

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of an extensive reading programme in boosting students' motivation to read.

Illiteracy is less a problem in Malaysia compared to some parts of the world. According to a survey conducted by the National Library of Malaysia (1996), Malaysians have a literacy rate of 93%. However, just because people are able to read, it does not mean that they do read. Zakiah Koya (NST, 30th Sept. 1998) in her article entitled "A mammoth task to create a reading society" reports that Malaysians read only two books per year and stated that a survey done in 1993 revealed that Malaysians spend only RM 13 per year on books. They spend only thirty minutes a week or four minutes a day on reading materials. The survey clearly mirrors the dilemma, that is, the apathetic attitude towards reading among Malaysians.

The situation in Malaysian schools is no better. Indeed most secondary school students seem to be interested in other pursuits. In addition there are many students in secondary schools in Malaysia who are struggling to read in English. A survey conducted by Tan (1999) on the reading habits of ESL learners from vernacular school revealed that an appalling majority of students do not read English books or other materials. Factors that contributed to these negative reading attitudes include lack of reading experience, interest, motivation, language guidance, home and social background and unawareness of the pleasures and benefits of reading English books. This is extremely frustrating for them and eventually many give up trying altogether.

Reading is a vehicle of action and empowerment, preparing students for tomorrow's demands and challenges and reading well is the heart of all learning. English is a global language and it is becoming increasingly important in ICT. At present, students who cannot read well shy away from reading. Thus, they cannot learn the language effectively. Language teachers have to make serious efforts to rectify this problem. They have to take actions to motivate students to read by implementing reading programmes.

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to researches that have been carried out in the field of reading. It is divided into several sub-sections. The first part is concerned with definitions of reading, the importance of reading to ESL students, and the various reading problems faced by ESL students. The second part focuses on the importance of motivation and reading. The third part discusses the significance of Schema Theory in reading. The fourth part uncovers what is defined as extensive reading and the role of extensive reading in language learning. The fifth part deals with the role of graded readers and the final section looks at the role of reader response approaches.

2.2 Definitions of Reading

The ability to read is a crucial pre-requisite for students to excel in school, as it is the basic tool for learning in all subject areas. Reading is undoubtedly the golden key to the world of knowledge, enlightenment and enjoyment.

Most language exponents find it difficult to define reading, as there are numerous views on what reading entails. Robinson (1977) concedes that it is an

elusive concept. Smith (1983) confirms that there is no point in looking for simple definition as reading has multiple meanings depending on the context in which it occurs.

Goodman (1975) defines reading as an active psycholinguistic process that begins with a linguistic surface representation by the writer and ends with a meaning constructed by the reader. Fundamentally, there exists an interaction between language and thought whereby the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought. Grabe (1991) agrees with Goodman's definition as he asserts that in the process, readers use knowledge they brought to the reading by predicting information, sampling the text and confirming the prediction.

Coady's (1979) reinterpretation of the psycholinguistic model is however more suitable to the ESL context. He believes reading is composed of three components. The components are process strategies for example, word identification, prior or background knowledge and conceptual abilities. He contends that beginners and less proficient readers are more inclined to focus on word identification compared to more proficient readers who are more likely to focus on predicting and confirming information and making use of their prior or background knowledge.

Mitchell's (1982) definition of reading is also relevant to the ESL context. He contends that reading is the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols to guide the recovery of information from his or her memory and subsequently use this information to construct a plausible interpretation of the written message. In order for the readers to make sense of what they are reading, materials that are within their linguistic capacity should be given to them as have been done in this study.

There are substantial changes in the way reading is defined. In attempting to define reading, one must consider the reader's purpose, since what is referred to as reading varies with the intent of the reader (Johnson, 1973). Increasingly, reading is conceptualised as a dynamic, interactive, constructive process requiring thought and elaboration on the part of the reader.

However, the most important definition of reading rests with the teacher as the teacher knows best the students' shortcomings in the area of reading. With this knowledge the teacher can work towards enhancing her or his students' reading abilities. In this study, I regard reading as suggested by Goodman (1975) and Grabe (1991). In order for successful reading to take place, there must be interaction between the students and the text whereby the students decode the language encoded by the writer into thoughts. Students also fall back on their prior knowledge in confirming information. In this study, the reading logs provide students with opportunity to write whatever they have decoded from the stories, for example why they like a particular story or the features in the story that attracted them.

As for this study, I'm going to try to cultivate reading habits among students' as reading is one of the most important skills in language learning.

2.2.1 The Importance of Reading to ESL Students

Reading is one of the most important skills in language learning. Reading in English is important as many articles in the Internet and materials in tertiary institutions are in English. The literature component introduced in the English Language Syllabus effective from the year 2000 provides more reasons for students to

equip themselves with the ability to read, as they have to read a number of short stories and novels to answer comprehension questions in the SPM examinations. Most of these short stories and novels are beyond the linguistic level of these students, thus making them shy away from them. In order for students to love reading these texts, simple reading materials appropriate with their level should be given first, so that they would not be put off by reading. Students need to be moulded into acquiring the reading habits by giving them materials, which are within their schemata. In this study, I am trying to promote reading habits among students by giving them short and interesting reading materials, which are within their linguistic capacity. If students are to embrace reading habits, positive feelings of reading achievement need to be experienced first. By reading short, simple stories, this feeling can be fostered in students.

Reading is an essential skill for ESL students, and for many, reading is the most important skill to master (Anderson, 1999). Reading is important, as it is needed to acquire knowledge, ideas and information. One can derive enjoyment through reading too. Carrel (1988) agrees that reading is the most important of the four language skills.

A research conducted by Gradman and Hanania (1991) demonstrated that “the extent of active exposure to language through individual outside reading” emerged as foremost among significant background factors that contribute to success in language learning. Therefore, if we, as teachers want our students to be successful in learning English as a second language, we need to expose them to a wide variety of texts from a wide variety of sources and one major source, which is readily available and

accessible to most students', is the Internet.

Another study by Elley (1991) also proved that subjects that have been exposed to extensive reading showed rapid growth in language development, "there was a spread effect from reading competence to other language skills – writing, speaking and control over syntax," (Elley, 1991, p. 404). Similar studies conducted by Hafiz & Tudor (1989) in the UK and Pakistan, and Robb & Susser (1989) in Japan, revealed more significant improvement in subjects' written work than in other language skills.

The ability to read English fluently is critical for academic scholar, business professionals, research scientists, and engineers (Grabe, 1996). He further asserts that these people need to master reading, as it is an important tool for them, as they need to exchange information internationally. Teachers bear the responsibility of equipping their students with the ability of reading English fluently as their students are future academic scholars, professionals, scientists, and engineers.

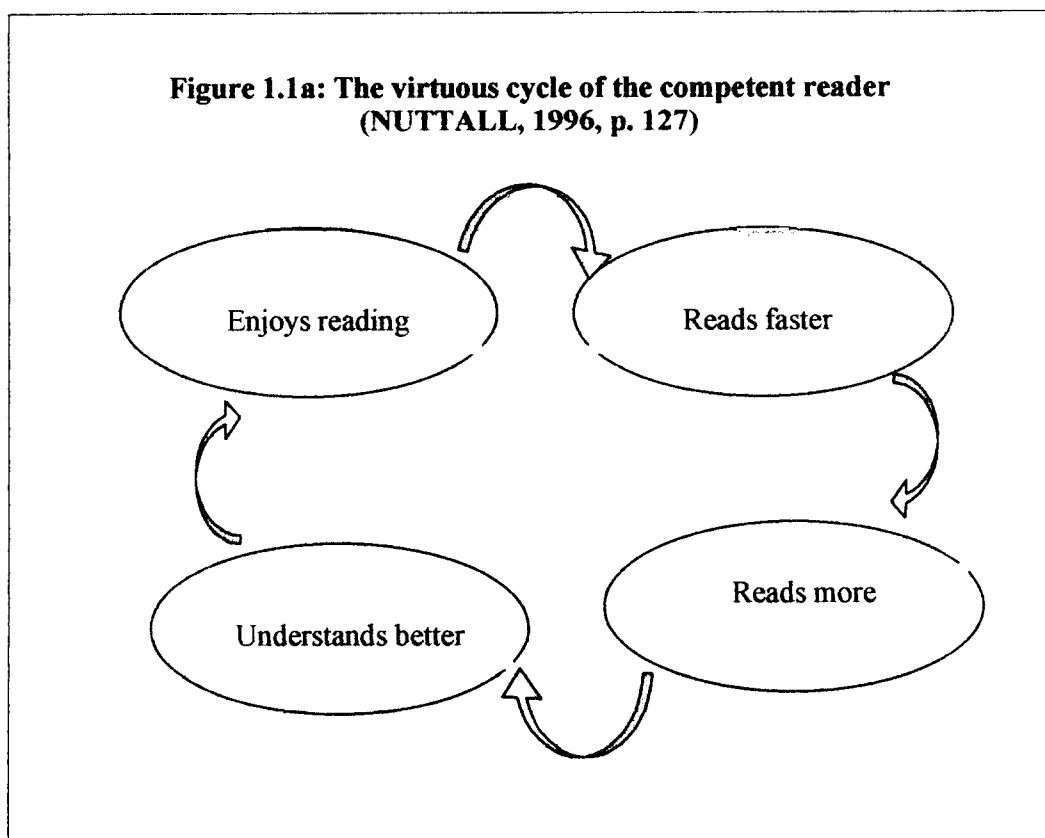
2.2.2 *Reading Problems*

The magnitude of reading problems amongst second language learners is on the rise. Many students in the secondary schools are unable to read materials in English. For many of these students, reading problems occur primarily at single word level. According to Mc Cormick (1995) most low proficiency reader's literacy learning often begins with word learning difficulty compounded by unsuccessful learning experiences combined with the issues of self -respect. The subjects of this study are of average proficiency and have problems in reading due to their difficulty

in understanding complex sentence structures and vocabulary. Therefore, this study is aimed at boosting students self-respect and confidence in reading in English by providing them with reading materials that they can decode easily.

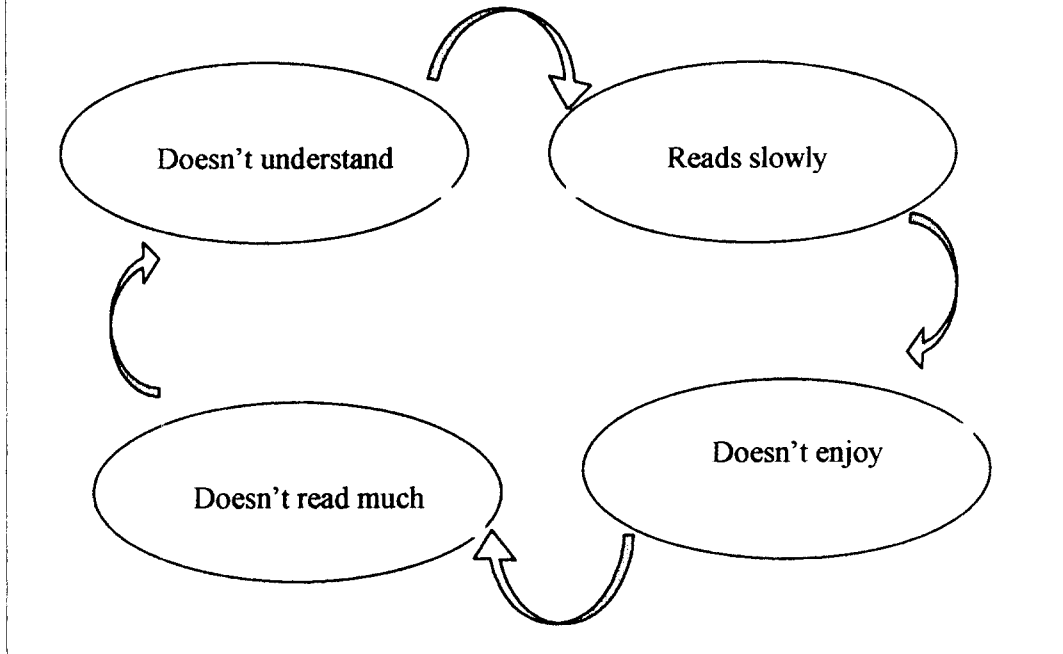
Numerous studies have shown evidence that reading rates in second language even for highly advanced students are slower than first language (L1) reading rates. The reason for this is that most second language students generally read single words sequentially, in contrast to reading phrase or sentence groups. Skimming with any degree of comprehension is difficult for them. The very slowness of their reading retards understanding of academic content, which tends to be written in “idea” units covering many sentences or indeed paragraphs (Price, 1976; Dutton, 1977). This circumstance may also account for why students who diligently read pages of books fail to understand what was read and find the entire exercise a waste of time. This is due to their inability to relate what they were reading as a result of their poor decoding skills. They have understood individual words but holistic conceptual comprehension has eluded them. Therefore, if we want our students to become fluent readers, we have to first ignite their interest in reading with materials that would interest them and which are within their schemata, which is precisely the aim of this study.

Nuttall (1996) concurs and explains that competent readers read faster and thus are encouraged to read more. Practice in reading further boosts understanding and enjoyment. As reading is a rewarding endeavour, good readers tend to read more. Subsequently, they improve their reading rate as shown in the virtuous cycle of the competent reader (Figure 1.1a).



On the other hand, Nuttall (1996) concurs that slow readers do not enjoy reading and due to this, they do not read much. As a result of not having sufficient practice, learners find a text difficult to comprehend and therefore have less interest in reading. As reading can be developed only by reading, their reading rate does not improve. Consequently, they remain as slow readers in the vicious cycle of the weak reader (Figure 1.1b).

Figure 1.1b: The vicious cycle of the weak reader (NUTTALL, 1996, p. 127)



Nuttall's notion has significant relevance to the situation in Malaysian schools. Students who are competent or proficient in English are able to read faster, thus able to read more books and have better understanding of whatever they read. As a result, they tend to enjoy reading and once they are hooked to reading, the virtuous cycle continues. In contrast, students of average and low proficiency level are quite slow in reading and do not enjoy reading. As a result, they do not read much and their limited reading exposure is the cause for their inability to comprehend texts. It has been my observation that the more the readers read, the better they understand. Better understanding leads to enjoyment in reading and the speed of reading increases as well. Better reading speed will help them to read more and the cycle will continue a lifetime. In this study, students are given stories, which are interesting and simple, appropriate to their proficiency level so that they could read the stories with ease and

pleasure. When this takes place regularly, students from the vicious cycle are able to move to the virtuous cycle.

Hence, language teachers must be sensitive to the needs of learners and rise to the challenge of making reading an enjoyable task, indirectly creating a ripple effect, producing even more effective readers. The short stories which will be used in this study can be read within a short span of time. Moreover, the simplified version would create interest as the lexical choices are within digestive level and are not mind boggling. These stories are used to serve two purposes: to educate and to entertain. When students are entertained, they tend to enjoy reading and want to read more.

2.3 Reading and Motivation

The main idea of motivation is to capture the students attention and curiosity and channel their energy towards reading. Boorkowski & Schneider (1987) acknowledge that cognitive aspects of reading such as prior knowledge and strategic behaviours has resulted in an increase in reading motivation. Brown (1986) contends that successful readers are more aware of purposes for reading and adjust their reading process accordingly. This study proposes to provide students with interesting reading materials that would capture their attention and motivate them to read as the reading materials are within their comprehension level. The feeling of success in being able to comprehend what they read is in itself a source of motivation.

Gambell (1996) asserts that motivation is a powerful influence in literacy learning. Highly motivated students are self-determining and generate their own reading opportunities. Gambell's study on a motivational reading programme in the

U.S. indicated a significant increase in the reading motivation and behaviours of the participants. Undoubtedly the teacher's role is very important in making any reading programme successful. The teacher needs to assist and provide support to students in their journey towards achieving success in their reading. Medley (1986) points out that teacher's role is important, as the teacher is the one who is in contact with pupils during educational tasks. In this study, a short reading programme is introduced to motivate students to read and become life long readers.

Ford (1992) motivational system theory maintains that pupils will attempt to attain goals they value and perceive as achievable. In other words if the task assigned to them is manageable, they will participate fully. The short stories downloaded from the Internet was simplified in order to give the students confidence in their reading ability.

2.4 Schema Theory and Reading

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Schema Theory which was developed by R. C. Anderson, a well respected educational psychologist. It is based on the belief that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (Anderson et al. in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983, p. 73). As such, readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of "combining textual information with the information a reader brings to text" (Widdowson in Grabe 1988, p. 56). Readers mental stores are termed 'schemata' and are divided into two main categories: 'content schemata' which involves background knowledge of the world and 'formal schemata' which consists background knowledge

of rhetorical structure (Carrell, 1983).

The reading process involves identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all which activate schemata and allow readers to comprehend the text (Swales 1990, p. 89). Thus, the reading process involves the exploitation of a reader's background knowledge. This knowledge provides a platform for readers to predict the content of a text on the basis of a pre-existing schema. In other words, readers activate an appropriate schemata against which they try to decode and interpret the message beyond the printed words. If the readers do not possess the relevant schemata, then there will be some disruption in comprehending the text. This means that the learner must already have some information about the content being read before meaningful reading can occur. The graded reading materials in this study is aimed at activating students existing schemata and give them a sense of satisfaction in being able to decode and interpret the text they read. If students' schemata is activated, comprehension of texts becomes easier.

According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p. 80), "one of the most obvious reasons why a particular content schema may fail to exist for a reader is that the schema is culturally specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background." For learners with limited linguistic abilities, "if the topic... is outside of their experience or base of knowledge, they are adrift on an unknown sea" (Aeversold and Field 1997, p. 41). Research by Johnson (in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983, p. 80) suggested that a text on a familiar topic is better recalled than a similar text on an unfamiliar topic.

Prior knowledge is important for readers in order to comprehend a text (Carrel, 1980). Studies show that first language readers who have well-developed schemata will understand and remember its information better than readers who do not (Rumelhart, 1980). As such, if readers are given materials which are within their schemata, they would understand it better.

Studies conducted by Nunan (1991) and Nuttal (1996) also revealed that lack of prior knowledge affects comprehension. Readers who have the advantage on background knowledge of the subject matter performed significantly better in their reading comprehension than those who did not.

The above studies support the reason for choosing stories which are familiar to students so that they can associate well with them. Taking into account this factor, I chose the stories which also existed in my students mother tongue and simplified the stories.

2.5 Extensive Reading

The term “extensive reading” was first coined by Palmer (1917, cited in Day & Bamford, 1977) to distinguish it from “intensive reading”. Extensive reading is reading large amounts material for information or pleasure.

The Compendium (1989) defines extensive reading as “reading quickly for general knowledge, enjoyment or leisure”. It further states that extensive reading is encouraged in schools by using supplementary reading materials such as class readers as additional reading materials to practice reading skills and to encourage the habit of reading for pleasure. As the class readers are quite old and are in tattered condition, I

propose to use interesting short stories from the Internet to motivate my students' to read.

Hill (1992) says that extensive reading is a type of reading most often practiced by people who like to read and it involves 'reading in quantity'. Reading in quantity here refers to reading a lot of materials, comprising a wide range and a reasonable speed for pleasure and enjoyment. Hill stresses on three conditions for this: speed, interest and level of materials. If students are to read in 'quantity', then they need to read quickly, have access to books of their interest and of suitable language level that matches their level of proficiency. Rivers (1968) and Harmer (1991) believe that students may lose interest or become demotivated if the criteria set by Hill are not met.

In extensive reading, the immediate focus is on the content being read rather than on language skills and students generally read the materials relatively faster but each at their own pace and level. The aim is for overall understanding rather than word-by-word decoding or grammar analysis.

The most important factor of extensive reading is students choose the materials they want to read instead of being forced to read texts they neither enjoy nor understand. In this way, students are made to be responsible for their own learning. As students enjoy surfing the Internet, the stories for this extensive reading programme was chosen from the Internet in the hope that students would surf the net for such stories in the future.

2.5.1 The Role of Extensive Reading Programme

The aim of an extensive reading programme is to get students to enjoy reading in the English language. In this approach, reading is seen not solely as translation or as a skill, but as an activity that someone chooses for personal, social or academic reasons. According to Day and Bamford (1998), the purposes of extensive reading are usually related to “pleasure, information, and general understanding.” An extensive reading programme can provide effective platform for promoting reading improvement and development from elementary levels upwards as the reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. In other words, the language is within the students’ comprehension level and dictionaries are rarely used during reading as this hampers the reading process. Not only that, students would be put off if they have to constantly look for meanings of word in the dictionary.

Extensive reading programmes have been called by many different names including Book Flood, Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything And Read (DEAR), and Silent Uninterrupted Reading For Fun (SURF). Extensive reading normally focuses on students reading alone. However, this programme can also involve group activities (example Daniels, 1994 cited in Bell 1998) which encourage students to read more and lends them an avenue for discussing what they have read.

Bell (1998), lists the following as the advantages of extensive reading programmes in nurturing learners’ progress in reading development and improvement.

1. It can provide “comprehensible input”.
Krashen (1982), contends that extensive reading will lead to language acquisition provided there is avenue for adequate exposure of the language, interesting materials, and tension-free learning environment.
2. It can enhance learners’ general language competence.
Grabe (1991, p. 391) and Paran (1996, p. 30) have emphasised the importance of extensive reading in providing learners with practice in automaticity of word recognition and decoding the symbols on the printed page.
3. It increases the students’ exposure to the language.
Students exposure to the second language increases with extensive reading as they acquire new forms from the input. Elley (1991, p. 404) views provision of large quantities of reading material as crucial in reducing the ‘exposure gap’ between L1 learners and L2 learners.
4. It can increase knowledge of vocabulary.
In a study by Nagy & Herman (1987), children between grades three and twelve learned up to 3000 words a year and this was through acquisition from reading.
5. It can lead to improvement in writing.
Stotsky (1983) and Krashen (1984) reviewed a number of L1 studies that proved the positive effect of reading on subjects’ writing skills, indicating that students who are prolific readers in their pre-college years become better writers when they enter college.

6. It can motivate learners to read.

An extensive reading programme was carried out in Yemen by Davis (1995) and the result was the programme managed to motivate the students as the materials selected were within the students taste and interest.

7. It can consolidate previously learned language.

Graded readers have a controlled grammatical and lexical load, thus providing regular and sufficient repetition of new language forms (Wodinsky & Nation, 1988). Therefore, students can easily digest the contents as the lexical and grammar input is suited to their level of comprehension.

8. It helps to build confidence with extended texts.

As students get used to extensive reading, they can be trained to exploit longer texts especially as they would be required to read longer texts for academic purposes. Kembo (1993) points out the value of extensive reading developing students confidence and ability in facing these longer texts.

9. It encourages the exploitation of textual redundancy.

Kalb (1986) refers to redundancy as an important means of processing, and to extensive reading as the means of recognising and dealing with redundant elements in texts.

10. It facilitates the development of prediction skills.

When students are give text based on their pre-existing schema, their schema is activated and they can decode and interpret messages beyond the printed words. They predict, sample, hypothesise and recognise their understanding of the message as it unfolds while reading (Nunan 1991, pp. 65-66).

This programme requires a significant investment of time, energy and resources on the part of those in charge of managing the materials. The benefits in terms of language and skills development for the participating learners far outweighs the amount of sacrifices required from teachers (Timothy Bell, 2001).

The Malaysian Education Ministry strongly believes that cultivating a reading culture begins in schools. Some of the measures that have been implemented by the Ministry of Education to promote and enhance the reading culture in schools are:

- a. **Class Readers Programme**
Publication of Graded Reading Books to assist weak students in acquiring reading skills.
- b. **The School Resource Centre Excellence Award** given to schools, which encourages the development and usage of school libraries with the aim of inculcating the reading culture.
- c. **Acquisition and allocation of additional reading materials** to support reading programmes where a total of RM 5 million is allocated annually for 1000 selected schools, especially schools in rural areas.
- d. **The implementation of the Nilam Programme**, which is an integration of all reading encouragement activities, carried out at state level to encourage reading and to inculcate the reading habit. (Musa Muhammad, 2002).

But from my discussion with teachers from other schools and from my own experience as well, I realise that these programmes have not been successful, as they have not been taken seriously by the teachers as well as the administrators. The Class Readers are in poor condition, that is, they are in tattered condition. The Nilam Programme is also not successful as there is no real proof that the students really read the books they borrow. This seems to be the case in other schools too, as I found out from my discussions with colleagues from other schools. My school library too does not have a good selection of reading materials in English. Most of the storybooks are

rather old and not up to date. They are not interesting as well, according to the students.

Since the idea of an extensive reading programme is to read for pleasure or enjoyment, a large number of reading materials will be made available under this programme. Learners should be able to develop the reading habit, which would foster the learners' language and their aesthetic sensitivity.

The teachers' role is to encourage learners to engage in a focused and motivating reading programme and to lead the learners along a path to be independent and resourceful in their reading and language reading. My aim of using graded fables is to enable students to read according to their own appropriate speed, silently and with adequate understanding as advocated by Nuttall (1996). Since the aim of this programme is to read for pleasure, learners will not be tested or evaluated. They only have to record their readings in a reading log, which is more like a reader response kind of entry.

In this extensive reading programme, regular conferencing between the teacher and students plays an important role in motivating students to read the fables. This regular conferencing will enable effective monitoring of an individual's progress and provide opportunities for the teacher to encourage students to read widely, show an interest in the books being read and guide students in their choice of titles.

The characteristics of an extensive reading programme I have adopted for this research project is as stated below:

- a. Students read a large amount of graded printed fables available, on a wide range of interesting topics.

- b. Students choose what they want to read and the materials are within their comprehension level.
- c. Reading is done individually and silently. The activity is done for pleasure, to get information and general understanding, so reading has its own reward.
- d. The teacher provides help and guidance when necessary.
- e. The teacher and students keep track of the students' progress using a reading log. They just have to write why they like a particular story.

The ultimate aim of this programme is to develop students' ability to become independent readers. Students can do more reading the more they learn to read. As Vygotsky said, 'nurturing is essential to assist learners in realising their potential' (cited by Fatimah Hashim, 2001). It is important that learners' are given challenging reading materials appropriate to their level of understanding, in a relaxed, tension free learning environment than to 'push' things down their throats, just because the reading materials are considered by someone to be appropriate for their age and grade. Teachers can find out their students interest and choose relevant materials

2.6 The Role of Graded Readers

Graded Reading is also known as Simplified Reading. The rationale behind using graded materials is to enable the readers to read without difficulties. The materials can be graded according to the use of high frequency vocabulary rather than the usage of vocabulary which a native speaker might normally use. Extensive reading programmes often use material which are graded or as Day and Bamford (1997) call "language learner literature". In fact, the terms graded readers and extensive reading are often used synonymously. The materials that I will be using in

this study is graded reading materials as the subjects of this study are students of average English proficiency. They do not have the linguistic ability to comprehend or digest authentic reading materials. The whole aim of this extensive reading programme is to evoke interest and motivate students to read more in English. As such, the usage of graded reading materials is crucially essential to achieve this aim.

Graded readers have psychological benefits too. Mason and Krashen (forthcoming) found that reluctant readers can become motivated readers through extensive reading which professes on reading for pleasure. Students would be able to process words faster when graded materials are used.

Most linguists who recommend extensive reading do so on the assumption that the students will be reading graded readers. It has been argued that reading is more effective and enjoyable for students when they understand and enjoy what they read instead of being forced to decode and translate texts which is beyond their ability.

Simensen (1987, cited in Susser and Robb, 1990) differentiates three kinds of graded readers.

1. Authentic readers, not written for pedagogic purposes.
2. Pedagogic readers, specially written for EFL/ESL students.
3. Adapted readers, which have been adapted from authentic texts.

There are many arguments to use authentic materials in teaching reading to second language learners but proponents for graded readers argue that reading remains an authentic task when readers read books for the pleasure of reading rather than for language study per say.

Graded readers offer a controlled grammatical and lexical load. In addition, they also provide regular and sufficient repetition of new language forms (Wodinsky and Nation, 1988 cited in Bell, 1998). Thus students are not overwhelmed by an overload of unfamiliar language items at any one time and are motivated to read more as they actually begin to understand and enjoy what they read.

In my study I have chosen fables from the Internet that I have simplified according to my students ability. The stories I have chosen exhibits good moral values and at the same time the stories are interesting, exciting and amusing. Another undeniable fact is it provides valuable input for language development, whereby new words which can be deduced using contextual clues are introduced.

2.7 The Role of Reader Response Approaches

Reader response approaches are used in this study as students would be responding to the stories using this approach in their reading logs. They would be adopting the aesthetic stance as they are required to state why they like a particular story or state the salient features that attracted their attention in the story.

There are basically four assumptions made in reader response theory.

1. Stance is important.

Reader response theory has been heavily influenced by the work of Rosenblatt (1976). She identifies two stances: the aesthetic and the efferent. The aesthetic stance focuses on what the reader experiences, thinks and feels during reading. The efferent stance is for specifically carrying information away from the text, to learn something rather than to experience something. Reader response approaches generally

emphasise the aesthetic as the primary stance but most readers can be placed on a continuum across the two stances.

2. Readers make meaning.

The relationship between the reader and the text is dynamic (Karolides, 1977). What a reader makes of a text will reflect the reader's state of being at a particular time and place in a particular situation. The reader comes to the text with their own personalities and character traits, their individual memories and experiences, their personal situations and concerns, their cultural background and perspective, and their backlog of language (Mahzan Arshad, 1998).

3. Although meaning is personal, it is also grounded in text.

According to Rosenblatt (1976), the text cannot be ignored in the personal construction of meaning. Acceptable responses take into account both the text and each reader's cultural background and individual uniqueness (Chase and Hynd, 1987 cited in Spiegel, 1988).

4. Multiple interpretations of text are constructed

Readers are individuals in their own right thus multiple interpretations of the same text are to be expected. There are two essential elements to reader response approaches to literature in classrooms: reading and responding.

In most response based approaches, reading is carried out through sustained silent reading in which learners read at their own pace. This gives the reader ample time to reflect and respond to the text. Most reader response approaches encourage readers to respond in writing, often in the form of journals as a prelude to peer discussions. Noll (1994) emphasises that 'discussion allows sustained dialogue and a

forum in which to raise questions, argue, reflect and negotiate meaning.’

Research shows that learners grow tremendously in their ability to respond to literature;

“They develop ownership of what they read and of their responses ... make personal connections with literature ... gain an appreciation for multiple interpretation along with a tolerance for and even expectation of ambiguity ... become more reflective, more critical readers” .

(Spiegel, 1998, p. 44)

As the focus of this study is not comprehension of texts, comprehension questions are not given. Students would not be under any pressure when reading the stories as they only have to record their personal responses in the reading log. I told the students that their responses would not be graded in order to ease their fears and give them a free rein to air their views.

Students would be using reader response approach to interact with the text according to what they perceive of the author’s message in the text as well as their own experiences, feelings and their personal situations and concerns. All this details would be recorded in their reading logs. Therefore, aesthetic reading gives them the opportunity to become independent lifelong readers (Tighe, 1995). It is my hope that these students would indeed become life long readers.