

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study is motivated by 3 research questions as stated in Chapter One. In this chapter, the findings of the study will be presented. I will first discuss the perceptions and attitudes of the subjects towards the English language. Next, I will discuss the problems these students face in reading comprehension and the strategies they use to overcome these difficulties as shown in the questionnaires, the interviews and the recall task.

4.2 Analysis of the Data collected

The following sections present the findings from the instruments used in this study – the reading comprehension tests, Questionnaire I and Questionnaire II, the recall task and the structured interviews.

4.2.1 The Reading Comprehension Tests

The students were given 2 reading comprehension tests (Appendices 1 and 2) for the purpose of characterizing their reading comprehension abilities. To score the students' responses to the questions, two TESL teachers read and produced answer keys for both tests. Where there were differences in answers, the teachers discussed the options and made the final decision on the appropriate answer. The analysis of the students' performance in these tests is shown in Table 4.1a and Table 4.1b.

Analysis of Reading Comprehension Test Responses

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As the analysis shows, the reading comprehension abilities of the students in this class range from high to low despite the fact that they were streamed according to academic performance. Based on the results of these two tests, 2 students with the highest, middle and lowest scores were selected as key informants who would provide greater insights the difficulties they faced when reading in English and the strategies they utilized to overcome them. These students were S2 and S18 (the highest scores), S11 and S22 (the middle scores) and S3 and S28 (the lowest scores).

4.2.2 Questionnaires I and II

To obtain information from all the students involved in this study, two questionnaires were administered. Questionnaire I (Appendix 4) pertains to the students' language background, their learning and reading difficulties and the strategies utilized. Questionnaire II (Appendix 5) concerns the recall task the students were required to do. Table 4.2a and Table 4.2b present the analysis of the responses obtained from the questionnaires.

4.2.2.1 Students' English language background

All the 30 students who participated in this study are Malays. 22 of them (73%) began learning English in kindergarten. 3 students (10%) started before kindergarten. The remaining 5 students (17%) only started learning English when they began attending primary school. As indicated by one student, Student 28 (S28), this is because she attended a Sekolah Agama Rakyat kindergarten where English was not taught. For purposes of oral communication, the students' native language, Bahasa Melayu, was shown to be predominantly used with family members and

other people outside school. With friends and teachers, two-thirds of the students used both English and Bahasa Melayu. One student who attended a Chinese primary school communicates in Bahasa Melayu, English as well as Chinese. Another student whose family migrated from Singapore when she was in Form One reported using mainly English with family members. As can be deduced from this analysis, most of these students' exposure to English started early and they use English mainly within the school environment, with their friends and teachers.

4.2.2.2 Students' Attitude towards English

All the students stated that they liked the English language and they felt that learning English was important. 28 of them (93%) indicated dissatisfaction with their achievements in English because they felt they could do better. One student was happy because his achievements had improved while another student felt his achievements were at a satisfactory level. These responses reflect the students' metacognitive awareness of their learning of English as they were able to apply metacognitive strategies to self-monitor and self-evaluate.

4.2.2.3 Students' Learning and Reading Strategies

Half of the students found that vocabulary was the biggest hurdle they had to overcome in learning English while the rest of the students found speaking in English difficult. When faced with difficulties in comprehending what they read in English, 18 of them (60%) would turn to dictionaries for help but only one student indicated a willingness to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. The others would look for clues, ignore and read on or seek help from teachers and friends. This

application of socio-effective strategies imply that the students were aware of the difficulties they faced and the strategies they took to surmount them.

4.2.2.4 Students' Reading Habits

Though all the students felt that learning English was important, 25 of them (83%) read only when they had to and the materials they read were mainly magazines as stated by 15 (50%) of the students. 5 students (17%) read books while 7 (23%) preferred comics. 2 students (7%) read in English when they surfed the internet and only one student (3%) read English newspapers. The students' main criterion for choosing reading materials in English was the topic and not vocabulary or the length of the text. However, when asked about the main problems they faced when reading in English, 25 of them (83%) indicated *difficult words* showing that vocabulary is a prominent problem.

4.2.2.5 Students' Test Wiseness

There is no doubt that the students were aware of the format of the PMR English language examination papers. They were able to describe the components of both papers and their requirements. This is perhaps a backwash effect that is beneficial to the students (Hughes, 1989). Familiarity and knowledge of assessment format help the students plan learning strategies to overcome weaknesses. 13 students (43%) found Paper I the easiest while 11 chose the language forms and functions component. 6 students (20%), on the other hand, thought the reading comprehension section the easiest. However, the students were unanimous in finding Paper II of the PMR the most difficult. Only 1 student faced problems with the cloze passages in Paper I.

NO.	QUESTION	STUDENTS																				ANALYSIS				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	A	B	C	D	E
	Language Background																									
i.	Learning English	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	2	4	24		
ii.	Use of English	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	19		10	1	
iii.	- Family	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	8		21		
iv.	- Friends	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	9		21		
	- Teachers	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	23		6	1	
	- Other people	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A					
3.	Attitude Towards English																									
4.	English achievements	B	A	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	2	28			
5.	Learning English	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	30				
	Importance of English	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	30				
6.	Learning Strategies																									
7.	Difficulties in learning	C	C	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	16		14	5	1
	Strategies to overcome difficulties	B	C	A	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	2	4	18		
8.	Reading Habits																									
9.	Frequency of reading (Eng.)	D	D	A	A	D	A	D	A	A	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	4	1		25	
10.	Type of reading materials	D	D	B	C	E	C	D	C	C	A	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	5	1	15	7	2
11.	Criteria (choice of materials)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	29	1			
	Difficulties	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	1		25	4	
12.	Test Witness																									
13.i.	Awareness of format	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	30				
ii.	Easiest	B	B	A	A	C	C	B	B	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	13	6	11	1	29
	Most difficult	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E					
14.	Reading Comprehension																									
15.	Tests																									
	Technique normally used	A	B	D	B	A	B	B	D	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	9	14	2	5	
	Technique used when facing difficulties	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	3	26	1		

N O	QUESTIONS	STUDENTS																												ANALYSIS					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	A	B	C	D	
1	Rating of understanding of text read A Completely understood B Understood gist C Understood little D Did not understand	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	C	A	A	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	B	2	24	4	T= 30
2	Technique used when faced with reading difficulties A Look for clues B Left it come back to it later C Guessed D Ignored and read on	D	A	A	B	C	B	B	A	A	A	C	A	A	B	B	A	B	A	C	B	A	A	A	A	D	D	C	B	15	8	4	3	T= 30	
3	Ability to recall and rewrite the text read A Yes B Most of it C Only certain parts D No	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	C	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	25	5	5	T= 30	
4	Aspects found difficult to recall or rewrite A Sequence B Certain English words C Spelling D Recall and write in English despite understanding	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	A	27	6	8	17	T= 58
5	Suggestions to make recall task easier A Additional time B Explain text content C Explain unfamiliar words	A	A	C	B	A	A	C	A	B	A	A	B	B	B	A	A	C	C	C	B	B	A	A	C	B	B	A	A	17	12	25	25	T= 54	

4.2.2.6 Students' Techniques in Reading Comprehension Tests

When asked about the techniques they usually used in answering reading comprehension questions, about half of the students indicated that underlining of important words in the questions was the preferred technique while 9 students (30%) would read the questions several times. Only 5 students (16.7%) would answer the easiest questions first and 2 students (7%) would look for similar words in both question and text. When faced with difficulties in answering reading comprehension questions, most of these students would choose the most likely answer. 3 students (10%) would guess the answer and only 1 student answered randomly. These findings are shown in Table 4.2a.

4.2.2.7 Students' Responses to the Recall Task

24 of the students (80%) understood the gist of the recall text even though there were some unfamiliar words. Only 2 students (7%) claimed to have completely understood the text while 4 students (13%) thought there were many difficult words marring their comprehension. When queried on the strategies they employed in overcoming the problem of non-comprehension of words, phrases or sentences, half of the students stated that they looked for clues while a quarter of the students left it and returned to it later. The rest of the students resorted to either guessing or ignoring and continuing reading. When required to recall and rewrite the text, 25 students (83%) stated that they were able to recall and write most of the text. Only 5 students (17%) claimed to have recalled and written only certain parts of what they had read. Most of the students had difficulty recalling the sequence of the narrative text. 17 students (57%) faced problems recalling and writing in English despite

having understood the text. Recalling and writing certain English words and the spelling of certain words were also cited as problems by some of the students. From the suggestions the students gave, it was obvious that their main concern was with the vocabulary. They also found the time given to accomplish the task too short. These findings are shown in Table 4.2b.

4.2.3 The Students' Written Recalls

The students' written recalls (Appendix 7) were analyzed according to the criteria presented in Chapter 3. Further analysis was carried out to look at the quantity of recalls produced by the students. Each student's correct recapitulation of the propositions in the text constituted his or her comprehension score. The possible range of this score is 0 – 41. The findings are shown in Table 4.4. The quantity of recalls for each category was also analyzed and the findings are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3
Analysis of the quantity of recalls for each category

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF RECALLS
Setting	73.3 %
Initiating Event	75.0%
Internal Response	45.5%
Internal Plan	60.0%
Attempt	77.8%
Consequence	79.4%
Reaction	70.0%

As the analysis shows, the Internal Response category is the least memorable for the students. The Attempt, Consequence and Initiating Event categories, that were

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essentially actions, were better recalled. These findings echo the findings by Carrell (1984a). Horiba et. al. (1993), in their study of Japanese learners of English, also found that outcomes (consequences), goals and settings were more memorable to their subjects. As the criterion for analysis used in this study disallowed incomplete details, many recalls for the Setting category were not scored even though all the recalls contained a major setting.

4.2.4 A Comparison of Students' Scores

This section seeks to answer the first research question by comparing the students' reading comprehension (RC) test scores with their text recall scores. The students' raw scores attained in the recall task were converted to percentages for this purpose.

The comparison of the students' reading comprehension scores and their recall scores is shown in Table 4.5. As the analysis shows, the average score or mean score (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996) for the reading comprehension tests is 67.8 whereas for the recall task, the mean score stands at 65.7.

The difference between the two mean scores is small. In addition, the scores were also rated according to the rating scheme used in schools, where scores at 80% and above are rated high, scores below 40% rated low and scores in between are rated medium.

There was little disparity or extreme variations between the two types of scores, i.e. there were no instances of students obtaining a high score for one test but a low score for the other or vice versa. In cases where there were differences

Table 4.5
Comparison of Students' Scores

Student	RC Score	Rating	Recall Score	Rating
1	65	Medium	78	Medium
2	86	High	83	High
3	45	Medium	32	Low
4	60	Medium	76	Medium
5	61	Medium	73	Medium
6	82	High	73	Medium
7	81	High	58	Medium
8	77	Medium	68	Medium
9	85	High	56	Medium
10	58	Medium	49	Medium
11	70	Medium	41	Medium
12	56	Medium	85	High
13	57	Medium	73	Medium
14	54	Medium	76	Medium
15	74	Medium	76	Medium
16	85	High	61	Medium
17	72	Medium	68	Medium
18	87	High	90	High
19	59	Medium	71	Medium
20	85	High	90	High
21	75	Medium	61	Medium
22	70	Medium	66	Medium
23	80	High	85	High
24	73	Medium	66	Medium
25	62	Medium	66	Medium
26	75	Medium	76	Medium
27	54	Medium	34	Low
28	39	Low	46	Medium
29	58	Medium	61	Medium
30	48	Medium	34	Low
Total	2033		1972	
Mean	~ 67.8		65.7	

between the scores, Smith and Jackson (1985) recommend placing confidence in the information gained from the recall task. Consequently, based on the above findings, it can be concluded that the students' reading comprehension scores do reflect their understanding of what they read.

4.2.5 Students' Reading Difficulties

To identify the reading difficulties the students in this study faced, data obtained from all the research instruments used – the reading comprehension tests, the questionnaires, the interviews and the written recalls - will be referred to. The key informants in the interviews comprise the highest (S2 and S18), middle (S11 and S22) and lowest (S3 and S28) achievers in the reading comprehension tests.

4.2.5.1 Semantic Skills

When the students were asked what aspect they found to be the most difficult in learning English, 16 of them (53%) responded that there were too many difficult words. For this reason, these students found vocabulary a major problem in their efforts to learn the language. The students' responses to the questions in the reading comprehension tests that required semantic knowledge also reflected the students' weakness in semantic skills. For Question 13 which required the students to find the synonym for the word '*vast*', only 6 students (20%) chose '*large*'. For Question 74, only 16 students (53%) chose '*as soon as possible*' as the meaning of the word '*emergency*'. For Question 50, which required the meaning of the word '*exceeding*', half of the students gave the wrong response. These students also faced difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions. For example, in Question 57, only 8 students (27%) chose '*tired*' to refer to the writer's feelings when his arm '*weighed a ton*'. In another question which required a word for the phrase '*can hardly make ends meet*', only 16 students (53%) chose the appropriate response.

In the recall task, most of the students were unfamiliar with the word '*peeped*'. 7 students gave a verbatim recall of the proposition, 2 students paraphrased

correctly while 12 students did not recall the proposition. Many students misspelt the word and some students' recall of the proposition showed their non-comprehension of the word. For example, S19's recall was '*peered into the refrigerator*' and S5 recalled it as '*preesed something*'. 4 out of the 6 key informants also indicated the importance they placed on understanding every word of what they read and when they did not understand any words, they would refer to the dictionary. This preoccupation with the exact meaning of a word disrupted the flow of reading and the additional processing might have made lexical access slower, thereby resulting in inadequate comprehension of what they read.

4.2.5.2 Syntactic Skills

All the students' recalls, other than verbatim recalls, reflected their lack of syntactic skills. S18 who produced a high percentage of verbatim recall of propositions, showed inadequate syntactic skills in her non-verbatim recalls though to a lesser degree compared to that of the other students. For example, she recalled '*The fire brigade had arrived*' as '*The firemen were arrived*'.

The students' recalls also display interference of their native language. S5 and S7 recalled proposition 24 '*I ran quickly across the garden to Mr Lim's house*' as '*I quickly went to garden Mr Lim's house*' and S4 wrote '*there have something outside take my attention*' for proposition 10. 3 students recalled '*The fire was getting out of control*' as '*The fire was in control*'. Some students recalled propositions 40 and 41 '*Due to my quick action, only the kitchen in the house was damaged*' omitting the important word 'only', hence distorting the essential meaning of the propositions.

Many students showed a poor grasp with certain aspects of grammar such as subject-verb agreement (eg. Father and mother *is* not at home), tenses (eg. Next day, Mr Lim's family *go* to my house) and prepositions (eg. house was *in* fire). This difficulty that many of the students faced was particularly evident in their performance in the cloze tests in Paper I of the PMR.

As the data from the interviews show, none of the key informants mentioned the grammatical form or function of the words in the text as their focus when they read. As S2 put it, *'I look at the grammatical form. That's the problem. I don't understand grammar. It's rather difficult.'* These students' lack of awareness of grammatical structures may have adversely affected their ability to group words into meaningful units which would have aided their comprehension process.

4.2.5.3 Inferential Skills and Integration

Another reading difficulty that these students had was their inability to make inferences. This higher level process required students to go beyond what was explicitly stated in the text. The students' varied responses to inference questions in the reading comprehension tests showed their weakness in this skill. For example, in Question 14 which required the students to draw a conclusion from the description of the origin of beads in Sarawak, 13 students (43%) were unable to do so.

In Question 65, 16 students (53%) were unable to infer that the doctor's reminder to Amran not to play until his wound was completely healed was to enable him to recover quickly. 13 students (43%) responded wrongly that the reminder was to enable Amran to have a good rest. In Question 87, where students had to infer and integrate information to conclude what Amir's application letter was about, 26

students (87%) were incapable of doing so. Similarly, in Question 94, 18 students (60%) were unable to infer that Nora was most likely a former neighbour despite the information being given in different parts of the dialogue between the 2 sisters, Maimun and Rohani.

It was also evident from the students' recalls that better comprehenders were better able to make inferences. S16 (ranked 3rd in the reading comprehension tests) inferred that the protagonist ran to his neighbour's house to *save Jimmy* and S16's (also ranked 3rd) inference that the protagonist went to the kitchen to *have some food* were apt. Perhaps this difficulty in making inferences and integrating information is due to the students' inadequate mastery of the relevant language skills.

4.2.5.4 Understanding Text Structure

The text used in the recall task in this study is of the narrative genre. The narrative structure of the text is deemed familiar to the students as this text type is widely exploited in their textbooks, in their language learning activities and also in reading comprehension tests.

All the students' recalls showed their ability to follow the plot and identify the causal structure of the text though they differed in the quality and quantity of their recalls. Even the recall with the lowest score was ordered chronologically as in the text albeit with much fewer propositions recalled. S11's recall presented an anomaly in that it was in the 3rd person and not in the first person as in the text. It could be that in doing so, the quantity and quality of his recall were affected as he only recalled 17 out of a possible 41 propositions. This meant that his recall score was 41% compared to his reading comprehension score of 70%.

As discussed earlier, the internal structure of the text used in this study reflects the story schema proposed by Stein and Glenn (1979) except for the Internal Plan category of Episode 2, which was ordered after the Attempt category instead of before. 11 students' recall transposed the propositions according to the story schema rather than as they were ordered in the text, i.e. they recalled the Attempt category after the Internal Plan category. This seems to indicate that the students utilized an internalized structure or schema in their recall. But this does not suggest that the other students who did not do so, did not possess a schema for narratives. They most likely adhered to the task requirement of recalling the text as closely to the original as possible.

4.2.5.5 Comprehension Monitoring

This aspect of skilled comprehension concerns the meta-level skill of assessing the adequacy of one's comprehension and the strategies required to remedy potential comprehension difficulties. The information obtained from the interviews with the key informants show that they seemed to have a general perception of their own difficulties in reading comprehension and the strategies to overcome them. When asked what they did when they read a text in English, 5 of them responded that they read straight through and then reread depending on the text. S28, on the other hand, said that she would have a dictionary in hand for reference purposes in case of unfamiliar words. This self-defeating attitude is perhaps a cause of her low comprehension as indicated by the scores she obtained – 39% for the reading comprehension tests and 46% for the recall task. When asked if they skipped words when they read in English, all 6 of them stated a willingness to do so but S18 would

return to the word at a later stage. Meanwhile, S2 would guess the meaning of the word and reread the sentence while the other students would refer to a dictionary before reading on. If a paragraph contained many unfamiliar words, 2 students would reread many times, 1 student would skip the paragraph but 3 students would try to guess what the words meant. These responses indicate the students' ability to monitor their comprehension but their strategies were perhaps less effective in helping them overcome their difficulties.

4.2.5.6 Working Memory

As discussed earlier, working memory refers to the reader's ability to store information from one sentence and process information from the next one simultaneously. Therefore, inefficiency of the working memory results in readers being unable to make connections between sentences and ideas. For the recall task in this study, most of the students (90%) found the sequence of the events in the text difficult to recall but their recalls showed otherwise. There were no instances of extreme variance in chronological ordering in their recalls. 17 of the students (57%) claimed that recalling and writing the text in English was difficult even though they had understood the text.

In addition, the analysis of the data shows that the top 3 achievers in the reading comprehension tests were also among the top scorers for the recall task. The scores obtained by the low achievers reflect a similar trend. The 3 lowest scorers in the reading comprehension tests were among the lowest scorers for the recall task. Therefore, it would seem that there may be a correlation between the memory load capacity and the comprehension skills of these students.

The above section gave an analysis of the reading difficulties the students in this study seem to face, based on their responses in the reading comprehension tests, questionnaires, interviews and the recall task. The next section discusses the strategies these students employ to overcome their reading difficulties.

4.2.6 Reading Strategies

According to Barnett (1986), strategies are mental operations that second language readers either controlled consciously or applied automatically to make sense of the texts they read. These strategies may be successful or unsuccessful in aiding the learners' comprehension process. Sarig (1987) refers to these strategies as reading moves and she categorizes them into 4 types. The reading strategies that the students in this study employ are analyzed in the light of these 4 types of moves.

4.2.6.1 Technical-aid moves

This type of reading move demonstrates the reader's use of technical aids to facilitate text processing and they include strategies such as skimming and scanning. From the students' responses in the interviews and questionnaires, it is clear that they employ technical-aid moves.

5 out of the 6 key informants stated that when they read an English passage, they read straight through and reread depending on the passage. S2, a high achiever said, *"I read until the end. Then, if I need to answer questions, I try to find what the question needs and underline it then I find clues."* In other words, this student used both skimming and scanning as strategies. He also used marking and writing of key elements in the text to aid his comprehension.

The title of the reading passage is a technical-aid move that 5 of the students employed. 2 of the students⁴ claimed that the title made the text they read easier to understand. S2 and S22, on the other hand, found that the title influenced their interest in reading. S22 stated, "*If the title looks boring I feel I am forced to read it.*"

Another technical-aid move these students utilized were illustrations. All 6 of them expected the illustrations to reflect what was in the text and they scrutinized the illustrations before they read the text.

As these students indicated that they use not one but a variety of technical-aid moves, these strategies would help promote their comprehension. When these reading moves did not enhance understanding, perhaps it was due to a mismatch between the reading task and the students' choice of strategy or it may be due to the students' ineffective activation of the appropriate strategy.

4.2.6.2 Clarification and Simplification moves

These moves show the reader's intention to clarify and/or simplify sentences in the text. These moves include the use of substitutions such as syntactic simplification, synonyms, circumlocutions and paraphrasing. The students' written recalls exhibit a variety of these moves. S2 paraphrased proposition 32 *'The fire was getting out of control'* as *'The fire was burning so fast'* and proposition 37 *'Soon the firemen were busy putting out the fire'* as *'They quickly control the fire and stop it from burning the hole house'*. Despite the grammatical and spelling errors, it is obvious that this student understood the propositions but his attempt at paraphrasing them showed his lack of language proficiency as this attempt required higher levels of language competence.

S1's attempts to simplify certain propositions is obvious in his recall of *'earlier in the day'* and *'the fire was getting out of control'* which were written as *'early morning'* and *'The fire can't be control'* respectively. S6 clarified *'necessary details'* in proposition 23 as *'some information about what's happen'*. S8 and S10 simplified proposition 33 *'I could see flames shooting out of the kitchen window'* to *'I saw 1 big fire in the kitchen'* and *'The fire was big'*. For proposition 25 *'I could hear Jimmy barking'*, S27 produced *'I heard Jimmy voice.'* S28 used the synonym *'fast'* in place of *'quick'* in proposition 40 *'Due to my quick action'*.

All these examples from the students' recalls demonstrate the students' clarification and simplification moves. When these moves are effectively applied in context, they promote comprehension. The effectiveness of this type of reading move, however, is more dependent on the students' proficiency than the other 3 types of moves.

4.2.6.3 Coherence-detecting moves

Coherence-detecting moves display the reader's intention to produce coherence from what they read by using textual and extra-textual cues. As shown in the analysis of the written recalls, some of the students were able to identify the anomaly in the structure of the text. Instead of writing the structure of their recalls as presented in the text, 11-students transposed the Attempt category and the Internal Plan category of Episode 2 according to the internal structure of the story schema. These students' restructuring of the text illustrates their possession of the appropriate schema to detect and correct the logical development of the text.

5 of the key informants stated that they hypothesized about what might come next when they read in English but only 2 of them would take into consideration, the structure of the text they read. When asked to describe how they figured out what the meaning of an unfamiliar word might be, 4 of these students said they would consider what the rest of the sentence or paragraph said. As S18 put it, "...it's like there is a connection." These coherence-detecting moves help promote the students' understanding of a text when applied in the appropriate context.

4.2.6.4 Monitoring moves

This type of reading move has to do with the reader's active monitoring of his or her text processing. The students' responses to the interview questions mirror their use of these moves to comprehend what they read. 4 of the key informants affirmed that they read different types of passages differently. This behaviour indicates flexibility in the way they approach the reading task. Desertion of a hopeless sentence was also included as a monitoring move by Sarig (1987). S28 displayed her use of this monitoring move in her response. When asked what she would do if a paragraph in the text she read contained several unfamiliar words, she replied, *"Then I don't understand one paragraph of the story."* S22's reply to the question concerning skipping of words was *"Yes....because if I focus on that word only, I lose the mood to read the story because of the one sentence I don't know....It's better to read first then think about what I don't understand."*

In contrast to this attitude was S2, who by employing a conscious hold move, would leave the unfamiliar word and return to it after rereading and attempting to

comprehend the text. These responses emphasize the students' use of monitoring moves as a reading strategy.

4.3 Conclusion

In this study, I had set out to find out whether the English reading comprehension test scores obtained by a class of Form Three students of a rural secondary school reflect their actual comprehension abilities. I compared the students' reading comprehension test scores with their scores in the immediate recall task and found that contrary to my initial expectations, there was no significant difference between the two sets of scores. The students' reading comprehension test scores do reflect their actual understanding. I also looked at the reading difficulties these students encountered and how they overcame them.

The analysis of the students' responses to the questionnaires and interviews shows that the students do indeed face reading problems as a result of shortcomings in the following: semantic, syntactic and inferential skills, understanding text structure, comprehension monitoring and working memory capabilities. The subsequent analysis describes the range of strategies these students seemed to have used to overcome their reading problems. These reading strategies comprise both good, i.e. successful, and poor, i.e. unsuccessful, depending on the context in which they were applied. In other words, the students' rate of success in reading is dependent on their choice of reading strategies and the effectiveness of the application of these strategies.