Chapter 5

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of an extensive reading programme using graded fables to motivate students of average English proficiency level to read.

In this chapter, I will conclude the findings based of my study. This research is aimed to answer the following questions:

a) Does the extensive reading programme motivate students of average proficiency level to read more in English?

b) Does the programme encourage students of average proficiency level to read independently?

c) Does the programme encourage students of average proficiency to improve their English Language?

5.2   Summary of Findings and Discussion

In carrying out this study, I found out that students of average proficiency level can be motivated to read especially if short and easy reading materials are used as in our extensive reading programme. Almost all the students read more than the number of graded fables targeted at the beginning of our reading programme.

The data obtained through questionnaires and interviews shows that the students have a positive attitude towards reading as a whole. The students also like to read simple stories (in this case graded) in a conducive environment at their home at their own pace.

All the students interviewed wished to read if they are given choice to select

their own reading material. The students preferred shorter reading materials like short stories rather than novels. They professed their wish of choosing their own materials for literature as they do not like materials that they have to read now as they are boring and alienated. This is because the literary texts for Form Four are all based on foreign environment and culture. Students' schemata is activated by their previous knowledge, therefore if the text does not activate their schemata, then comprehension fails to take place.

Wallace (1992) stressed that "the first part of a text activates a schema ...... which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follow."

Even though, the students were initially forced to read when they were introduced to this extensive reading programme, they seem to have enjoyed the reading activity because it was done as a group activity by the whole class and the reading material was easily available to them. In addition, the materials were easy for them to understand and they did not have to answer the normal comprehension questions that follow reading. This made their reading all the more enjoyable as the results of the questionnaire and interviews indicated that they get bored if the reading materials are beyond their comprehension level.

Students showed improvement in their command of target language in the area of speaking, reading and writing. They admitted to this in their questionnaire and interviews. From my own observations too, I found this to be true. Their written work in their exercise books, monthly assessments and mid-year examinations revealed improvement, especially in the area of essay writing and responses to literature component.

Prior knowledge in the form of stories heard in Ll plays an important role because the students could understand the tables better even though the fables were in the target language. So, when the students read the appropriate schema is activated and helps the reader to decode and interpret the message beyond the printed words. Students predict, sample, hypothesize and reorganize their understanding of the message as it unfolds while reading (Bell, 1998).

The result of the reading logs and interviews confirmed that students develop their meaning from texts as an extension of their prior knowledge, past experiences, past reading, and listening.

5.3   *Implications of the Findings*

The purpose of this study is to promote positive attitudes in students of average proficiency and to enable them to be engaged in a focused and motivating reading programme. According to Nuttall (1987), teachers should make room for reading in the classroom if they want the students to acquire the habit of reading. But, this study was carried out by giving students take home reading assignments so that the students will find appropriate time and space to concentrate on their reading. As many of the students professed to enjoy reading at home environment more, the above measure proved to be fruitful.

One of the characteristics of an extensive reading programme is to make the students read. Making the students feel the need to read books, for study or other purposes is an incentive for some students but wanting to read books because the students enjoy them is an incentive for everybody, including the teacher. Thus, the

graded materials that were used had big prints to make them appealing to the students. The fables had easy language for easy reading and was short for quick reading without getting the students bored.

The extensive reading programme managed to lead the students along a path to be independent readers and the students should be able to read for pleasure. Since this reading programme does not require the students to do tests or keep long journals other than the Reading Logs they were not pressured to read for content but for enjoyment. The responses given by students in their reading logs in the recent study exhibited their enjoyment. Students took the aesthetic stance in their responses. Day and Bamford (2000), advocated students to read and report their reading to the teacher and other students. The report however should not be too rigid. It should be more of a reader response kind of thing whereby students write their emotions and feelings towards the story they have read. This kind of responses would lead "students to view themselves as successful readers," (Gilles, 1990), thus, motivating them to read more books in the future. Students also become more aware of the actual processes of reading and making meaning (Giles, 1990; Turner & Paris, 1995; Yacom, 1993). As such, teachers should not pressure students under extensive reading programme to read and answer comprehension questions based on the content of the story, as this would invoke images of rote learning, vocabulary lists, memorisation and homework. Instead, they should create a stress-free condition, which would promote pleasurable reading. By doing so teachers are helping the students to forge a positive attitude towards reading in the English Language and this would in turn help the students to improve their command of the target language, especially in the areas of speaking,

reading and writing.

The graded fables were also *"manageable"* in the sense that the language was appropriate for their level of understanding. This is an important factor because the students would be encouraged to read more and the most important aspect is they would enjoy reading. This study suggests that in order for students to develop reading habits, they should be given texts and asked to interact with texts, which they are familiar with and within their reading capacity. According to William James the art of remembering is the art of thinking. Thinking is the ability to make connection with what we have in our mind and what is shown to us. The connection is thinking, and if we attend clearly to the connection, the connection thing will be likely to remain within recall (cited by Mahzan Arshad, 1998).

5.4 Recommendations For Further Research

This research focuses on motivating students of average proficiency to read more English graded fables independently using the extensive reading programme. An extensive reading programme can provide an effective platform for promoting reading improvement and development from elementary levels upwards. In order for the programme to work effectively, teachers can give credit for the extensive reading programme in terms of rewards such as presents, or given extra marks to qualify for certain grades that they fail to accomplish in their monthly assessments or even in term examinations. For example, if the student is short of one or two marks to attain a B3 (a certain grade in SPM examination), then the teacher can award the marks to the student based on his/her extensive reading assignment. To initiate this programme is

not easy as it requires a significant investment in time, energy and resources on the part of those charged with managing the materials. However, the benefits in terms of language and skills development for the participating learners far outweigh the modest sacrifices required.

This study could be continued with significant investment of time, energy and resources. Even though this programme has succeeded in motivating the students to read independently, further research could be undertaken to "transfer" the students from reading graded fables to reading authentic texts. Students would need training in study skills and strategies for reading longer texts and books. Thus, the extensive reading programme could be used to develop students' confidence and ability in facing longer texts.

Another aspect of an extensive reading programme that can be initiated is the practice of reading aloud to the class. Reading aloud in class should play a full part in motivating the emerging reader to overcome the fear of decoding words in an unfamiliar text. The teacher who reads aloud in class could provide the model of pronunciation and this could act as a great motivator and encourage many students to participate in classroom reading.

Reading also has positive effects on writing skills as found in this research. Reading diaries and book reports could be used together with a card file system to document the programme and record both the titles read and students' written comments on the books. These finding would help researchers to investigate whether "an input- based, acquisition- oriented reading programme based on extensive reading" is effective in fostering improvements in students writing (Bell, 1998).

5.5 Conclusion

An extensive reading programme is effective because of its *"prolonged practice"* or because of the process of learning *"to read by reading"* (Susser, 1990). Students with a certain level of ability in English can learn to read by using the extensive reading programme. To achieve this, the teacher should be present to instruct and to carry out the activities that would encourage proper reading skills or strategies in students. This would enable the students to have automatic comprehension skills, which would be useful when the students are reading on their own.

The extensive reading programme has been used in this study to *"spark off"* the reading habit in my students. It is my hope that they would carry this burning desire to read for pleasure with them forever. Now that English is gaining importance once again in our country, it is hoped that extensive reading programmes will gain popularity to enhance the learning of English through reading.