

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter presents a discussion based on the findings of this study. This is followed by the implications, limitations of the study and directions for further research.

5.1 The Role of Motivational Techniques on Reading

The findings of the study show that subjects of both groups showed an almost equivalent performance in the Index of Reading Awareness (IRA) prior to the provision of motivational techniques. However, following the provision of motivational techniques, the Experimental group performed better than the Control group.

It was also found that after the provision of motivational techniques subjects who obtained the highest and the lowest scores in the IRA from the Experimental group performed better than their counterparts in the Control group.

These findings illustrate that using motivational techniques improve the subjects' awareness in reading skills in the Experimental group. The efficacy of employing motivational techniques shows that subjects in the treatment group became more conscious of their reading skills. The selected motivational techniques that were used such as 'relevance' and 'expectancy' enabled the students to perceive the importance of reading skills. 'Relevance' or the task-based approach employed allowed the students to use what they learned while

reading. Thus, when lessons provided by teacher are seen relevant to the students' goals and interests, students will be motivated to reach that goal (Dornyei, 1994), in this case improving reading skills. These findings lend support to Grabe's (1991) assertion that students needed to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e.g. guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc). With regard to the assertion made by Grabe (1991), Anderson (1999) agrees that teaching students reading skills can sharpen the comprehension process.

The effect of using motivational techniques in reading can also be detected in the subjects' performance on their Posttest. Subsequent to the provision of motivational techniques the Experimental group performed better than the Control group. Results of the Posttest for the Experimental group were better than the Control group but did not reach the statistical significance. The Experimental Posttest's mean score was not significantly greater than the Control group. However, the t-test within group showed otherwise. The t-test showed that the Experimental group had performed better on their Posttest than the Pretest. In contrast, the findings indicate that the Control group's performance in their Pretest was almost similar with their performance in their Posttest. The Experimental group showed a gain of 4.82 in the mean score and the Control group displayed a drop of -0.91. The negative mean difference indicates a decrease in the performance of the students who did not receive the treatment using motivational techniques in reading classroom. The results show that the

motivational techniques used help students in the Experimental group acquire skills which initially they were not aware of or did not have.

The improvement in the Experimental group's reading skills may be explained in a number of ways. One reason could be that by focussing instruction on a particular skill, that is, reading, resulted in increased comprehension ability. Predicting, recognizing the main idea/topic were acquired by the students in the Experimental group. This finding lends support to recent research which claims that both bottom-up and top down strategies can be integrated to ensure efficient reading and to the stand taken in this study that reading is an interactive process (Rumelhart, 1977, Stanovich, 1980). In contrast to the Control group, there was no comparable improvement. In fact they have done worse in their Posttest. The efficacy of teaching students reading skills is attested by Paris and Oka (1986) who assert that in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers they must possess both the *skill* and the *will* to read. Similar to their study, this study also demonstrated that subjects who underwent training in motivational techniques improved their awareness and understanding in reading skills. The Control group appeared not to possess the tools necessary to go beyond a certain achievement level.

A second reason is the activities used in the tasks such as predicting, skimming, scanning, concept mapping, jigsaw reading, vocabulary and summary writing required students to skim, scan, locate information, to read critically and encourage them to discuss and argue as they arrive at answers. These activities designed ensured that the students were acquiring the reading skills required and

at the same time sustained the students' interest and motivation in learning. The activities which were problem-solving in nature encouraged students to be involved in oral interaction and subsequently allow them to participate in the class actively as they exploit the reading materials with their friends.

The other reason for improvement in the reading comprehension skills is the use of a task-based approach. In a task-based approach, the teacher's role relinquishes as the students acquire more control over their learning (Spires, Johnston and Huffman, 1993). Through this process the learning activities are "scaffolded" so as to build background knowledge and promote learning (Reyes & Molner, 1991). In this study, the focus is on the needs and interests of individual learners. It is hoped that when students are able to see the relevance of the lessons they are able to capitalize their valuable resources as learners and subsequently take control of their own learning. As students use these skills in classroom talk, their own understandings are optimized and they begin to discover their role as readers.

The students' output from reading tasks in this study illustrated that in the last three weeks of the training period they were able to use whatever they had learned in the first five weeks of training period. They chose their own reading materials and select whichever tasks appropriate to them in enhancing their comprehension of the text. It has been shown that "there is substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning

successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies” (Dickinson, 1995:165).

The task-based approach is perceived to be more suitable for the teaching of reading skills. In addition, the task-based approach to the teaching of reading comprehension skills had motivated the students better as they put more effort and enthusiasm in their work. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in task-based approach, the teacher acts as facilitator who provides and assists students with opportunities in learning, as they become better academic readers.

In this study, I instructed and encouraged my students to read selection of texts and compare their understanding of the reading text in group. In the final stage of the training period the students were also allowed to choose their own groups. The use of group work in all the tasks supports Mosenthal et al., (1992) that the primary vehicle for learning how to comprehend is social, that is, the strategic processing of text is learned through interactions with others over the meaning of texts. As students discussed and argued with their friends, they were able to negotiate the meaning of text. Thus, this does not only encourage students to take an active role in their learning but also enable them to be aware of and improve their understanding of reading skills as they negotiate the meaning of the text socially.

The findings concur with Dornyei’s (1994) claims that peer interaction in group work is a valuable part of classroom learning as “it promotes intrinsic motivation (in that it leads to less anxiety, greater task involvement, and a more positive emotional tone), positive attitudes towards the subject area, and a caring,

cohesive relationship with peers and with the teacher” (Johnson and Johnson, 1991:55). In short, students’ understanding of the task among their peers encouraged active participation, improved the affective climate of the classroom, promoted their motivation to learn and improved their reading skills.

The findings also showed that students who see the importance of reading put more effort in their work and are more motivated to participate in the activities. Two of the students in the case studies, Wong and Sarah, were highly motivated students. Both realized the importance of reading skills in equipping them to become strategic readers. They were motivated to participate in all the activities conducted in class. They reported that they liked the activities done in groups as this enabled them to share and discuss their ideas openly within the group. As Ames and Archer (1988) aptly put it, students who perceive reading as a valuable and important tool and who have personally relevant reasons for reading will engage in reading in a more planned and effortful manner.

However, although Sarah scored high on the Posttest this does not mean her understanding of using the skills improved. This was shown in her IRA Posttreatment score. She obtained the lowest score in her IRA Posttreatment than the three other students in the case study. Sarah’s average ability in English language could have contributed to this. Research has indicated that poor readers often face difficulties in using the skills strategically as compared to the other three students in the case studies who were in the high ability group in their English language. Sarah’s choice of task in using concept mapping in most of her work in the reading class concurred with Smith’s (1971) and Goodman’s (1973)

claim that readers who are less proficient are not making full use of syntactic and semantic sources and tend to rely on visual information. Thus, this illustrates that instruction in teaching reading skills is not sufficient. These students especially the poor readers need to go beyond the level of acquiring the learning process. This could be due to time. If the duration period of training were longer probably the improvement would be most obvious to poor readers.

It was also found that the other two students, Jasmine and Lee did not see the importance of attaining the skills taught. They were not motivated to do most of the tasks. They may not be able to use the strategies effectively because they may not appreciate the reasons why such strategies are useful. When these students were not able to see the importance of having such skills they were not motivated to engage in the tasks prescribed. According to Meece (1991), students are more likely to approach and engage in learning in a manner consistent with a mastery goal when they perceive meaningful reasons for engaging in activity; that is, when they are focussed on developing an understanding of the content of the activity, improving their skills, or gaining new skills and when task presentations emphasize personal relevance and meaningfulness of the content.

Consequently, this indicates that as teachers, we need to explain the purpose of the task not just mere 'mentioning'. According to Mosenthal, Schwartz and MacIsaac (1992:198) "Mentioning, as opposed to teaching, implies a superficial presentation without sufficient development or sustained involvement to have an impact on student performance". Carrell (1989:129) asserts that "reading strategy instruction must not only include training and practice in the use

of task-specific strategies but more importantly, information must be provided” about the significance and outcome of these (strategies) and the range of their utility (i.e. awareness training)”.

Data collected from the interview illustrated that these subjects were of the view that the approaches used in the reading class helped them to be more aware in their reading skills. The two students who did not make positive gains in their Posttest admitted they did benefit from techniques such as working in groups and the use of a task-based approach. While these students may not show improvement in their test, their IRA total scores showed positive gains. Thus, it can be concluded here that the selected motivational techniques do help students improve their awareness and understanding of the skills. Despite the limitations of the results, one can conclude that they provide encouraging support for the use of motivational techniques as a learning tool. The data from this study suggest that the process of using the task such as predicting, vocabulary and concept mapping are more important than the end product. All four students were unanimous in wanting to have these techniques again in their reading class as it is stimulating and challenging.

To conclude, the study has found that:

- (1) motivational techniques positively affect students’ abilities in acquiring a second language;
- (2) students who are highly motivated are better readers;
- (3) reading skills can be taught; and,
- (4) good readers have better reading skills than poor readers.

5.2 Implications of the study

The findings from this study demonstrated that the provision of motivational techniques has helped improve students' reading skills. Furthermore, the study implies that language skills, in this study reading comprehension skills, can be acquired through selected motivational techniques such as using a task-based approach and cooperative learning.

It was also found that through the materials selected and activities planned through the task-based approach, the students acquired the reading comprehension skills required. In addition through this approach the students move away from the teacher-centred approach, where students asked to read a text and answer questions, to learner-centred approach has resulted in active student participation. In my opinion, language teaching must move away from the traditional approach of teacher-centred to greater learner-centredness especially to college students.

In this study, the subjects of the Experimental group, unlike the Control group, used group work for almost all the tasks. It was observed that group work encouraged students to participate actively and improved the conducive environment for learning. The students did not feel threatened or reserved in sharing their opinions. Research has indicated that interaction is vital to the completion of such tasks. Empirical evidence suggests that interaction (i.e. through group work) encourages students to continue with the task until it is completed because interaction creates a 'shared meaning context' in which learners can extend and modify the spectrum of their actions and expertise

(Amigues, 1989). Thus, the use of pair work or group work should be encouraged for language teaching because I believe some of the progress made by the students in this study may be attributed to group work.

The results of this study show that employing new approaches to language teaching, in this case motivational techniques, can bring about more optimal results. The task-based approach is learner-centred. It allows students to move away from teacher-centredness and motivates students to develop their reading skills. Savignon (1991) stipulates that the task-based approach supports the view that reading is an active process and that when a reader reads he is actively participating in a complex negotiation of meaning. Thus, he further adds that by allowing for students' inter-learner discussion, it makes possible this negotiation of meaning. Subsequently, the teacher's control becomes lesser and the students acquire more control over their learning.

The study has suggested an approach, the motivational technique approach, as an alternative strategy to current reading instructional approaches. This study has also provided evidence for the fact that using such techniques can be effective in the reading classroom.

Hence, teachers should engage students in a large amount of varied activities to promote reading skill in order to help them become better reader and subsequently motivate them to be life-long reader. Selecting, developing and focussing on tasks to enhance students' motivation and improve their reading skills are necessary so those students are able to see the relevance and significance of the task as they engage in the learning process.

5.4 Limitations of the study

As in any experimental classroom research, this study is also subjected to limitations. Here, the method, materials, the duration of lessons and instruments were all controlled. The study has not considered other factors, which may contribute to performance such as intelligence, language ability, students' background and timing of lessons. The students were from intact classes and were not randomly selected. Thus, this indicates that a generalization pertaining to its result may be inappropriate. As this is a very small study, involving only one class in only one of the schools in USM, the findings of this particular class cannot represent other students in USM.

The duration of this study was only eight weeks. It would be an advantage to the researcher to have a longer period of study so that conclusive finding can be made to examine the affects of the motivational techniques on each subject. As Guthrie, Siefert and Kline (1978) have indicated that instruction over longer periods has a more significant effect than instruction of shorter duration.

Furthermore, the subjects were only exposed to expository texts. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the findings from the use of expository texts to other text genres. Finally the use of cloze test as instrument. The limitation of using cloze test has not allowed flexibility of determining the subjects performance of the skills taught, as the cloze test requires subjects to a different set of strategies such as searching and making guesses for information to fill in the blanks (Johnston, 1983).

5.3 Directions for further research

The results of this study indicate that there is still a need to further investigate the role of motivational techniques in reading classroom. In this study I have only selected two aspects of motivational techniques that are expectancy and relevancy. It would be interesting to look at other motivational techniques such as interest and outcomes, whether they would produce the same effect on the learners in improving reading skills.

Another suggestion for further research is to examine students' awareness of the task. This is important as when the subject is more aware of the requirement and the purpose of the task the learning process will enhance and they will be motivated to take an active role in their learning. As James and Garret (1991) assert only when we realize what we do know, we are able to identify what it is that we need to know; by the same token, realizing what we do not know helps us to see what we do know. They further emphasize that this is the way that skills improve when we raise implicit knowledge to awareness.

Another area for research is to further examine on the use of other text genre for example narrative, argumentative and persuasive. Since this scope of study looks only on expository text. The design of the tasks would also be investigated on how and which tasks would be more effective to students. In addition further research can also be done looking at high and lower proficiency students in grasping the tasks and examine to what extent would they differ in performance. It would also be interesting to see if the motivational techniques can be used effectively in writing class.

However, whatever form future research takes, I am convinced of the efficacy and suitability of this approach for the teaching of reading comprehension. I hope to continue to investigate the merits of this approach in my reading class.