% (7)	73.4% (22)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
improve their spelling	26.6% (8)	60.0% (18)	6.7% (2)	6.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
improve their pronunciation (by reading aloud)	26.6% (8)	53.4% (16)	10.0% (3)	10.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
improve their essay writing	26.6% (8)	56.7% (17)	6.7% (2)	10.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
increase their knowledge	34.7% (11)	53.3% (16)	3.3% (1)	6.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
learn and apply moral values	6.7% (2)	63.4% (19)	13.3% (4)	13.3% (4)	3.3% (1)

Table 4.2h(ii) – Reading Benefits (Teachers' Views)

As for the other benefits, most of the students generally agreed that reading the passages in the textbook would help them improve their vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and their essay writing. They also accepted that reading would increase their knowledge, but they were undecided about whether reading aloud would help them improve their pronunciation. One possible explanation could be that they were not given sufficient opportunities to read aloud in class.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the data in Table 4.2h(i) and Table 4.2h(ii) is that the students, as well as the teachers, regarded reading as *theoretically* beneficial. However, in practice, there is little evidence from the students' responses in Table 4.2b to show that they had indeed benefited from reading the passages in the textbook.

4.3 READING INTERESTS

The focus of this section is the analysis of data regarding the students' reading interests. Since they did not enjoy reading from their textbook, would they be interested in reading if they could choose what they wanted to read? And if so, what would be their preferred sources of reading materials. The data in Tables 4.3 and 4.3.1a show the students' answers to these questions.

	Good (N = 64)		Average (N = 117)		Weak (N = 55)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Would you be more interested in reading if you could choose your own English reading materials?	95.3% (61)	4.7% (3)	88.9% (104)	11.1% (13)	78.2% (43)	21.8% (12)

Table 4.3 – Interest in Free Reading

Table 4.3 shows that over 75% of the students would be more interested in reading if they were free to choose their own English reading materials. The percentage goes as high as 95.3% in the case of the Good students. This indicates that their negative attitude towards reading in English (Table 4.2d) is largely confined to reading from their English textbook -Table 4.2f(i) - and probably also from teacher-selected materials. Pugh (1978) refers to the gulf which sometimes exists between what teachers consider suitable as reading materials and what students themselves choose to read. His view is shared by Bintz (1993:612) who believes that students demonstrate not an 'explicit reluctance to read but rather an implicit resistance to reading school-assigned materials'.

4.3.1 SOURCES OF READING MATERIALS

Sources of Reading Materials	1 st choice (N = 200)*	2 nd choice (N = 200)*	3 rd choice (N = 200)*	4 th choice (N = 200)*	5 th choice (N = 200)*
Newspapers	14.5% (29)	21.5% (43)	22.5% (45)	28.5% (57)	13.0% (26)
Books	11.5% (23)	18.5% (37)	21.5% (43)	20.5% (41)	28.0% (56)
Magazines	20.0% (40)	25.5% (51)	27.0% (54)	21.0% (42)	6.5% (13)
Internet materials	25.5% (51)	13.5% (27)	15.0% (30)	18.5% (37)	27.5% (55)
Comics	28.0% (56)	20.5% (41)	14.5% (29)	12.5% (25)	24.5% (49)

Table 4.3.1a – Students' Preferred Sources of Reading Materials

*36 responses to this question were rejected as the respondents ticked their choices instead of numbering them in order of preference.

It can be seen from Table 4.3.1a that books no longer occupy the traditional spot at the top of preferred reading materials. It is perhaps a sign of the times that students prefer

materials that are fun and entertaining, authentic and easy to read. Hence, the highest percentage in the column under 1st choice is for comics (28.0%), followed by Internet materials (25.5%), Magazines (20.0%), Newspapers (15%) and lastly, Books (11.5%).

The data in Table 4.3.1a contrasts significantly with that in Table 4.3.1b below which shows the teachers' preferred sources of materials for teaching reading.

Sources of Materials for Teaching Reading	1 st choice (N = 29)*	2 nd choice (N = 29)*	3 rd choice (N = 29)*	4 th choice (N = 29)*	5 th choice (N = 29)*
Newspapers	48.3% (14)	27.6% (8)	20.7% (6)	3.4% (1)	0.0% (0)
Books	31.0% (9)	20.7% (6)	17.2% (5)	20.7% (6)	10.4% (3)
Magazines	10.4% (3)	34.5% (10)	34.5% (10)	17.2% (5)	3.4% (1)
Internet materials	0.0% (0)	6.9% (2)	13.8% (4)	31.0% (9)	48.3% (14)
Comics	10.4% (3)	17.2% (5)	6.9% (2)	27.6% (8)	37.9% (11)

Table 4.3.1b – Teachers' Preferred Sources of Materials for Teaching Reading

*1 response to this question was rejected as the respondent ticked his/her choices instead of numbering them in order of preference.

In teaching reading comprehension, teachers should seriously give some thought to using comics and magazines to add variety to the materials used. In a study by Swain (cited in Khemlani-David 1992), more top pupils (nearly 100%) in all age-groups, read comics or comic-books than did lower-achieving pupils! Clearly, comics should not be scoffed at as valid reading materials for language learners. Teachers should also be familiar with the Internet as a rich and current source of reading materials so that they can keep abreast with what their students enjoy reading. It is a cause of some concern that

none of the teachers chose the Internet as a source of reading materials while the students picked the Internet as their second most popular choice. The data collected from the teachers clearly shows that they favoured newspapers (48.3%) above all other sources of reading materials, with other books (31.0%) as their second choice.

4.3.2 RANKING OF READING INTERESTS

What does the average Form Four student like to read about? The answer to this question would provide teachers with a reading interests inventory that would help them in the selection of materials for reading comprehension. Very often, teachers pick passages from the textbook, or select their own materials based on what they perceive as interesting or informative to the students. However, given the difference in age, interests and world experience, what appeals to teachers may not necessarily appeal to students. Students in general do not enjoy reading from the textbook as they find most of the reading passages boring (Table 4.2g). This is not surprising. Neither is this distaste for reading from textbooks exclusive to Malaysian students. Hutchinson and Torres (1994:315) asks "Why does there appear to be apathy and even hostility to the ELT textbook?" Lester and Cheek (1998:282) pose a similar question "Why do many high school students intensely dislike their textbooks? What is it about this particular type of reading activity that brings out such negative feelings?" Bintz (1993), (1997) talks about resistant readers in high schools who found out-of-school reading much more meaningful, functional and purposeful than school-assigned reading.

Since studies have shown that students in general do not enjoy reading from their textbook because they find the topics boring and of little relevance to their needs and

interests, what then would they be motivated to read? In an attempt to seek an answer to this question, the students were asked to rank their favourite reading interests from a list of 20. This selection is an expanded version of the areas of reading interests listed by Brusch (1991), Fatimah Hashim and Lynne Norazit (1992), Bügel and Buuck (1996), Carrell and Wise (1998) and Flack (1999).

Tables 4.3.2a to 4.3.2d provide a guide to the ranking of 20 reading interests as indicated by the students. To cover all major groups and also to enable a comparison to be made, the data is tabulated according to :

- Setting – Rural and Urban
- Gender – Boys and Girls
- Stream – Science and Arts / Commerce
- Proficiency in English – Good, Average and Weak

This grouping is based on studies done by Harris (1964), Nunan (1985), Bügel and Buunk (1996) and Carrell and Wise (1998) who have concluded that individual differences in reading interests are a direct consequence of prior knowledge, cultural schemata and gender. The rationale behind the inclusion of the fourth group is to find out whether proficiency in English has any bearing on reading interests. In other words, do students who have high proficiency in English share the same reading interests as students who have low proficiency in English?

Tables 4.3.3a(i-ii) and 4.3.3b(i-ii) highlight the most popular and the least popular reading interests for each of the groups. Finally, the data in Table 4.3.3c compares the teachers' ranking of what they perceive to be their students' reading interests with the students' own ranking of their reading interests.

Reading Interests	RURAL (N=95)		URBAN (N=141)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
Adventure Stories	1	80.0% (76)	3	70.9% (100)	9.1
Mysteries	2	78.9% (75)	6	57.4% (81)	21.5
Entertainment	3	77.9% (74)	1	78.0% (110)	0.1
Animals	4	67.4% (64)	9	52.5% (74)	14.9
Love Stories	5	63.2% (60)	8	53.2% (75)	10.0
Science & Technology	6	62.1% (59)	10	47.5% (67)	14.6
Sports	7	61.1% (58)	2	73.8% (104)	12.7
Teen Issues	8	57.9% (55)	15	27.7% (39)	30.2
Computer & I.T.	9	53.7% (51)	4	61.0% (86)	7.3
Travel	10	52.6% (50)	7	53.9% (76)	1.3
Foreign Culture	11	48.4% (46)	13	34.5% (50)	13.9
Famous People	12	45.3% (43)	11	45.4% (64)	0.1
Hobbies & Crafts	13	42.1% (40)	5	59.6% (84)	17.5
Health Care	13	42.1% (40)	17	24.1% (34)	18.0
History	15	36.8% (35)	11	44.7% (63)	7.9
Local Culture	16	31.6% (30)	18	22.0% (31)	9.6
Environment	16	31.6% (30)	14	29.8% (42)	1.8
Moral Values	18	28.4% (27)	20	14.2% (20)	14.2
Good Habits	19	25.3% (24)	16	27.0% (38)	1.7
Current Issues	20	17.9% (17)	19	14.9% (21)	3.0

Table 4.3.2a – Ranking of Reading Interests (by Setting)

As can be seen from the column for percentage difference in Table 4.3.2a, the biggest differences are found in these reading interests :

- Teen Issues

Teen Issues was ranked 8th by 57.9% of the students from the rural school and 15th by 27.7% of those from the urban school, giving a huge difference of 30.2%.

- Mysteries

This was given a ranking of 2 by 78.9% of the respondents from the rural school and 6 by 57.4% of those from the urban school. The difference of 21.5% is fairly large.

- Health Care

42.1% of the students from the rural school gave Health Care 13th placing compared to 17th placing given by 24.1% of the students from the urban school. The difference between the two is 18.0%.

- Hobbies & Crafts

42.1% of the students from the rural school ranked this field of interest 13th while 59.6% of those from the urban school listed it among the more popular fields at 5th spot, giving it a difference of 17.5%.

Apart from these four reading interests, there is little significant difference in the ranking of the other reading interests by the students from both schools.

Reading Interests	BOYS (N=130)		GIRLS (N=106)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage /Number	Rank	Percentage /Number	
Sports	1	80.8% (105)	7	53.8% (57)	27.0
Entertainment	2	77.7% (101)	1	78.3% (83)	0.6
Computer & I.T.	3	76.2% (99)	12	35.8% (38)	40.4
Adventure Stories	4	73.1% (95)	2	76.4% (81)	3.3
Science & Technology	5	68.5% (89)	14	34.9% (37)	33.6
Mysteries	6	62.3% (81)	3	70.8% (75)	8.5
Animals	7	59.2% (77)	6	57.5% (61)	1.7
Travel	8	54.6% (71)	9	51.9% (55)	2.7
Love Stories	9	47.7% (62)	4	68.9% (73)	21.2
History	9	47.7% (62)	15	34.0% (36)	13.7
Hobbies & Crafts	11	46.9% (61)	5	59.4% (63)	12.5
Famous People	12	40.8% (53)	10	50.9% (54)	10.1
Teen Issues	13	33.8% (44)	11	47.2% (50)	13.4
Foreign Culture	14	30.0% (39)	7	53.8% (57)	23.8
Environment	15	28.5% (37)	16	33.0% (35)	4.5
Health Care	15	27.7% (36)	12	35.8% (38)	8.1
Good Habits	17	22.3% (29)	18	31.1% (33)	8.8
Local Culture	18	20.0% (26)	16	33.0% (35)	13.0
Current Issues	19	17.7% (23)	20	14.2% (15)	3.5
Moral Values	20	15.4% (20)	19	25.5% (27)	10.1

Table 4.3.2b – Ranking of Reading Interests (by Gender)

Table 4.3.2b shows that there are significant differences between what boys and girls like to read about in terms of areas of interest. The major differences are :

- Computer & Information Technology (I.T.)

76.2% of the boys chose this, making it the 3rd most popular reading interest compared to only 35.8% of the girls who ranked this at 12th position. The difference of 40.4% is huge.

- Science & Technology

There is also a large difference of 33.6% for this reading interest with 68.5% of the boys and 34.9% of the girls picking this area of interest, giving it a ranking of 5th and 14th respectively.

- Sports

From the percentage difference of 27.0%, sports seem to be more popular with the boys than with the girls. A high of 80.8% of the boys selected sports, giving it the number one rank, compared with only 53.8% of the girls who ranked sports 7th on their list.

- Foreign Culture

The girls seemed more enamoured of foreign culture than the boys. 53.8% of them ranked it at 7th, while 30.0% of the boys put it at 14th spot. The difference is 23.8%

- Love Stories

Not surprisingly, love stories were popular with 68.9% of the girls, and occupies 4th spot. Only 47.7% of the boys were interested in this field, giving it a ranking of 9th spot. The difference is 21.2%.

Reading Interests	SCIENCE (N=80)		ARTS/ COMMERCE (N=156)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
Adventure Stories	1	75.0% (60)	2	74.4% (116)	0.6
Entertainment	1	75.0% (60)	1	79.5% (124)	4.5
Science / Technology	1	75.0% (60)	11	42.3% (66)	32.7
Mysteries	4	72.5% (58)	5	62.8% (98)	9.7
Sports	5	60.0% (48)	3	73.1% (114)	13.1
Animals	6	53.8% (43)	7	60.9% (95)	7.1
Travel	7	52.5% (42)	9	53.8% (84)	1.3
Computer & I.T.	8	51.3% (41)	6	61.5% (96)	10.2
Foreign Culture	9	50.0% (40)	13	35.9% (56)	14.1
Teen Issues	10	48.8% (39)	14	35.3% (55)	13.5
Famous People	10	48.8% (39)	10	43.6% (68)	5.2
Hobbies & Crafts	12	47.5% (38)	8	55.1% (86)	7.6
Love Stories	13	45.0% (36)	4	63.5% (99)	18.5
History	14	42.5% (34)	12	41.0% (64)	1.5
Environment	15	35.0% (28)	17	28.2% (44)	6.8
Health Care	15	35.0% (28)	15	29.5% (46)	5.5
Local Culture	17	27.5% (22)	19	25.0% (39)	2.5
Current Issues	18	25.0% (20)	20	11.5% (18)	13.5
Good Habits	19	21.3% (17)	16	28.8% (45)	7.5
Moral Values	20	8.8% (7)	18	25.6% (40)	16.8

Table 4.3.2c – Ranking of Reading Interests (by Stream)

An examination of Table 4.3.2c reveals few differences between the ranking by the Science students and by the Arts/Commerce students. Only three reading interests show a significant percentage difference in ranking, and these are :

- Science & Technology

This ranks 1st with 75.0% of the respondents from the Science stream but only 11th with 42.3% of those from the Arts/Commerce stream. This gives a huge difference of 32.7%.

- Love Stories

As there were more girls than boys in the Arts/Commerce classes, it is not surprising that 63.5% of them chose this reading interest compared to 45.0% for those from the Science stream. The ranking for the former is 4th and for the latter it is 13th. The difference is 18.5%.

- Moral Values

Both the Science students (8.8%) and the Arts/Commerce students (25.6%) gave this reading interest a low ranking of 20 and 18 respectively. The percentage difference is fairly big at 16.8%.

The percentage difference between the two groups for the other reading interest does not reflect much significant difference.

Reading Interests	GOOD (N=64) (High Proficiency)		WEAK (N=55) (Low Proficiency)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
Entertainment	1	79.7% (51)	1	80.0% (44)	0.3
Adventure Stories	2	78.1% (50)	2	74.5% (41)	3.6
Mysteries	3	73.4% (47)	10	43.6% (24)	29.8
Science & Technology	4	60.9% (39)	8	45.5% (25)	15.4
Sports	5	59.4% (38)	3	70.9% (39)	11.5
Computer & I.T.	6	56.3% (36)	6	60.0% (33)	3.7
Teen Issues	7	54.7% (35)	17	29.1% (16)	25.6
Love Stories	8	53.1% (34)	4	65.5% (36)	12.4
Animals	8	53.1% (34)	5	63.6% (35)	10.5
Travel	10	50.0% (32)	10	43.6% (24)	6.4
Famous People	10	50.0% (32)	13	38.2% (21)	11.8
Foreign Culture	12	48.4% (31)	15	36.4% (20)	9.9
Hobbies & Crafts	13	45.3% (29)	7	50.0% (28)	5.6
History	14	42.2% (27)	8	45.5% (25)	3.3
Health Care	15	32.8% (21)	13	38.2% (21)	5.4
Local Culture	16	26.6% (17)	19	23.6% (13)	3.0
Current Issues	17	25.0% (16)	20	9.1% (5)	15.9
Good Habits	18	23.4% (15)	15	36.4% (20)	13.0
Environment	19	21.9% (14)	12	41.8% (23)	19.9
Moral Values	20	6.3% (4)	17	29.1% (16)	22.8

Table 4.3.2d – Ranking of Reading Interests (by Language Proficiency)

The data in Table 4.3.2d indicates that there are some rather curious differences in the ranking of reading interests by the students who are good in English and by those who are weak in English.

- Mysteries

73.4% of the good respondents ranked Mysteries as their 3rd preferred choice of reading interests while 43.6% of the weak respondents placed it at 10th spot. The difference is 29.8%.

- Teen Issues

Those good in English, that is 54.7%, enjoyed reading about Teen Issues compared to 29.1% of those weak in English. The former ranked this area at 7th spot while the latter ranked it 17th. The difference is 25.6%.

- Moral Values

This reading interest occupies a low 17th position with 29.1% of the weak respondents, and at the bottom of the list at 20th spot, with 6.3% of the good respondents. The difference works out to 22.8%.

- Environment

This reading interest stands at 19th spot with 21.9% of the good respondents favouring it compared to a relatively high 41.8% of the weak students who ranked it 12th in terms of popularity. The difference is 19.9%.

Other less significant differences lie in interests like Science & Technology, and Current Issues which occupy the higher ranks with the good respondents than with the weak ones.

4.3.3 COMPARISON OF THE MOST POPULAR AND THE LEAST POPULAR READING INTERESTS

In a study of this nature involving the views and tastes of a large sampling, differences are bound to exist. However, as the data in Tables 4.3.2a to 4.3.2d indicates, these are clearly group differences rather than individual differences. Of the four sets of comparison, group differences in reading interests are more pronounced in comparisons by gender and stream than in comparisons by setting and language proficiency. For instance, in the case of gender (Table 4.3.2b), the boys enjoyed reading about Sports, Computer & I.T., Science & Technology while the girls preferred Love Stories, Hobbies & Crafts and Foreign Culture.

Aside from these group differences based on setting, gender, stream and language proficiency, the comparative analyses also indicate that the students do share similar strong likes and dislikes in their choice of reading interests. This is evident in Tables 4.3.3a(i-ii) and 4.3.3b(i-ii) which list the five most popular and five least popular reading interests for each of the eight groups. The list for the Average group (average proficiency) has been deliberately omitted to facilitate comparison of reading interests between those good in English (high proficiency) and those weak in English (low proficiency).

There is no doubt that Entertainment, Adventure Stories and Sports are the most popular reading interests with almost all the eight groups. At the other end of the popularity scale are Current Issues, Moral Values and Local Culture.

Rural (N = 95)	Urban (N = 141)	Boys (N = 130)	Girls (N = 106)
1. Adventure Stories 80.0% (76)	1. Entertainment 78.0% (110)	1. Sports 80.8% (105)	1. Entertainment 78.3% (83)
2. Mysteries 78.9% (75)	2. Sports 73.8% (104)	2. Entertainment 77.7% (101)	2. Adventure Stories 76.4% (81)
3. Entertainment 77.9% (74)	3. Adventure Stories 70.9% (100)	3. Computer & I.T. 76.2% (99)	3. Mysteries 70.8% (75)
4. Animals 67.4% (64)	4. Computer & I.T. 61.0% (86)	4. Adventure Stories 73.1% (95)	4. Love Stories 68.9% (73)
5. Love Stories 63.2% (60)	5. Hobbies & Crafts 59.6% (84)	5. Science & Tech. 68.5% (89)	5. Hobbies & Crafts 59.4% (63)

Table 4.3.3a (i) – Most Popular Reading Interests
(by Setting and Gender)

Science (N=80)	Arts/Commerce (N=156)	Good (H.P.) (N=64)	Weak (L.P.) (N=55)
1. Adventure stories 75.0% (60)	1. Entertainment 79.5% (124)	1. Entertainment 79.7% (51)	1. Entertainment 80.0% (44)
1. Entertainment 75.0% (60)	2. Adventure stories 74.4% (116)	2. Adventure stories 78.1% (50)	2. Adventure stories 74.5% (41)
1. Science & Tech. 75.0% (60)	3. Sports 73.1% (114)	3. Mysteries 73.4% (47)	3. Sports 70.9% (39)
4. Mysteries 72.5% (58)	4. Love Stories 63.5% (99)	4. Science & Tech. 60.9% (39)	4. Love Stories 65.5% (36)
5. Sports 60.0% (48)	5. Mysteries 62.8% (98)	5. Sports 59.4% (38)	5. Animals 63.6% (35)

Table 4.3.3a (ii) – Most Popular Reading Interests
(by Stream and Language Proficiency)

Rural (N = 95)	Urban (N = 141)	Boys (N = 130)	Girls (N = 106)
16. Local Culture 31.6% (30)	16. Good Habits 27.0% (38)	16. Health Care 27.7% (36)	16. Local Culture 33.0% (35)
16. Environment 31.6% (30)	17. Health Care 24.1% (34)	17. Good Habits 22.3% (29)	16. Environment 33.0% (35)
18. Moral Values 28.4% (27)	18. Local Culture 22.0% (31)	18. Local Culture 20.0% (26)	18. Good Habits 31.1% (33)
19. Good Habits 25.3% (24)	19. Current Issues 14.9% (21)	19. Current Issues 17.7% (23)	19. Moral Values 25.5% (27)
20. Current Issues 17.9% (17)	20. Moral Values 14.2% (20)	20. Moral Values 15.4% (20)	20. Current Issues 14.2% (15)

Table 4.3.3b(i) – Least Popular Reading Interests
(by Setting and Gender)

Science (N = 80)	Arts / Commerce (N = 156)	Good (N = 64)	Weak (N = 55)
16. Health Care 35.0% (28)	16. Good Habits 28.8% (45)	16. Local Culture 26.6% (17)	16. Good Habits 36.4% (20)
17. Local Culture 27.5% (22)	17. Environment 28.2% (44)	17. Current Issues 25.0% (16)	17. Moral Values 29.1% (16)
18. Current Issues 25.0% (20)	18. Moral Values 25.6% (40)	18. Good Habits 23.4% (15)	17. Teen Issues 29.1% (16)
19. Good Habits 21.3% (17)	19. Local Culture 25.0% (39)	19. Environment 21.9% (14)	19. Local Culture 23.6% (13)
20. Moral Values 8.8% (7)	20. Current Issues 11.5% (18)	20. Moral Values 6.3% (4)	20. Current Issues 9.1% (5)

Table 4.3.3b (ii) – Least Popular Reading Interests
(by Stream and Language Proficiency)

STUDENTS (N = 236)			TEACHERS (N = 30)		
Areas of Interest	Rank	Percentage / Number	Areas of Interest	Rank	Percentage / Number
Entertainment	1	78.0% (184)	Teen Issues	1	93.3% (28)
Adventure Stories	2	74.6% (176)	Entertainment	2	90.0% (27)
Sports	3	68.6% (162)	Sports	3	80.0% (24)
Mysteries	4	66.1% (156)	Adventure Stories	4	76.7% (23)
Animals	5	58.5% (138)	Love Stories	4	76.7% (23)
Computer & I.T.	6	58.1% (137)	Mysteries	6	73.3% (22)
Love Stories	7	57.2% (135)	Travel	7	63.3% (19)
Travel	8	53.4% (126)	Computer & I.T.	8	60.0% (18)
Science & Tech.	8	53.4% (126)	Hobbies & Crafts	9	56.7% (17)
Hobbies & Crafts	10	52.5% (124)	Famous People	9	56.7% (17)
Famous People	11	45.3% (107)	Foreign Culture	11	40.0% (12)
History	12	41.5% (98)	Current Issues	12	30.0% (9)
Foreign Culture	13	40.7% (96)	Local Culture	13	20.0% (6)
Teen Issues	14	39.8% (94)	Health Care	13	20.0% (6)
Health Care	15	31.4% (74)	Environment	15	16.7% (5)
Environment	16	30.5% (72)	Good Habits	15	16.7% (5)
Good Habits	17	26.3% (62)	Science & Tech.	17	13.3% (4)
Local Culture	18	25.8% (61)	Moral Values	18	10.0% (3)
Moral Values	19	19.9% (47)	Animals	18	10.0% (3)
Current Issues	20	16.1% (38)	History	20	3.3% (1)

Table 4.3.3c – Comparison of Ranking of Reading Interests by Students and by Teachers

An analysis of the two lists shows that overall, there are several mismatches between the students' ranking of reading interests and that of the teachers'. The more significant ones are:

Reading Interests	Ranked by Students	Ranked by Teachers
Teen Issues	14 th (39.8%)	1 st (93.3%)
Science & Technology	8 th (53.4%)	17 th (13.3%)
Animals	5 th (58.5%)	18 th (10.0%)
Current Issues	20 th (16.1%)	12 th (30.0%)
History	12 th (41.5%)	20 th (3.3%)

Table 4.3.3d – Mismatch in Ranking of Reading Interests by Students and by Teachers

Both students and teachers listed Entertainment as the most popular reading interest. It is also interesting to note that both also ranked Foreign Culture higher than Local Culture, while Moral Values and Good Habits were given low rankings.

Overall, there are more differences in the ranking of the most popular and least popular reading interests by the students and by the teachers than among the nine student groups.

4.3.4 RANKING OF TOPICS OF INTEREST

A similar organization of data is used for Tables 4.3.4a to 4.3.4d listing the students' ranking of ten topics of interest out of a list of 24 topics that they would like to see in a Form Four KBSM textbook. The 24 topics listed are based on the reading specifications in the reading component of the KBSM syllabus for Form Four. Some of these topics are taken from Form Four textbooks that are approved by the Ministry of Education, some from SPM revision guidebooks, and some are specially conceived for the research study.

Reading Interests and Topics of Interest are two entirely separate groupings. The former is general, while the latter is specific. For instance, a respondent may say that he is interested in reading about animals (reading interest), but a passage about the Orang Utan of Sepilok (topic of interest) may not interest him at all. He may be more interested in reading about other animals, perhaps dinosaurs or pandas.

No doubt it is impossible to cater to individual differences in reading interests given the large number of students using a particular textbook. Nevertheless, this study will give teachers and textbook writers a general idea of what teenager students like to read. The data will also be compared with the data collected from the teachers' responses to see how far the two are matched or mismatched.

Tables 4.3.5a(i-ii) and 4.3.5b(i-ii) list the most popular and the least popular topics for each of the groups. The last table, Table 4.3.5c presents the overall comparison of the ranking of topics of interests by the students and by the teachers.

Topics of Interest	RURAL (N=95)		URBAN (N=141)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage /Number	
The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	1	76.8% (73)	1	74.5% (105)	2.3
The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	2	65.3% (62)	2	64.5% (91)	0.8
The Use and Abuse of the Internet	3	62.1% (59)	4	63.1% (89)	1.0
The 1998 Commonwealth Games	4	58.9% (56)	3	63.8% (90)	4.9
The World’s Tallest Building -the Petronas Twin Towers	5	52.6% (50)	5	48.2% (68)	4.4
Teenage Romance	6	49.5% (47)	5	48.2% (68)	1.3
Beauty Contests	6	49.5% (47)	13	34.0% (48)	15.5
A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	6	49.5% (47)	7	42.6% (60)	6.9
A Traditional Japanese Wedding	9	48.4% (46)	7	42.6% (60)	5.8
Motor Sports	10	47.4% (45)	11	39.7% (56)	7.7
Malaysians Conquer Mt Everest	11	42.1% (40)	12	34.8% (49)	7.3
How to Prepare for an Interview	12	40.0% (38)	10	41.1% (58)	1.1
Buying Originals vs Buying Copies	12	40.0% (38)	17	30.5% (43)	9.5
The Fast Food Phenomenon	14	38.9% (37)	15	32.6% (46)	6.3
Colours and their Meaning	15	36.8% (35)	13	34.0% (48)	2.8
Keeping Our Rivers Clean	16	35.8% (34)	15	33.3% (47)	2.5
Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia’s Pop Princess	17	32.6% (31)	23	14.9% (21)	17.7
Complaints about School Facilities	18	31.2% (30)	7	42.6% (60)	11.4
Qualities of a Good Leader	19	28.4% (27)	19	25.5% (36)	2.9
Caring for the Elderly	20	25.3% (24)	22	17.0% (24)	8.3
Malaysian Products	20	25.3% (24)	21	20.6% (29)	4.7
The Orang Utan of Sepilok	22	21.1% (20)	20	24.1% (34)	3.0
A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	22	21.1% (20)	18	27.0% (38)	5.9
Islamic Art and Architecture	24	12.6% (12)	23	14.9% (21)	2.3

Table 4.3.4a – Ranking of Topics of Interest (by Setting)

Compared to reading interests, the percentage difference in the ranking of topics of interest between the students from the rural school and those from the urban school is much lower overall. The notable differences are:

- Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia’s Pop Princess

This topic is more popular with the rural students than with the urban students. It garnered 32.6% of the votes and was ranked 17th while only 14.9% of the urban students were interested in reading about this topic, giving it a 23rd ranking. The difference is 17.7%.

- Beauty Contests

49.5% of the rural students and 34.0% of the urban students ranked this topic at 6th and 13th respectively. This gives Beauty Contest a difference of 15.5%.

- Complaints about School Facilities

Although the difference in rank is the widest of all the topics at 18th (for Rural) and 7th (for Urban), the percentage difference of 11.4 is relatively small, with 31.2% of the rural students and 42.6% of the urban students selecting this topic.

Topics of Interest	BOYS (N=130)		GIRLS (N=106)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	1	74.6% (97)	1	76.4% (81)	1.8
The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	2	70.0% (91)	2	58.5% (62)	11.5
The Use and Abuse of the Internet	3	68.5% (89)	6	55.7% (59)	12.8
The 1998 Commonwealth Games	4	65.4% (85)	3	57.5% (61)	7.9
Motor Sports	5	63.8% (83)	23	17.0% (18)	46.8
The World’s Tallest Building -the Petronas Twin Towers	6	51.5% (67)	8	48.1% (51)	3.4
Teenage Romance	7	41.5% (54)	3	57.5% (61)	16.0
A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	8	40.8% (53)	7	50.9% (54)	10.1
Beauty Contests	9	40.0% (52)	12	40.6% (43)	0.6
Complaints about School Facilities	10	38.5% (50)	14	37.7% (40)	0.8
How to Prepare for an Interview	11	37.7% (49)	10	44.3% (47)	6.6
Buying Originals vs Buying Copies	12	36.9% (48)	16	31.1% (33)	5.8
Malaysians Conquer Mt Everest	12	36.9% (48)	13	38.7% (41)	1.8
A Traditional Japanese Wedding	14	34.6% (45)	3	57.5% (61)	22.9
Keeping Our Rivers Clean	14	34.6% (45)	15	34.0% (36)	0.6
The Fast Food Phenomenon	16	30.0% (39)	11	41.5% (44)	11.5
Colours and their Meaning	17	26.2% (34)	9	46.2% (49)	20.0
Qualities of a Good Leader	17	26.2% (34)	19	27.4% (29)	1.2
Malaysian Products	19	23.1% (30)	22	21.7% (23)	1.4
The Orang Utan of Sepilok	20	20.8% (27)	20	25.5% (27)	4.7
A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	20	20.8% (27)	18	29.2% (31)	8.4
Caring for the Elderly	22	18.5% (24)	21	22.6% (24)	4.1
Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia’s Pop Princess	23	15.4% (20)	17	30.2% (32)	14.8
Islamic Art and Architecture	24	12.3% (16)	24	16.0% (17)	3.7

Table 4.3.4b – Ranking of Topics of Interest (by Gender)

As with reading interests, differences in reading preferences are more marked between boys and girls, than between rural and urban.

- Motor Sports

This topic is the 5th choice with 63.8% of the boys, but 23rd with 17.0% of the girls. The difference of 46.8% is by far the biggest of all.

- A Traditional Japanese Wedding

57.5% of the girls ranked it 3rd while 34.6% of the boys gave this topic a ranking of 14th. The difference is 22.9%.

- Colours and their Meaning

Only 26.2% of the boys chose this topic compared to 46.2% of the girls. It was ranked 17th by the boys and 9th by the girls. The difference is 20.0%

- Teenage Romance

With 57.5% of the girls choosing this topic, it shares 3rd ranking with A Traditional Japanese Wedding. 41.5% of the boys ranked it 7th, giving a difference of 16.0%.

- Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess

Although this topic lies in the bottom half of the popularity ranking, more girls than boys chose it. 30.2% of the girls picked it as 17th on their list compared to a low of 15.4% of the boys who ranked it 23rd out of a total of 24. The difference is 14.8%.

Topics of Interest	SCIENCE (N=80)		ARTS / COMMERCE (N=156)		Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	1	80.0% (64)	1	73.1% (114)	6.9
The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	2	72.5% (58)	3	60.9% (95)	11.6
The Use and Abuse of the Internet	3	66.3% (53)	3	60.9% (95)	5.4
The 1998 Commonwealth Games	4	58.8% (47)	2	63.5% (99)	4.7
The World’s Tallest Building -the Petronas Twin Towers	5	57.5% (46)	6	46.2% (72)	11.3
Teenage Romance	6	55.0% (44)	9	45.5% (71)	9.5
Complaints about School Facilities	7	47.5% (38)	14	33.3% (52)	14.2
How to Prepare for an Interview	8	43.8% (35)	11	39.1% (61)	4.7
Qualities of a Good Leader	8	43.8% (35)	23	17.9% (28)	25.9
The Fast Food Phenomenon	10	42.5% (34)	17	31.4% (49)	11.1
A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	10	42.5% (34)	5	46.8% (73)	4.3
A Traditional Japanese Wedding	10	42.5% (34)	6	46.2% (72)	3.7
Motor Sports	13	41.3% (33)	10	43.6% (68)	2.3
Buying Originals vs Buying Copies	14	37.5% (30)	16	32.7% (51)	4.8
Keeping Our Rivers Clean	15	36.3% (29)	14	33.3% (52)	3.0
Malaysians Conquer Mt Everest	16	35.0% (28)	11	39.1% (61)	4.1
Colours and their Meaning	17	30.0% (24)	13	37.8% (59)	7.8
Beauty Contests	18	28.8% (23)	6	46.2% (72)	17.4
The Orang Utan of Sepilok	19	25.0% (20)	22	21.8% (34)	3.2
Malaysian Products	20	22.5% (18)	20	22.4% (35)	0.1
A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	20	22.5% (18)	18	25.6% (40)	3.1
Islamic Art and Architecture	22	17.5% (14)	24	12.2% (19)	5.3
Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia’s Pop Princess	22	17.5% (14)	19	24.4% (38)	6.9
Caring for the Elderly	24	16.3% (13)	20	22.4 (35)	6.1

Table 4.3.4c – Ranking of Topics of Interest (by Stream)

Of the four comparisons of the ranking of topics of interest, comparison by stream seems to have the fewest major differences in ranking.

- Qualities of a Good Leader

43.8% of the Science students showed interest in this topic, giving it a ranking of 8th, compared with only 17.9% of the Arts/Commerce students who gave it a ranking of 23rd. The difference is 25.9%.

- Beauty Contests

On the other hand, this topic is more popular with the Arts/Commerce students than with the Science students. A total of 46.2% of the former ranked this topic 6th, compared to 28.8% of the latter who ranked it 18th. The difference is 17.4%.

- Complaints about School Facilities

47.5% of the Science students chose this topic compared with 33.3% of the Arts/Commerce students, giving the topic a ranking of 7th and 14th respectively. Although the difference of 7 in ranking is fairly high, the percentage difference of 14.2 is relatively low.

Topics of Interest	GOOD (N=64)		AVERAGE (N=117)		WEAK (N=55)		* Percentage difference
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number	
The Ghost of Pulau Senja - a short story	1	78.1% (50)	1	78.6% (92)	1	65.5% (36)	12.6
The Making of 'Tarzan the Movie'	2	71.9% (46)	4	60.7% (71)	1	65.5% (36)	6.4
The Use and Abuse of the Internet	3	68.8% (44)	3	61.5% (72)	4	58.2% (32)	10.6
Teenage Romance	4	62.5% (40)	6	50.4% (59)	18	29.1% (16)	33.4
The 1998 Commonwealth Games	5	56.3% (36)	2	63.2% (74)	1	65.5% (36)	9.2
The World's Tallest Building - the Petronas Twin Towers	6	48.4% (31)	5	53.8% (63)	8	43.6% (24)	4.8
Motor Sports	7	45.3% (29)	9	42.7% (50)	12	40.0% (22)	5.3
A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	8	43.8% (28)	8	45.3 % (53)	5	47.3% (26)	3.5
A Traditional Japanese Wedding	8	43.8% (28)	7	47.0% (55)	10	41.8% (23)	2.0
Qualities of a Good Leader	8	43.8% (28)	23	18.8% (22)	21	23.6% (13)	20.2
Malaysians Conquer Mt Everest	11	42.2% (27)	12	39.3% (46)	18	29.1% (16)	13.1
Colours and their Meaning	12	40.6% (26)	18	28.2% (33)	8	43.6% (24)	3.0
Complaints about School Facilities	12	40.6% (26)	11	40.2% (47)	15	30.9% (17)	9.7
Beauty Contests	12	40.6% (26)	12	39.3% (46)	10	41.8% (23)	1.2
The Fast Food Phenomenon	15	39.1% (25)	16	33.3% (39)	13	34.5% (19)	4.6
Buying Originals vs Buying Copies	16	37.5% (24)	14	34.2% (40)	15	30.9% (17)	6.6
How to Prepare for an Interview	17	35.9% (23)	10	41.0% (48)	7	45.5% (25)	9.6
Keeping Our Rivers Clean	18	23.4% (15)	14	34.2% (40)	5	47.3% (26)	23.9
Caring for the Elderly	19	21.9% (14)	22	19.7% (23)	22	20.0% (11)	1.9
Siti Nurhaliza - Malaysia's Pop Princess	20	20.3% (13)	20	20.5% (24)	20	27.3% (15)	7.0
Malaysian Products	21	18.8% (12)	20	20.5% (24)	15	30.9% (17)	12.1
A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	22	14.1% (9)	19	26.5% (31)	14	32.7% (18)	18.6
The Orang Utan of Sepilok	23	10.9% (7)	17	31.6% (37)	23	18.2% (10)	7.3
Islamic Art and Architecture	23	10.9% (7)	24	17.1% (20)	24	10.9% (6)	0.0

Table 4.3.4d – Ranking of Topics of Interest (by Language Proficiency)

*The percentage difference is between the Good and the Weak groups.

For ease of calculation and comparison, the percentage difference is based on the difference in the ranking of topics of interest between the Good and Weak groups only. As in the case of reading interests, there are some notable differences in some of the topics of interest chosen by the Good students and those chosen by the Weak students.

- Teenage Romance

62.5% of the Good students chose this topic compared to 29.1% of the Weak students. It ranks 4th and 18th respectively. The difference is 33.4%.

- Keeping Our Rivers Clean

It is rather puzzling why 47.3% of the Weak students ranked this topic 5th while 23.4% of the Good students ranked it 18th. The difference is 23.9%.

- Qualities of a Good Leader

This topic is more popular with the Good students as 43.8% chose it compared to only 23.6% of the Weak students. It ranks 8th and 21st respectively. The difference is 20.2%

- A Visit to a Biscuit Factory

The Weak students seemed more interested in this topic. 32.7% of them ranked it 14th compared to only 14.1% of the Good students who ranked it 22nd. The percentage difference is 18.6.

4.3.5 COMPARISON OF THE MOST POPULAR AND THE LEAST POPULAR TOPICS OF INTEREST

As the data in Tables 4.3.5a to 4.3.5d show, there are differences in tastes where topics of interest are concerned, just as there are differences in reading interests. For the most part, these differences are not surprising given the fact that teenagers are quite individualistic in their reading preferences. These differences are more distinct between boys and girls, and between Science and Arts/Commerce, than between rural and urban or between good, average and weak students.

Having said that, there are noticeable similarities in the ranking of the most popular and least popular topics of interest. Tables 4.3.5a(i-ii) and 4.3.5b(i-ii) highlight the top five and bottom five topics of interest for each of the eight groups. (The Average group has been omitted to facilitate comparison between the Good students and the Weak students.)

It is clear that the topics 'The Ghost of Pulau Senja', 'The Making of Tarzan the Movie', 'The 1998 Commonwealth Games' and 'The Use and Abuse of the Internet' are very popular with all the groups. On the other hand, few are interested in reading about 'Islamic Art and Architecture', 'Caring for the Elderly', and 'The Orang Utan of Sepilok'.

RURAL (N = 95)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	76.8% (73)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	65.3% (62)
3. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	62.1% (59)
4. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	58.9% (56)
5. The World’s Tallest Building – the Petronas Twin Towers	52.6% (50)
URBAN (N = 141)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	74.5% (105)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	64.5% (91)
3. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	63.8% (90)
4. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	63.1% (89)
5. The World’s Tallest Building – the Petronas Twin Towers	48.2% (68)
5. Teenage Romance	48.2% (68)
BOYS (N = 130)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	74.6% (97)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	70.0% (91)
3. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	68.5% (89)
4. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	65.4% (85)
5. Motor Sports	63.8% (83)
GIRLS (N = 106)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	76.4% (81)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	58.5% (62)
3. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	57.5% (61)
3. Teenage Romance	57.5% (61)
3. A Traditional Japanese Wedding	57.5% (61)

Table 4.3.5a (i) – Most Popular Topics of Interest
(by Setting and Gender)

SCIENCE (N = 80)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	80.0% (64)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	72.5% (58)
3. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	66.3% (53)
4. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	58.8% (47)
5. The World’s Tallest Building – the Petronas Twin Towers	57.5% (46)
ARTS / COMMERCE (N = 156)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	73.1% (114)
2. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	63.5% (99)
3. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	60.9% (95)
3. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	60.9% (95)
5. A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	46.8% (73)
GOOD (N = 64)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	78.1% (50)
2. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	71.9% (46)
3. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	68.8% (44)
4. Teenage Romance	62.5% (40)
5. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	56.3% (36)
WEAK (N = 55)	Percentage / Number
1. The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	65.5% (36)
1. The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	65.5% (36)
1. The 1998 Commonwealth Games	65.5% (36)
4. The Use and Abuse of the Internet	58.2% (32)
5. A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	47.3% (26)

Table 4.3.5a (ii) – Most Popular Topics of Interest
(by Stream and Language Proficiency)

RURAL (N = 95)	Percentage / Number
20. Caring for the Elderly	25.3% (24)
20. Malaysian Products	25.3% (24)
22. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	21.1% (20)
22. A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	21.1% (20)
24. Islamic Art and Architecture	12.6% (12)
URBAN (N = 141)	Percentage / Number
20. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	24.1% (34)
21. Malaysian Products	20.6% (29)
22. Caring for the Elderly	17.0% (24)
23. Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess	14.9% (21)
23. Islamic Art and Architecture	14.9% (21)
BOYS (N = 130)	Percentage / Number
20. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	20.8% (27)
20. A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	20.8% (27)
22. Caring for the Elderly	18.5% (24)
23. Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess	15.4% (20)
24. Islamic Art and Architecture	12.3% (16)
GIRLS (N = 106)	Percentage / Number
20. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	25.5% (27)
21. Caring for the Elderly	22.6% (24)
22. Malaysian Products	21.7% (23)
23. Motor Sports	17.0% (18)
24. Islamic Art and Architecture	16.0% (17)

Table 4.3.5b (i) – Least Popular Topics of Interest
(by Setting and Gender)

SCIENCE (N = 80)	Percentage / Number
20. Malaysian Products	22.5% (18)
20. A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	22.5% (18)
22. Islamic Art and Architecture	17.5% (14)
22. Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess	17.5% (14)
24. Caring for the Elderly	16.3% (13)
ARTS / COMMERCE (N = 156)	Percentage / Number
20. Malaysian Products	22.4% (35)
20. Caring for the Elderly	22.4% (35)
22. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	21.8% (34)
23. Qualities of a Good Leader	17.9% (28)
24. Islamic Art and Architecture	12.2% (19)
GOOD (N = 64)	Percentage / Number
20. Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess	20.3% (13)
21. Malaysian Products	18.8% (12)
22. A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	14.1% (9)
23. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	10.9% (7)
23. Islamic Art and Architecture	10.9% (7)
WEAK (N = 55)	Percentage / Number
20. Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia's Pop Princess	27.3% (15)
21. Qualities of a Good Leader	23.6% (13)
22. Caring for the Elderly	20.0% (11)
23. The Orang Utan of Sepilok	18.2% (10)
24. Islamic Art and Architecture	10.9% (6)

Table 4.3.5b (ii) – Least Popular Topics of Interest
(by Stream and Language Proficiency)

Topics of Interest	STUDENTS (N=236)		TEACHERS (N=30)	
	Rank	Percentage / Number	Rank	Percentage / Number
The Ghost of Pulau Senja – a short story	1	75.4% (178)	5	63.3% (19)
The Making of ‘Tarzan the Movie’	2	64.8% (153)	7	56.7% (17)
The Use and Abuse of the Internet	3	62.7% (148)	1	76.7% (23)
The 1998 Commonwealth Games	4	61.9% (146)	11	43.3% (13)
The World’s Tallest Building - the Petronas Twin Towers	5	50.0% (118)	19	20.0% (6)
Teenage Romance	6	48.7% (115)	2	66.7% (20)
A Day in the Life of a Radio DJ	7	45.3% (107)	2	66.7% (20)
A Traditional Japanese Wedding	8	44.9% (106)	15	33.3% (10)
Motor Sports	9	42.8% (101)	21	10.0% (3)
How to Prepare for an Interview	10	40.7% (96)	5	63.3% (19)
Beauty Contests	11	40.3% (95)	12	40.0% (12)
Complaints about School Facilities	12	38.1% (90)	8	50.0% (15)
Malaysians Conquer Mt Everest	13	37.7% (89)	14	36.7% (11)
Colours and their Meaning	14	35.2% (83)	10	46.7% (14)
The Fast Food Phenomenon	14	35.2% (83)	2	66.7% (20)
Keeping Our Rivers Clean	16	34.3% (81)	17	26.7% (8)
Buying Originals vs Buying Copies	16	34.3% (81)	17	26.7% (8)
Qualities of a Good Leader	18	26.7% (63)	8	50.0% (15)
A Visit to a Biscuit Factory	19	24.6% (58)	23	3.3% (1)
The Orang Utan of Sepilok	20	22.9% (54)	22	6.7% (2)
Malaysian Products	21	22.5% (53)	20	16.7% (5)
Siti Nurhaliza – Malaysia’s Pop Princess	22	22.0% (52)	15	33.3% (10)
Caring for the Elderly	23	20.3% (48)	12	40.0% (12)
Islamic Art and Architecture	24	14.0% (33)	23	3.3% (1)

Table 4.3.5c – Comparison of Ranking of Topics of Interest by Students and by Teachers

A comparison of the students' and the teachers' ranking of topics of interest reveals that there are several notable matches and mismatches. First, the mismatches:

Topics of Interest	Ranked by Students	Ranked by Teachers
The World's Tallest Building - the Petronas Twin Towers	5 th (50.0%)	19 th (20.0%)
Motor Sports	9 th (42.8%)	21 st (10.0%)
The Fast Food Phenomenon	14 th (35.2%)	2 nd (66.7%)
Qualities of a Good Leader	18 th (26.7%)	8 th (50.0%)
Caring for the Elderly	23 rd (20.3%)	12 th (40.0%)

Table 4.3.5d – Mismatch in Ranking of Topics of Interest by Students and by Teachers

As for the matches, both students and teachers picked 'The Ghost of Pulau Senja', 'The Use and Abuse of the Internet', 'The Making of 'Tarzan the Movie'', and 'Teenage Romance' among the most popular topics of interest. At the other end, both listed 'Islamic Art and Architecture', 'Malaysian Products', 'The Orang Utan of Sepilok' and 'A Visit to a Biscuit Factory' among the least popular topics of interest.

As with reading interests, overall, there are more differences in the most popular and least popular topics of interest chosen by the students and by the teachers than among the nine student groups.

4.4 THE READING PASSAGES IN FORM 4 KBSM ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

A total of seven Form 4 KBSM English textbooks were selected and the reading passages in each of the textbooks were matched against the students' reading interests inventory (page 88). The seven textbooks are:

- A. English Form 4
by Faridah Ibrahim & Beatrice ThiyagaRajah
Publishers: Mutiara Cemerlang Sdn. Bhd. (1990)
- B. English Form 4
by Patrick Wong Hon Mun
Publishers: Eastern Universities Press Sdn. Bhd. (1990)
- C. English Form 4
by Saras Nagappan & Nora Mohd. Nor
Publishers: Mutiara Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. (1990)
- D. English Form 4
by Hoh Foo Kong & Woo Yee Saik
Publishers: Delta (1990)
- E. English Form 4
by Noor Azlina Yunus & Angeline Spykerman
Publishers: Fajar Bakti (1990)
- F. English Form 4
by Lee Boon Leong & M.S. Param
Publishers: Dakmaz Management Sdn. Bhd. (1990)
- G. Learning English 4
by Kemmy Tong et al
Publishers: UCSCAM (1991)

For purposes of tabulation, the seven textbooks will be referred to as Textbooks A, B, C, D, E, F and G in Table 4.4a. The numbers refer to the number of passages in each of the textbooks that relate to a particular area of interest.

Students' Ranking of Reading Interests (page 89)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
1. Entertainment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Adventure Stories	1	0	3	1	3	2	0	10
3. Sports	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
4. Mysteries	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	5
5. Animals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Computer & I.T.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Love Stories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Travel	2	2	1	1	3	3	1	13
9. Science & Tech.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Hobbies & Crafts	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
11. Famous People	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
12. History	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Foreign Culture	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Teen Issues	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
15. Health Care	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	4
16. Environment	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	7
17. Good Habits	0	3	0	0	2	1	0	6
18. Local Culture	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
19. Moral Values	3	4	7	3	3	3	2	25
20. Current Issues	4	4	3	5	2	4	1	23

Table 4.4 a - Number of reading passages in KBSM textbooks that relate to the reading interests as ranked by students

The data in Table 4.4a clearly shows that the number of reading passages based on Moral Values and Current Issues is very much higher than that of other reading interests. These two reading interests are ranked 19 and 20 respectively, that is, the two least popular reading interests with the students. There are relatively fewer passages relating to the more popular reading interests, and none at all on Entertainment which is ranked highest of the 20 reading interests. There are also no passages on Computer & I.T. and Science & Technology. As all the textbooks were published in 1990/1, at best they need to be revised to reflect the current trends in students' reading interests, and at worse they should be phased out altogether, and new ones published.

Textbook writers write under certain constraints, the most important of which is the constraint of writing according to the curriculum specifications. The KBSM syllabus follows a thematic approach – the language components of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary revolve around a central theme for each unit of the textbook. However, as far as the reading component is concerned, such an approach effectively limits the textbook writers' selection of reading passages, and narrows it down to topics that students find 'boring' as the data in Tables 4.2f(i) on page 68) and 4.2g on page 69) shows. Pillay and North (1997:21) argue that topics are important as a carrier for teaching the language skills, and not for their own sake. In other words, it is pointless to 'spot' which topic would be tested in the reading section of the examination paper. Hence, there is no necessity to follow the theme so faithfully for the reading component as has been done in the KBSM textbooks (Table 4.4b, i-iii).

Read and Understand	Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM Textbooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions on how to fix things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "Fix-it Fauzi" B. "Acting like true scouts" C. "A Practical Woman" D. Fixing a leaking tap E. Home Hints F. Changing a flat tyre G. Fixing a leaking tap
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages through the mass media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The Prime Minister's National Day speech on Unity B. UNICEF's Immunization Programme C. Extract from Agatha Christie's "A Murder is Announced" D. A news announcement on TV E. Rules for the Penang Bridge Run F. The Similajau National Park G. Samples of announcements in newspapers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories on Moral Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diligence - self-reliance - public-spiritedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Extract from Anita Desai's "The Village by the Sea" Extract from Shahnon Ahmad's "No Harvest But A Thorn" Extract from John Blashford-Snell's "Operation Raleigh" B. "All-in-the-family Ikan Bilis Venture" adapted from the New Straits Times "Blind Fisherman" adapted from Utusan Konsumer "The Man with Astounding Knowledge" adapted from Stories from Indian literature C. Extract from A. Rashid Ngah's "The Lamp" Extract from Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" Extract from Sara Hammond's "The Stranger in the Village" Extracts from Pearl Buck's "The Good Earth" D. Extract from Umar Kayam's "Sri Sumarah & Other Stories" "Lending a Helping Hand" – the Penang ferry disaster "A World Without Colours" – Louis Braille E. "Fishermen" – poem by Mohamad Haji Salleh Extract from Shahnon Ahmad's "No Harvest But A Thorn" Extract from Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People" F. Extract from George Orwell's "Animal Farm" Extract from Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" Extract from Sybil Karthigesu's "No Dram of Mercy" G. "Mohamed Omar, the Farmer"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper and Book Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A book report on John Hersey's "Hiroshima" A news report on "Promoting National Integration" B. A book report on John Hanley's "Lifespring" A book report on Benazir Bhutto's "Daughter of the East" C. A book report on Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights" D. A news report on "Successful USM Life-Saving Week" A book report on Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" E. A news report on "Hikers Rescued After Ordeal in Jungle" F. A news report on "On the Right Track" A book report on Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" G. A news report on a case of child abuse

Table 4.4b(i) – Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM English Textbooks

Read and Understand	Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM Textbooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information in Charts, Graphs and Manuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. World Population B. Car Models & Prices; Daily Calorie Supply in ASEAN C. Homes for the Needy D. Line Graphs, Bar Graphs and Pie Graphs E. Proton Saga's Market Share in Malaysia F. Causes of Fire; Road Accidents G. Attendance at a Book Fair
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information in Informal Letters to the Newspapers and Formal Letters of Enquiry and Complaint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Two informal letters about studying History Two letters of complaint about defective goods B. "Keeping Clean and Beautiful Just to Impress Foreigners?" "Woes of a Flat Dweller" C. Two informal letters about the Changing Malaysian Landscape; Extract from Roald Dahl's "The Landlady" D. Two informal letters embarrassing experiences A letter of complaint about poor garbage collection service Three letters of enquiry E. An informal letter about the problem of littering A letter of enquiry about the Gunung Tahan Expedition F. An informal letter about smoking in buses and pollution A letter of recommendation (from John Cloake's "Templer, Tiger of Malaysia") G. Samples of informal letters to the newspaper Samples of letters of complaint and enquiry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptions of Scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Remozaz in Remoland; Bagamoyo in Tanzania B. "Sabah: Eastern Magic"; "The Sarawak Chamber" C. Extract from Somerset Maugham's "Mabel" D. Visit ASEAN; Colourful Kelantan E. Extract from Redmond Hanlon's "In the Heart of Borneo" Extract from Henri Fauconnier's "The Soul of Malaysia" F. Extract from <i>Travel & Leisure</i> about Bangkok Extract from <i>Pacific</i> about Baguio G. Manila City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A news report about a fight after a football final Extract from Hubert S. Banner's "Out of the Jungle" B. "A Super Show" – the 15th SEA Games; Excerpt of PM's speech at CHOGM - "Challenges Facing the Commonwealth" C. "Moment in Glory – the 15th SEA Games" D. The 15th SEA Games; Baram Regatta from <i>Wings of Gold</i> E. The 15th SEA Games; R.D.Sherman's "Old Mali & the Boy" F. "Our Golden Girls" – the 15th SEA Games G. The 15th SEA Games

Table 4.4b(ii) – Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM English Textbooks

Read and Understand	Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM Textbooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinions on Current Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. “Don’t Give Up” – a song about the jobless B. A story about diligence and determination C. Conservation or Development? A story about a father who has been retrenched D. “More Jobs for the Handicapped, Please” E. Extract from John Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath” F. “Island” - poem by Edwin Thumboo about urbanization G. Extract from Anita Desai’s “The Village by the Sea” H. Unemployment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of Processes and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. How Persimmons are Preserved B. Recycling Glass C. Take the “I” out of “Refuse” D. Recycling Waste Paper E. Extract from Gerald Durrell’s “My Family and Other Animals” about catching a snake F. Recycling Waste Paper G. Recycling Waste Paper H. Conservation and Recycling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks on Current Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. “Youths as Consumers” B. “Buying Quality Goods at the Right Prices” C. “Living a Healthy a Healthy Lifestyle” “Consumer Education in Schools” D. “Food Poisoning” “A Good Bargain” E. “Consumer Rights” “Traditional Medicine” F. “The Work of the Kuantan Municipal Council” G. “Healthy Eating”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poems of Writers from the ASEAN region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. “Lochinvar” by Sir Walter Scott B. “Old Man Travelling” by W. Wordsworth C. “If” by Muhammad Hj Salleh D. “Home” by Muhammad Hj Salleh E. “Lament of Hsi-Chun” by Hsi-Chun F. “New Year’s Morning” by Lee Tzu G. “Flooded” by Muhammad Hj Salleh H. “Sunset at the River Mouth” I. “Rough” by Steven Spender J. Two Poems & Limericks K. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by S. T. Coleridge L. A poem by Rolando A. Carbonell

Table 4.4b(iii) – Topics in the Reading Component of 7 KBSM English Textbooks

The list of topics for each of the reading skills specification in Tables 4.4b(i) to 4.4b(iii) shows that the reading passages have been selected more for their academic content (e.g. World Population, Consumer Education); instructional content (e.g. Fixing a leaking tap, How Persimmons are dried) and moralistic content (e.g. stories on moral values) rather than for their relevance to students' needs and interests. Furthermore, few of the topics are of teen interest. Indeed, the list of topics confirm the findings in Table 4.3.5c on page 104 that the selection of reading materials by textbook writers (most of whom are teachers or ex-teachers) do not necessarily reflect the type of reading materials that would appeal to students. Students have a distaste for topics that are overtly instructional and moralistic, and that do not have teen appeal. If anything, the topics in the KBSM English textbooks reflect a selection that would appeal more to the textbook writers *themselves* than to the students.

A high number of the reading passages are extracts from the literary works of well-known writers like Somerset Maugham, John Steinbeck, George Orwell, Daniel Defoe, Henrik Ibsen and Emily Bronte. There are a few selections from Third World writers like Chinua Achebe and Anita Desai, and from Malaysian writers like Shahnnon Ahmad and Sybil Karthigesu. While most of the selections are adapted, there are many passages that contain vocabulary items that would make readability a problem for students. As the data in Table 4.2g (page 69) shows, 34.1% of the good students, 53.8% of the average students and 46.3% of the weak students claimed that there are too many new words in the reading passages. More than 60% of the students also expressed having difficulty understanding what they are given to read - Table 4.2e(i) on page 66.

4.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, it is possible to draw up the following conclusions about the students' attitude towards reading and their reading interests:

- Most of the students regarded the reading skill as important but not as important as the other language skills of listening, speaking and writing.
- Most of them rated their reading proficiency as fair.
- Only 55% of their parents actively encouraged them to read.
- 40% did not enjoy reading in English.
- Although the majority agreed with the benefits that can be derived from reading the passages in their textbooks, 73.3% said they did not enjoy reading these passages.
- 64% said this was because the topics were boring while 47% complained that the passages were too difficult for them.
- However, 88% said they would be more interested in reading if they could choose their own English reading materials.
- Among their preferred sources of reading materials, comics ranked 1st, followed by Internet materials and magazines. This shows they preferred light reading materials.
- The same applies to their reading interests. For instance, they enjoyed reading about Entertainment, Adventure and Sports and disliked reading about Moral Values, Current Issues and Local Culture.

- Similarly, their favourite topics of interest reflect their preference for materials with content that they can relate to in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, current interest, relevance and prior knowledge or familiarity. Therefore, topics such as 'The Ghost of Pulau Senja', 'The Making of 'Tarzan the Movie'', 'The Use and Abuse of the Internet' and 'The 1998 Commonwealth Games' are among the more popular topics.
- Comparisons by setting, gender, stream and language proficiency show that there are more differences in reading interests by gender and stream than by setting and language proficiency.
- Comparisons between the students' and teachers' ranking of reading interests and topics of interest reveal more differences than among the students themselves. Although there are some areas of similarity, overall, these are not as significant as the differences. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter 5.