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Understanding reading choice: An investigation of multilingual Malaysian undergraduates’ print-based and computer-mediated reading experiences

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This dissertation is my own work and contains nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others, except as specified in the text and Acknowledgements.
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Abstract

Concerns about aliterate undergraduates who seem marginally interested in academic reading and uninterested in wider reading are often blamed on their low levels of reading motivation. The proliferation of computer and internet-based resources seems also to have negatively re-shaped the undergraduate reading experience. While large survey studies may point to this worrying trend, in-depth studies may be useful in explaining this phenomenon. My empirical in-depth study aimed to investigate the complexities behind multilingual undergraduates' academic and non-academic reading experiences across their past and current contexts. In order to achieve this aim, I examined the literate lives of a purposively selected group of eight multilingual Malaysian undergraduates in a British university. The eight participants are female and male, first to final year undergraduates pursuing degrees in the disciplines of Engineering, Mathematics, Law and Economics respectively. I drew mainly on a transactional theory of reading for how it acknowledges the complexities of every individual reading event. This study was methodologically designed from a constructionist epistemological stance with a phenomenologically-informed theoretical perspective. Thrice across a time-span of between four to ten months, each participant was interviewed about their past and current reading experiences. All participants were also asked to keep a reading diary for a total of eight weeks. From the data, the embodied reading experience emerged. My in-depth examination suggested that beyond simply responding to linear levels of reading motivation, the undergraduates were continuously framing and re-framing their reading choices within and across various domains. It was the continuous negotiation of choice-making that showed how the reading experience could be critically shaped in relation to the reader's social, cultural and historical contexts.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

Images are compelling. Perhaps, Alberto Manguel was acutely aware of this when he chose as an introduction to his book *A History of Reading*, an exhibit of 18 panels or "plates" of imagery - each one depicting a facet of readership (Manguel, 1996, pp. 2-5). From the painting of the young boy-Jesus reading in the temple through to the stained glass portrayal of fisherman and essayist Izaak Walton reading by what appears to be a babbling brook, the images are compelling not because they represent valuable works of art but for the simple fact that the reading imagery is so easily recognisable. Very importantly, the imagery captured within some of these early art pieces is recognisable even and especially to the modern gaze. This observation suggests at least two things. Firstly, the endeavour of reading goes back a very long way in human history. Secondly despite the chasm of hundreds of centuries, the way human beings understand and accept what it could mean to be literate appears in some measure, immutable. Echoing Manguel, I also open my thesis with images, albeit descriptively. All these images have been drawn from Manguel's book. The first image is that of a signboard painted by Ambrosius Holbein in 1516 which was included in Manguel's discussion of the history behind students across the ages and their quest in reading and learning to read. Manguel (1996) describes the painting lucidly:

One signboard advertising a school in 1516 depicts two adolescent students working on a bench, hunched over their texts, while on the right a woman seated at a lectern is guiding a much younger child by pointing a finger at a page; on the left a student, probably in his early teens, stands at a lectern, reading from an open book, while the teacher behind him holds a bundle of birches to his buttocks. The birch, as much as the book, would be the teacher's emblem for many centuries (Manguel, 1996, p. 76).

The second 'picture' requires a conjuring of the image of the Italian poet Dante, perhaps most popularly represented in the modern psyche by the very many statues erected in his honour across Florence, Italy. Dante is significant because he was known to have suggested that:

the "vulgar tongue" – that is to say, the vernacular – was even more noble than Latin, for three reasons: because it was the first tongue spoken by Adam in Eden; because it was "natural", while Latin was "artificial" since it was only learned in schools; and because it was universal, since all men spoke a vulgar tongue and only a few knew Latin (Manguel, 1996, p. 251).
The third and final image is that of an illustration of a woman seated in a chair, with her head bent at an approximate forty-five degree angle, a position typical of apprehending a book in hand. In her hand, however is not a book but a scroll. This illustration is found in Manguel’s discussion of the history of the silent reader. Next to the image is Manguel’s description: “In the fifth century BC, a reader would have read out loud, unrolling her scroll with one hand while rolling it up with the other, exposing section after section” (Manguel, 1996, p. 48, emphasis my own). Perhaps easily dismissed, reading by turning the pages of a book is not the same as reading through the unfurling of a scroll.

These three images have been selected for a purpose. Embodied within these three panels of imagery drawn from antiquity are the central themes threading through my thesis. As much as these images have been captured in time and cultures past, the student reader who experiences pressure and pleasure when apprehending texts through a variety of languages and in a variety of textual forms is also very much a modern phenomenon and one that is familiar to me and others like me. Once again, an endeavour like reading which has been proven to go back a long way is still found to be present and in very recognisable forms. Suffice it to say that these three images will foreshadow the main threads of my thesis which came together to throw some light on the nature and shape of the reading choice.

1.2 Background of research

Despite acknowledging that some characteristics of reading have endured across time and culture, I must point out that one characteristic clearly sets reading, past and present, apart. That characteristic is the modern phenomenon of universal literacy. If in the past, reading was kept exclusively for the privileged few, it is today made available for the vast majority. This modern phenomenon which finds no counterpart in the history of reading is at one and the same time, progress and puzzlement. This is because the high proliferation of literate individuals has not brought about an equally high quantum of reading. In other words, it appeared that being able to read did not necessarily translate into actual reading. This could perhaps explain why research work in the area of reading motivation began to receive more attention in the last two decades of the 20th century than the decades before. Among the many reasons for the heightened awareness in this area of research is the general concern that students in schools and universities near the end of the 20th century appear to be less interested in reading than those of previous generations. This can be seen when educators,
politicians and policy makers in fully developed countries highlight the declining standards of as well as mediocrity in students’ academic performances specifically in their reading and writing abilities.

The report *A Nation at Risk* from the United States of America’s National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) is a case in point. Authors of the report warn of American education being dangerously mediocre with amongst other issues, declining standards of reading and worrying levels of functional illiteracy. This means that while people are generally literate, the report shows that they are not doing enough with their reading skills. Regardless of the fierce debates that ensued, *A Nation at Risk* brought intense scrutiny to how reading was taught and sustained in American school classrooms thereby prolonging the mid-20th century reading wars which centred on the phonics or whole word approaches to reading.

On the international front, assessments like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) have found firm footing in an increasing number of countries worldwide. Both PISA and PIRLS are assessment measures that focus on pupils’ literacy in English, Mathematics and Science. As recently as 2009, ten more countries were included in the on-going PISA assessment of 64 participating countries (Walker, 2011). The international expansion of these assessments also attests to the international society’s scrutiny of how school-going children are seen to learn, experience and perform in matters of reading. Closely linked are matters surrounding these children’s interest and motivation to read.

I have been and still am a lecturer in a Malaysian university. Across the time that I have been a lecturer, I have found myself and my undergraduate students increasingly faced with an array of what appeared to be technological distractions. Like many, I also wondered if I was losing the battle to keep my undergraduate students interested in reading. Yet, I was aware that this concern emerged from a specific set of lenses that could define reading within narrow lines. By this, I refer to traditional notions of reading as described by Slatin (1990) in how reading is often associated exclusively with print texts and linearity of reading. Can such narrow notions offer a complete picture? Proponents of the New Literacies and New Literacies Studies movement for example offer an alternative perspective (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; The New London Group, 2000). They argue that by a shift in how researchers define reading within modern-day contexts we may realise that in fact, never
before have young people been more inundated, bombarded and expected to engage with such broad ranges of materials than they are in this century. In other words in spite of their circumstances, distractions or (dis)interest, young literate boys and girls the world over are negotiating more about, reacting more to, deciding more upon, pursuing and truncating reading activities more on a daily basis than children of previous generations. In this light then, the reading experience of today’s students is arguably at its height. This alternative perspective raises the question of whether the concern about students being poorly motivated readers is perhaps exaggerated.

More than that however, the alternative perspective flags up how differently the reading experience can be theorised and understood. The somewhat contrasting ways between how reading experience can be theorised further raises questions about how data regarding undergraduates’ reading and decisions about reading have been gathered and interpreted. With regard to research perspectives then, the question of whose perspectives have largely been heard is also raised. These questions which underpin my study essentially revolve around three elements. Firstly, they are about the experience of reading. Secondly, they are about the individuals who experience reading within their contexts as undergraduates. Thirdly, these questions are about hearing the authentic voices of the readers and their reading experience. My research revolved around the question of how reading was experienced amongst Malaysians undergraduates in a British university. More than that, my research sought to examine the nature of the undergraduate’s academic and non-academic reading experience as it was mediated by and intersected with the complexities of the undergraduate’s previous and current contexts. In the following section, I will discuss some significant facets of Malaysia’s history in the way that it can be associated with the nation’s current directions for moving forward. This is because it is important to understand the background and the heritage from which these undergraduates hailed.

1.3 Decolonisation and national literacy: impact on curriculum

History has shown us that across time, nations inevitably experience forms of change in terms of governing principles. In the case of ex-colonies, the process of decolonisation marks the end of what is considered to be foreign reign and the start of independent rule. With the euphoria of the notion of independence come the challenges of self-government. Of the many aspects of governance that would be affected, the sphere of education is often most critically
re-shaped. It is no secret that education is a powerful tool which arms a nation’s people in a way that nothing else can so pervasively do. Intricately tied with a nation’s education policies are its language and literacy policies. Taken together, these policies are often containers of the nation’s history and conduits to its future.

Like many countries in the region, Malaysia was a colony under British rule. The reign of British rule is recognised to have ranged from the mid-1800s until the then-Malaya gained independence in 1957 (Gullick, 1969). Today, Malaysia is considered a federal constitutional monarchy in South East Asia. Its population is currently estimated to be more than 27.5 million people (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). Malaysia’s geographical location and its colonial past brought about significant processes of migration. Under British rule in the 19th century, Chinese workers from mainland China and Tamil workers from India were brought into what was then, Malaya. Together with the indigenous and Malay people of Malaya, Chinese and Tamil migrant workers lived and co-existed. In time, many of the Chinese and Tamil migrant workers began to see Malaya as home with many of them choosing to remain in the country and gaining citizenship. In 1957, the Malays, Chinese and Indians became a part of independent Malaya. In 1963, Malaysia was formed when the then-Malaya joined forces with Singapore and northern Borneo. However, political and ethnic struggles saw Singapore withdrawing from Malaysia two years later to become its own independent nation state. Today, modern Malaysia is made up of peninsular Malaysia on the west and northern Borneo on the east. The fabric of modern Malaysia’s society is a heritage from its history. The country’s citizenry is today a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural one. With over 27 million Malaysians, more than half are ethnic Malays while a quarter of the population are ethnic Chinese and almost a tenth of the country’s people are ethnic Indians. Malaysia is also home to indigenous people and people of other ethnic backgrounds. Although Malaysians by birth, many are able to trace their ancestral roots to countries like Indonesia, China and India (McGee, 1964; Wang, 1964a, 1964b).

Language matters in Malaysia have proven to be complex because of the ways in which they intersect with issues of ethnicity, culture, politics and education. Due to the historical and cultural roots of the Malay people in the region, Malay language is widely used and spoken throughout the country. The political and social contract that was forged during the formation of Malaysia cemented the position of the Malay language and was made the national
language of the country. Through compulsory education in national schools, almost all Malaysians are able to use the Malay language. The country’s colonial history meant that English language continued to be important and is today regarded as a second language. Although heavily dependent on the rural-urban divide, English is generally used and spoken by those living in the cities. Mandarin and various Chinese and Indian dialects are used and maintained within the respective ethnic groups. As such, ethnic Malays consider Malay as their mother tongue whilst ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians regard the Chinese and Indian dialects and languages to be their mother tongue respectively. In time, this environment shaped a citizenry that is largely bilingual, at the very least. Many are tri-lingual while a smaller portion know and use four or more languages. In other words, the average Malaysian will very likely speak, read, write and negotiate in more than one language (Embong, 2002; Jassem, 1994; Kua, 1998).

Perhaps most complex however, is the fragile yet fundamental language-bound relationships that emerge from within and across the Malaysian people’s use of many languages. The political brokering of national and vernacular languages (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil) as opposed to the genuine educational concerns of ensuring acceptable proficiency of both vernacular (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil) and highly-commodified languages (English, Mandarin) make the situation volatile. The complexities of such inter-lingual situations were identified early on even in the years before decolonisation (Leow, 2011; Purcell, 1936, 1948). Sure enough, in the time after the country’s independence and during the period of decolonisation, this situation was problematized and was at the centre of many political and educational discussions (Roff, 1967; Wang, 1964a, 1964b). The result of this was the ongoing tussle of language protection and even possession through the setting up of culturally and socially-different schools yet, all dedicated to the same national agenda. By the mid-80s’ Malay language was made the medium of instruction for national secondary schools and public universities. Primary schools on the other hand, were divided into vernacular and national schools. The medium of instruction for vernacular schools is the vernacular language (i.e. Chinese or Tamil) while for national schools, the medium of instruction is Malay. Thus, national schools function alongside vernacular schools while private and international schools have recently become popular albeit expensive choices for urban-middle-income families (Haji Ahmad, 1998; Tan, 2002). Although having moved with the times, the crux of this multilingual situation continues to be unresolved almost 60 years after independence (Lim,
Gomes, & Rahman, 2009; Mukherjee & David, 2011; Tan & Santhiram, 2010). Most pertinent to the issue of language and the national curriculum presently is perhaps the government’s language policies with regard to introducing the subject English for Science and Technology and later the nation-wide implementation of teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (Heng & Tan, 2006; Idris, Cheong, Nor, Razak, & Saad, 2007; Pandian & Ramiah, 2004) and the reversal of the same policy less than one decade later (Ali, Obaidul Hamid, & Moni, 2011). Another effort in strengthening the students’ grasp of languages is the introduction of English and Malay literature into the respective language subjects. This was done as a move to improve levels of young Malaysian’s English and Malay language proficiency.

That the years after decolonisation had meant that Malaysia struck out on her own provides us a glimpse of how the then-heirs to a new nation came together from a shared past to re-shape a present so as to look forward to a future. Whether this conundrum of language, culture and history is a problem to be resolved or a socio-cultural effect to be embraced remains debatable. Importantly however, the debate must be kept open if only to acknowledge the fluidity of human social and cultural practice. The conceptual complexities and sensitivities of the debate and the seemingly mundane practical choices that are made by speakers, readers and writers of this multilingual context make the situation at one and the same time, complicated and deceptively straight-forward. Perhaps the one thing that has remained constant through the course of time is how every new generation of Malaysians is educational heirs to their socio-cultural and historical past.

1.3.1 Reading and the Malaysian context: the incomplete story?

Although limited research has been carried out in terms of researchers investigating the reading experiences of students in Malaysia, the little that has been done tends to tell a selected perspective of the country’s literacy story. From as early as 1928, traceable evidence of academic research on the matter of reading and education in what was then British Malaya can be found. Nagle’s (1928) thesis broadly sketched the educational landscape of the land while pinning down important aspects of learning objectives, school attendance, finance and curriculum in order to provide a cross-sectional facts and figures view of the Malayan context. Unsurprisingly, Nagle did not refer to higher education in his study because the country’s first public university was only founded in 1948.
Malaya’s literacy journey then was very much in its infancy. In his recommendation for improving the curriculum of teaching and encouraging reading amongst children, Nagle (1928) called for further studies to look into “the interests of individual pupils” so as to provide “the only safe guide” (p. 157) for teachers to help promote reading interest. However, because the dominant approach to research in the west then (and even now) is heavily informed by the positivist paradigm, it followed that Nagle’s recommendation for helping Malayan children cultivate the reading habit would be underpinned by methods that were “determined scientifically” (p. 156) and based on laboratory experiments. Specifically, Nagle referred to Vogel and Washburne’s (1928) work which took on a mechanistic and statistical approach from surveying 36,750 children’s ballots of book titles they were reading or interested to read. As a result ‘The Winnetka Graded Book List’ was produced. Nagle proposed a Malayan version of the graded book list. Nagle also strongly recommended the adherence to W. S. Gray’s summarised recommendations of scientifically-based reading instruction programmes as a way to design reading classes in schools (Gray, 1932, 1933).

In the 1930s, Buchler (1932) reported on the Malayan reading public in very generalised terms. Tracing his analysis along ethnic lines, Buchler commented on how the Chinese in Malaya made up the largest portion of the reading public while indigenous Malays showed the least interest. Indians in Malaya were largely illiterate. However, Buchler’s assessment was not accompanied by any explication about how he had arrived at such generalised conclusions. In juxtaposing Nagle’s (1928) call for in-depth investigations into school children’s reading interests with Buchler’s (1932) generalised conclusions about the reading public, I raise the question of the extent to which statistical surveys and laboratory experiments can be useful in drawing out the complexities.

Since the time of Nagle (1928) and Buchler (1932), Malaysian researchers have begun to look into the matter of fellow Malaysians’ reading interests. As higher education became more accessible, new interest in examining reading attitudes and practice among undergraduates also began to emerge. In my own research pursuit, I carried out a small-scale survey study which set out to test the hypothesis about how a group of undergraduates’ awareness of the importance of reading was associated with their reported practice of reading (Chong & Lai, 2007). Findings from that statistical study showed that while the undergraduates demonstrated strong awareness of the importance of reading, their reported
practice of reading did not seem to match. However, I must acknowledge that the survey study could only capture the undergraduates’ rough estimations of how much time they had spent reading. The quantitative design of the study could not trace the undergraduates’ actual description or experience of reading. Following that, I decided to carry out a qualitatively-informed study that could provide a platform to capture the descriptions of undergraduates who considered themselves ardent readers (Chong & Renganathan, 2008). Findings from this study showed that each of these ardent readers experienced significant turning points that have served to transform and consolidate their love of reading as undergraduates. However because the scope of that study was narrow, the definition of reading was then only limited to the reading of fiction.

In his series of studies based largely on questionnaires and survey method, Pandian and his associates (Pandian, 1997, 1999; Pandian & Moorth, 2001) identified what they termed as reading reluctance amongst undergraduates in universities across Malaysia. Findings from their quantitative studies showed that these undergraduates appeared to be practising minimal reading. This meant that beyond what was required, little reading was carried out. By association, conclusions from these research efforts suggested that reading motivation amongst pre-university and university students in Malaysia was unsatisfactory. Elsewhere, Eakle and Garber (2004) in an international report on literacy highlighted another statistical study which found that a sample group of Malaysian undergraduates read only for examination purposes. Although that study was quantitative in nature, its generalisability is questionable due to its small sample size. In another survey, Kaur and Thiyagarajah (2000) discovered that Malaysian undergraduates who were studying for their degree in English language and literature were not strongly motivated to read. This seemed counter-intuitive in that undergraduates who were reading for a degree in language or literature would presumably be highly-motivated readers. Instead, those undergraduates were found to be unprepared for their course expectations. In another study, Sani, Wan Chik, Awg Nik, and Raslee (2011) used statistical analytic tools to link a variety of external variables with Malaysian undergraduates’ motivation for reading. This potpourri of variables that ranged from socio-economic status, inclination or avoidance of reading to metacognitive reading strategies was placed together to bring about the rather flimsy conclusion that the undergraduates were only moderately motivated readers. My critique of that flimsy conclusion was made based on the researchers’ conclusions drawn largely from survey
questionnaires. The actual undergraduates did not talk about their reading experiences. When it comes to investigating the reading attitudes and experiences of Malaysian students, there still appears to be some naïveté in the kinds of work that is carried out in the Malaysian context. By naïveté, I am referring to the apparent disconnect between the social, cultural and historical backgrounds of the readers in question and their reading attitudes and experiences.

Detracting from the mainstream approach of quantitatively-informed methods, Pillai (2007) investigates what she terms the ‘tertiary learner’s world’ by drawing together her literature undergraduates’ written responses to selected literary texts. Pillai highlights that Malaysian undergraduates may be seen to lack in the ability to read and write critically. Pillai alludes to the undergraduates’ poor reading habits that were formed while they were in high school. In her study, Pillai’s research participants are asked to read the literary texts through four critical reading approaches. The approaches are formalism, reader response, psychoanalytic and feminism. Based on her participants’ varied responses to their reading using the different critical approaches, Pillai concludes that her participants demonstrated the ability to appreciate the literary texts. Pillai suggests that the outcome was a combination of arming the participants with knowledge about the different critical reading approaches as well as allowing a broad understanding of what the reading experience could mean. However, Pillai’s study only examines the literature undergraduates’ response to institutionally-prescribed texts to the exclusion of the undergraduates’ contexts and personal-choice texts. Such a study may still be trapped within its own lecturer-student-classroom expectations which have immediate implications on how these undergraduates actually respond to those texts. I argue that while the insights may be useful in providing a more detailed and descriptive stance of the undergraduates’ reading experience, these insights may still be based on what the undergraduates construe to be ‘right answers’ to the questions regarding their literary texts.

As a result, snapshots of Malaysian undergraduates and what appear to be their levels of poor reading motivation have become a recurring picture. This also resonates with the general perception that despite having a high literacy rate and possessing multilingual abilities, Malaysians in general are not motivated readers (Azizan & Tan, 2006; Siti Aishah, 2003; Small, 1996). More importantly, this brief synthesis of traceable research and published materials delineating the issue of Malaysian undergraduates and their reading practices shows that in all this time, reading research in Malaysia has been dominated by positivist views.
While the positivist view, in and of itself can be an important means of shedding light on an issue, an imbalanced stance could result if counter perspectives are absent. In the case of reading research in Malaysia, the dominance of positivist views meant that real individual voices of readers may have been drowned out. As such, the Malaysian undergraduates’ literacy stories could be incomplete.

Within the present educational landscape which is complex and increasingly heterogeneous, the intricacies of the individual reader’s experience are perhaps most in need of being explored. I argue that its neglect may cause researchers to leave out important aspects of the reading experience which could hinder their understanding of how undergraduates make their reading choices. How then, does this perspective of seeing the microscopic details of individual reading situate itself within and correspond to a landscape that is seemingly inundated by large-scale measures aimed at generalisable conclusions? From the outset, this microscopic perspective may seem to clash with the more prevalent macro view. Yet, I argue that both views are indispensable as they reflect on, refract from and confirm each other.

1.3.2 What reading means to me: my own story

I am a Malaysian of Chinese descent. This means that although I was born in Malaysia, I have ancestors in China. However, none of my immediate family members nor I have made any contact with these relatives. Because I have grandparents who were born in Malaysia, I consider myself a third generation Malaysian of Chinese descent. Often, such heritage has important bearings on the multilingual and multiliterate make-up of the individual who is heir to this heritage. I have lived for the most part of my life in Malaysia. Growing up in one of the large cities along the west coast of Malaysia, I am considered to be from a typical middle-class family in urban Malaysia. This would often mean that amongst other things, education is prized and literacy highly valued. I was educated in Malaysian national schools for twelve years. I spent the following seven years in a Malaysian public university to read for my Bachelor’s degree in Education and a Master of Arts. Because of the combination of my formative education in national schools where Malay language was the medium of instruction, my training in English language and literature in the university as well as my ethnic Chinese descent, I am tri-lingual. This means that I speak Malay, English and Chinese language as well as two other Chinese dialects. However, I am only literate in Malay and English language. This is because I did not receive sufficient formal training in the Chinese
language. On the whole, my experience of learning, working and living in Malaysia means that I necessarily negotiate in multiple languages.

My professional career in the academic world has spanned almost 17 years. In those 17 years, I taught in various universities and colleges in Malaysia. I have taught English language proficiency courses, English literature, technical and professional writing (for engineering and technology undergraduates) and professional communication skills. In most of these courses, a fair amount of reading is expected from the undergraduates. During my teaching experience, I have sensed that reading seemed to be burdensome and even challenging to my undergraduates. This impression was formed when I continually encountered instances of undergraduates demonstrating what appeared to be incomplete reading assignments. This meant that specific reading assignments set by the lecturer and the institution were found to be unfulfilled. My informal discussions with other colleagues also brought forth similar notions. However, in all this time, I did not systematically investigate this issue with the undergraduates themselves but had only formed my own notions of what it may mean for undergraduates to read within their contexts. I have begun to realise that there may be a gap in my understanding. More critically, this gap in my understanding embodied not what I did not know but what I thought I knew because “(my own) familiarity makes reading deceptively knowable” (Price, 2004, p. 312). It was this realisation that spurred me to pursue this research.

1.4 Motivation for reading: exploring motivation in flux

In the time that I have been a lecturer at a Malaysian university, I have carried out a number of research projects which examined the reading experiences of Malaysian undergraduates (Chong & Lai, 2007; Chong & Renganathan, 2008). The aim of my research was to get to the heart of an on-going but relatively muted debate surrounding findings that pointed to reluctance in reading amongst literate undergraduates in Malaysia. Specific to this thesis, I will briefly highlight a study which I undertook for my degree of Master of Philosophy in Educational Research (Chong, 2011). My aim in that study was to understand the nature of reading for undergraduates who were considered “highly motivated”, “averagely motivated” and “poorly motivated” readers. These undergraduates were Malaysians who were pursuing their undergraduate degrees in a university in Malaysia.
Nine undergraduates volunteered for that study. General findings showed that cutting across all nine was the struggle with deciding between reading academically-required and personal-choice texts. Further examination showed also that conventionally understood forms of the dichotomy between academic and non-academic reading did not always fall within neat lines in the undergraduates' experience. This demonstrated that while much reading was carried out in relation to institutional expectations, these undergraduates were also engaging in materials that were not part of the institution's prescription. Mirroring school students, these undergraduates were also experiencing reading inside and outside the classroom. More importantly, the undergraduates' individual motivations to read were also not always equal across various subjects and in different contexts. The findings showed that the actual experience of reading seemed to vary regardless of the motivational levels that the nine undergraduates were initially categorised into. A tentative conclusion was drawn from the findings of that study: the undergraduates' descriptions about their reading practice within and outside the university showed that for them, motivation for reading was experienced as being in flux, necessarily varying over time and space. In other words, linear levels of motivation to read could not tell a complete story. That study showed up what I call the dimension of reading motivation in flux. The tentative findings from my Master of Philosophy study (Chong, 2011) raised the question of how then should the concept of reading motivation be 'positioned' or if it could even be positioned at all. Yet, the 'positioning' of the concept of reading motivation may be useful if only to suggest other ways of understanding how the reader and the reading experience are connected.

1.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to situate the background of my research within the larger context of my own story and specific facets of my country's historical make-up. I consider the contextualisation to be significant because it explains how I arrived at apprehending the broader concerns surrounding Malaysian undergraduates and their reading experiences and orientates the direction of my research. In the following chapter, I will further pursue these concerns but through critical perspectives from other research carried out in the area of reading not just in Malaysia but across other countries.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, I have briefly described the background of my research and the broader concerns I had with regard to Malaysian undergraduates and the way they experienced reading. Obviously, this concern also receives much attention across other nations. Any attempt at tracing substantive literature surrounding reading will no doubt, yield large bodies of theoretical and empirical works. However, changes in the literature surrounding readers and reading experience are not unexpected. In their discussion of “the act of reading”, Styles and Arizpe (2009) rightly point out that debates surrounding what and how children read as well as how adults influence children’s reading will “remain open...given that the answers will change along with historical, cultural and technological developments” (p.3). In the same way, issues about undergraduates and reading have been observed to be situated within historical, cultural and technological contexts within the literature. This chapter will trace some significant shifts within the literature and will show how these shifts are relevant to my study. Because the expansion of formal higher learning in Europe and United States has been more significant, has had a longer and more traceable documented history than institutions anywhere else, the selected literature that will be reviewed will largely be drawn from studies carried out in these continents. Albeit on a smaller scale, studies from contexts outside of these two continents will also be referred.

2.1 Past research: Practical Criticism and Literature as Exploration

Undergraduates are often understood to be the group of young people who have done well in their secondary education and who have made the conscious choice to continue with higher education. As such, their reading skills are also often assumed to be at high and efficient levels. For this reason it may have been possible that little attention has been paid to this taken-for-granted situation. Yet, there has begun to be increasing documented evidence that the quality and quantity of reading among literate and even highly-literate undergraduates in universities and colleges have fallen short of lecturers’ and societal expectations. Although the focus on undergraduates and reading has only been more systematically published and documented in the last 20 years in both the United Kingdom and United States, there nevertheless have been some significant and early references to this issue. I argue that we must understand this issue as it is situated in the milieu of ever-changing times. I illustrate
this by highlighting two important works: I. A. Richards’ (1929) *Practical Criticism* and Louise M. Rosenblatt’s (1938) *Literature as Exploration*.

### 2.1.1 *Practical Criticism*: I. A. Richards

Firstly and most famously documented is Richards’ (1929) *Practical Criticism*, a scathing analysis of University of Cambridge’s undergraduates’ less than desirable reading responses and interest in their literary exercises. Setting out to prove his hypothesis that undergraduate readers were essentially reading within previously created and systematically-imposed structures, Richards designed a study that drew out his undergraduates’ original responses of selected poems. Richards did that by removing any trace of the poets’ identity so as to dismantle any pre-conceived influence and notions that might otherwise have accompanied the undergraduates’ reading. He collected his undergraduates’ protocols of what would later be considered close reading in literature and proceeded to analyse their responses. Richards’ *Practical Criticism* may have been among the earliest documented evidence of the use of reader response theory among university undergraduates in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. In a sense, Richards’ experiment was a glimpse into the future of reader response theory.

Richards’ findings indicate that his undergraduates who were “products of the most expensive kind of education” and whose capacity for reading poetry he believed to be the most superior in all of the United Kingdom were still wanting in terms of appreciating the deep meanings that poetry can potentially convey (Richards, 1929, p. 300). His findings are surprising but significant because they bring to light how a presumably highly-literate group of young adults in a prestigious British university are seen to be faced with their own challenges in reading and experiencing literary criticism. Richards criticises the way in which the undergraduates were systematically trained to read poems such that they seemed compelled to produce stock responses. Richards felt that due to the heavily prescribed manner of teaching, the undergraduates did not experience deeper and potentially more critical readings of the literary pieces. By this, he highlights how the culture surrounding the undergraduates could and did heavily influence their experience of reading. More pertinently, Richards’ criticism is important in how it was drawn from the actual readers’ perspectives. Thus, it was through the readers’ voices that Richards could present some form of evidence for the critical role of socio-cultural contexts towards how realities are constructed.
2.1.2 *Literature as Exploration*: L. M. Rosenblatt

Richards’ (1929) early concerns about undergraduates and reading were strongly echoed by Rosenblatt’s (1938) equally moving response towards her American college students’ literary reading experience and how they had been taught. Because *Literature as Exploration* was meant to address teachers and lecturers of schools and colleges, the writing was interspersed with examples of literary texts and how they were treated in classrooms. Specifically, Rosenblatt describes her book as a “synthesis” of some years of experience in practical teaching (1938, p. 329). Rosenblatt consistently reminds the literature teacher about his or her critical influence in not only the students’ literary experiences but also in their human relations. Rosenblatt’s *Literature as Exploration* is regarded as one of the seminal works which paved the way for the formation of reader response theory.

Although Rosenblatt’s earliest writing about the undergraduates’ reading experience was published in 1938, her work ironically had to be re-discovered in the 60’s and 70’s before her transactional theory could resonate with ‘newer’ theories surrounding the reader and the audience. For instance, Suleiman and Crosman (1980) only in a foot-note belatedly acknowledge Rosenblatt’s transactional theory as being ‘rediscovered’ by Bleich (1978) whilst the emergence of Iser’s implied reader (1974, 1980, 2000), Fish’s interpretive communities (Suleiman & Crosman, 1980), Holland’s identity theme theory (Holland, 1975a, 1975b, 1980) and Jauss’ horizons of expectations (Suleiman & Crosman, 1980) are discussed in their collection of original essays in reader and audience analysis. In fact, Mailloux observes how Rosenblatt’s transactional theory only receives “attention in literary theory circles” much later than when it was first introduced (as cited by Rosenblatt, 1993, pp. 380-381). More than 70 years after *Literature as Exploration* was written, reader response theory has become a burgeoning “field” within literary criticism (Price, 2004, p. 304).

If there should be a centrepiece to Rosenblatt’s (1938) argument, it would be the notion that experience of reading should be seen as “living and unstereotyped” (p. 37). Rosenblatt highlights the complexities and individual nature of reading when she compares the “living and unstereotyped” reader with the “great diversity” (p. 38) of the forms of literary works. Further, she argues that “any of his present preoccupations, his needs and frustrations – even his present physical state – may enter actively into the nature of his primary spontaneous response” (p. 92). In short, the meaning drawn from any text ultimately begins and resides in
the individual reader as he or she transacts with both text and context. This immediately means that no two individuals will experience reading the same text in the same way. It can further be argued that no one individual will experience reading the same text twice in the same way. Hence if the reading experience is acknowledged to be so complex, it needs to be understood in its most authentic context.

To some extent, an attempt to understand the reading experience in an authentic context was demonstrated through Ginzburg’s (1976) *The Cheese and the Worms* micro-historical analysis of what a 16th century miller read and how that miller interpreted and understood his world. Ginzburg’s analysis results in a reconstruction of the “physiognomy of (the miller’s) culture and of the social context in which it had taken shape” (p. xii). It must be noted that Ginzburg does not claim to explicitly adopt the tenets of reader response theory which explains why some facets of his analysis of Menocchio’s reading habits are still rooted in the idea that texts must contain in them specific sets of meanings. Through his aim of arguing for the formation of popular reading however, Bennett (1983) challenges Ginzburg and like-minded others who disallow variations of texts in terms of how these texts can be differently interpreted by readers. In so doing, Bennett steers the discussion towards how the reading experience should be recognised as being experienced by a real reader.

In the next few sections, I will provide a summary for why Richards’ and Rosenblatt’s early works were important for my thesis. However, because significant principles that underpin reader response theory were important for how I understood my research, Rosenblatt’s fundamental work will be discussed in greater detail in Section 2.5.1.

### 2.1.3 Lessons from Richards and Rosenblatt

Reading researchers like Squire (1994) and Hansson (1992) have drawn associations between Richards’ and Rosenblatt’s early writing especially in terms of how they pay tribute to the real reader. Squire and Hansson highlight the particular challenges that come with this shift in focus on actual readers during a time when literary theorists seemed more pre-occupied with theoretical notions of the intended or implied reader. Richards and Rosenblatt’s focus on the real reader resonates with my research. In the following sections, I will discuss three points and show how my research is associated with Richards’ and Rosenblatt’s early works.
Firstly, *Practical Criticism* and *Literature as Exploration* revolve exclusively around undergraduate learners of English literature. This indicates how these early studies more readily considered the phenomenon of reading to exclusively belong to the field of literary studies. This would have also meant that because faculty members and teachers then tended to view reading from this perspective, the reading of non-literary texts in the lives of the undergraduates may have been left unexamined. If indeed the undergraduates’ social and cultural environment is crucial in how they read literary texts, how would that same environment affect their reading of non-literary texts? More than that, what can we discover from undergraduates whose academic pursuits do not lie in literary arts but yet, whose exposure to both expository and literary texts intertwine? In other words, is reader response theory only applicable to literary texts or can it be applied to any literate undergraduate’s context? My study seeks out the latter.

Secondly, Richards and Rosenblatt further push the boundaries of reading so as to present reading as an amorphous phenomenon which demands intricate and unique considerations. Although Richards was later to be popularly recognised for his work in the area of New Criticism which is understood to be incompatible with the tenets of reader response theory, both Richards and Rosenblatt treat the phenomenon of reading as an experience that must be understood through the reader’s perspective. Richards and Rosenblatt also seem to be able to foresee the diversity of the 21st century classroom and the importance of historical and socio-cultural influences on an individual learner when they emphasise the plasticity of the human being and its implications for literary learning.

Thirdly, Richard and Rosenblatt’s focus on undergraduates and reading furnishes us with the realisation that undergraduates and college students are readers who hold a wealth of knowledge regarding their reading experience. They are often balancing between discovering ways of making meaning from texts and grappling with day-to-day experiences that surround their socio-cultural contexts. As contexts alter, reading experiences should alter accordingly. These two pieces of writing provide the basis for how our perspectives of undergraduates and reading have shifted across time and how critical it is to return to the past so as to understand the future.
2.2 Current concerns: undergraduates reading in the 21st century

Since the time of Richard’s and Rosenblatt’s work on undergraduates and reading, major world events have taken place. The second half of the 20th century bore witness to some significant shifts that brought about critical changes to the field of education. Firstly in the years after the Second World War (WWII), mass education in Europe and United States meant that post-war children began to be systematically provided for within the school structures. As this took place, it was only a matter of time before the context of higher education was also adjusted to fit the altered landscape of the new undergraduate population. The effect of such change gradually emerged in the 1970’s as mass education began to occupy higher learning institutions. The most notable impact was the rise in student numbers. In Trow’s (2005) description of the changing phases of higher education in Europe and the United States, he illustrated the increase by contrasting a 5% enrolment before and immediately after WWII with a 30 – 50% enrolment at the turn of the millennium. Tight et al. (2009) followed with very current analyses of the impact of changes that surround higher education. Such expansion also meant that critical changes occurred within the student body across academic departments, faculties and fields. To be sure, increased pressure was placed on academic reading.

Secondly, mass higher education became increasingly international. Never before have such large groups of young adults travelled across continents in search of the all-important intellectual experience of studying abroad. University classrooms took on a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual and international context. Thirdly, the last two decades of the 20th century also witnessed the technological revolution that arguably altered the ways in which human beings connected, communicated, learned and lived. Inevitably, almost every feature of learning in education systems across the globe was re-shaped in the race to keep abreast with technological innovations. This meant that above all else, reading and writing skills were re-cast into new moulds so that new experiences emerged.

I argue that these three significant shifts engendered new challenges to the context of undergraduates and their reading experience. In the following section, I will refer to a review of selected literature on undergraduates and reading in the two decades before the turn of the 20th century and the first decade into the 21st century. I will highlight how the focus in research on undergraduates and reading has shifted such that aliteracy, multilingualism and
reading across new materiality are now seen to be current concerns facing undergraduates and their reading experience.

2.2.1 Aliteracy: academic and non-academic reading

As the 20th century came to a close, the condition of those who were literate but who chose not to engage in reading were given a label. The term ‘aliteracy’ known to have been discussed very early on by Mikulecky (1978) at the International Reading Convention in Houston, Texas, was defined simply as “capable readers (who) choose not to read” (p. 2). Despite Mikulecky’s discussion, the term ‘aliteracy’ possibly only entered the American public’s psyche when Boorstin (1984), as the 12th Librarian of the United States Congress, referred to it in his speech. Naming aliteracy as one half of the twin menace aliteracy/illiteracy, Boorstin decries the decline in reading interest among the American public, especially school-going students. Since then, the term ‘aliteracy’ has often been attached to adolescents in schools and young adults in the universities (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Bailey, 2003; Hawkes, 2008; Ismail, 2004; Karim & Hasan, 2007; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008). The overall concern surrounding this condition of aliteracy is how a generation of school and university aliterates could eventually become parents whose values and beliefs regarding reading may work against any effort in forming a generation of engaged readers. Despite the concerns, the debate surrounding aliteracy appears relatively muted. This is possibly because when juxtaposed against the more worrying problem of illiteracy, the issues surrounding literate individuals who simply choose not to read appear less urgent.

Interestingly, the issue of undergraduates and their reading habits in the later part of the 20th century was found to have been increasingly discussed in studies that had originally set out to investigate undergraduates’ utilisation of the university library and their book-buying habits (Mann, 1982). Essentially, studies like Mann’s are useful in providing some insight into undergraduates’ academic and non-academic reading habits. Specifically, Mann’s (1974) quantitatively-designed research set out to investigate and survey the patterns of university library use by undergraduates of a university in the United Kingdom. In this study approximately 77% of the questionnaires were returned thus providing the study with a strong response rate. Mann also carried out informal discussions with some of the university population which included undergraduates and faculty members. Mann’s analysis of findings
demonstrates that 15% of the undergraduates did not seem to utilise a library at all for private revision. Apart from that, 16% said they did not borrow any book from the library. Despite being in the latter part of Lent term, 35% of the undergraduates said that they “did not have any books on loan from the University libraries” (Mann, 1974, p. 253).

Because Mann’s study was carried out in the early 70’s, it would be assumed that the physical library and its book-lending services were the main source of reference for the undergraduates. There were as yet, few or no on-line materials or electronic databases available. Therefore during this period when libraries were probably the only significant means of drawing reading resources, Mann’s findings may appear to indicate that some undergraduates of that British university were poorly motivated to read. Yet, Mann cautions that although it:

would be very easy to draw the facile conclusion that many students are idle, do not want to study if they can avoid it, prefer mugging up lecture notes to reading books...as a general conclusion these ideas are dangerously misleading” (Mann, 1974, p. 254).

Mann’s critical observation foreshadows the present need to raise deeper questions surrounding the issue of aliteracy amongst undergraduates. Mann further explains that his findings are only snapshots of what appears to be the undergraduates’ reading practice and motivation. He suggests that factors like differing disciplines or university policies should also be included in further analyses. Mann’s early observation of the necessity to consider the undergraduates’ differing disciplines is relevant to modern contexts. This is because undergraduates learn within and sometimes even across disciplines. New interest has been shown towards understanding reading experiences in subjects that are specific to individual students in their respective disciplines. This has important implications for how we understand motivation for reading. It has become possible that the condition of aliteracy could be partly influenced by the researcher’s attempt at considering only some forms of reading while leaving out others.

Also, we must bear in mind that Mann’s research began with the intention of understanding the undergraduates’ book-buying and library-using patterns. While the findings may show that some of their book-buying and book-borrowing habits are infrequent, any conclusions that these undergraduates are engaging less in reading may be inaccurately made. This is
because there could have been other sources from which these undergraduates were drawing their reading experiences. As will be discussed later in this chapter, historically-based research of actual readers in the past has provided memoir and diary evidence that point to the reader’s less conventional source of reading materials that could come from texts that were handed down or simply found lying around (Rose, 2001). In the same way, it is possible that Mann’s research aim and design were not suitably positioned to capture other reading sources. Nonetheless, these studies in library science in the United Kingdom during the years before the technological revolution are useful markers that could reveal how undergraduates read and lived their literate lives (see Baker, 1986; Kingston, 1986; Mann, 1986). Mann’s cautionary reminder of not concluding too generally seems prophetic today in a technologically-altered era where sources of reading materials have been so dramatically transformed and are unarguably influential.

Currently however, concerns continue to be raised about how young adult learners’ reading habits in a range of faculties across universities are falling short of expectations. Researchers have reported that undergraduates appear to be reading less because of limited time. Ironically, the academic structure of higher education which involves heavy lectures often competes for time in the undergraduates’ daily schedule (Taillefer, 2005). In another library-related study that was concerned with the possible revolution of the modern university library, Salter and Brook (2007) set out to “test the hypothesis that students are aliterate” (p. 28). Although Salter and Brooks bring together various and even opposing studies about undergraduates and reading across the United States, the overall sense of their synthesis points to what appears to be “an increasing proportion of adults, including some of today’s college students (who) find reading in breadth and depth to be beyond their capacities for tolerance” (Deekle, 1995, p. 31). As such, Salter and Brooks’ review justifies the need for them to test that hypothesis by carrying out a survey across two universities and how the undergraduates chose to read during their leisure time. Although the scope is narrow in that it focuses only on leisure reading, this small-scale quantitative survey study offers another facet to the meaning of aliteracy. This is because Salter and Brooks suggest that the undergraduates seem to prefer “viewing” (p. 39) instead of reading during their spare time. This is important because it shows that other than reading print-based materials, the undergraduates are drawing pleasure from engaging with less traditional reading materials.

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2.2.2 Reading in multiple languages

The collocated words ‘multiple’ and ‘languages’ hence, ‘multilingual’ have been referred to in many quarters but with differently nuanced connotations. While much of our conventional use of the word ‘multiple’ and ‘languages’ could easily convey a sense of clear divisions among languages, scholars of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics have increasingly challenged this thinking (Canagarajah, 2013; Pennycook, 2007; Spolsky, 2009). Drawing from research areas further afield especially through diaspora and migration narratives, these scholars argue that the fluid movement of languages across historical, cultural and social contexts has shown that the notion of language as being simplistically divisible and quantifiable is questionable. On the contrary, language users are seen less as being multilingual than translingual. Whilst I agree with the idea that language is more than its conventionally-categorised sense, I am also aware that my assumptions of language use and language education are undeniably rooted in these conventions of categories. In that respect, I acknowledge both accounts of how language can be an objectified matter seen especially through language-in-education policies as well as being deeply fluid and intertwined when language is actually experienced. The apparent contradiction points not so much to flawed thinking but to the complicated nature of our thinking about language, language use and human experience. Within the scope of my thesis, the use of the word ‘multilingual’ is cautiously applied to the extent that it can practically refer to a basic but not naïve notion of multiple language use.

In terms of multiple language use, undergraduates who study abroad confront different challenges from those who study in their home countries. As I have previously pointed out, the advent of mass higher education has also meant that more study abroad programmes on short or long-term basis have begun to be carried out internationally. In her work, Taillefer (2005) forms as a backdrop the academic literary practices of British, Spanish and French undergraduates as they experience learning, reading and writing in foreign environments and foreign languages. Elsewhere, Braine (2002) tries to account for these complexities in his work on graduate students who are “non-native” English speakers. Drawing from his own reservoir of experience as a non-native English speaker confronting challenges in academic literacy, Braine calls for more qualitative-based research to be carried out. Braine also draws from similar detailed studies that could account for the intricate relationships and associations
which are formed between non-native graduate students and their academic contexts. While Braine acknowledges that these studies could still benefit from research methods that are rooted in multiple sources, they nevertheless give “voice” to the graduate students “so that they can express first-hand how they acquired academic literacy” (p. 61). That this concept of individuality in learning is applicable to academic literacy would mean that it is applicable to reading. Such clashes essentially foreground the multilingually-literate undergraduates’ complex literacy experiences.

In agreement with Braine, I also argue that more attention should be paid to the complexities within the reading experience of “non-native” graduate students. However, I find the term “non-native” to be a problematic one because of the way it implies an immutable sense of possession as to whom the target language is originally “native”. At this point, I acknowledge the perspective drawn from research on the translingual nature of language. This is because in global contexts where English is swiftly becoming the language of commerce and communication, the notion of a monolithic, standardised English is no longer tenable. Although it is not within the scope of my thesis that the position of English is directly discussed, this issue nevertheless flags up an important point. That point revolves around the significance of accounting for ‘non-native’ readers in terms of the language learners that they are and within the language contexts that they find themselves.

In the literature, issues pertaining to language, language learners, language users and language sustenance seem to be theorised in at least two areas. First though not necessarily in any order, is the research work done under the heading of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) or Second Language Learning (SLL). Because English is often assumed to be a second or foreign language, this area of research is sometimes also called English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In these areas of research, the focus is necessarily pedagogical. Therefore central to research in this area is the ‘technical’, classroom aspects of language teaching, learning, motivation, performance and testing (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2001; Evans, 2013; Krashen & Candlin, 1988; Ushioda, 2001). This area would count as the microsystem of the learner’s context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Even within this area, critical distinctions need to be made in terms of whether the learner is a minority-language learner as a result of migration or a bilingual learner whose education context is designed with bilingualism as a goal. This brings us to the
second research area which wrestles with bi-and multilingualism on a broader front. The focus in this research area is ideological. As such, the larger and macrosystemic sense (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) involving socio-cultural values, political and national agenda is the context through which the understanding of multiple language use is studied. In this area, concepts like post-colonisation, globalisation, language commodification, language heritage and maintenance are unpacked so as to see their influences on the way language policies take shape and the way language practices occur. Perhaps because of the differing epistemological focus in language learning and multilingualism respectively, both research areas are less often seen to intersect.

However, in a context like Malaysia and increasingly across South East Asia, such neat divisions are problematic and inapplicable. Firstly, the historical influences of colonisation, migration and assimilation mean that it is getting more challenging to pin down an individual’s ‘native’ tongue, first language, second language and even third language. For example, research carried out in bi- and multilingual Singapore shows that “…the official notion of mother tongue is problematic since, with the possible exception of the Malays, it does not reflect the language actually spoken at home, English being a home language for a significant portion of the population” (Wee, 2008, p. 34). This circumstance also abounds in the Malaysian context (Mukherjee & David, 2011). Therefore, research areas which discuss the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) will not sit well. Secondly, researchers in bi- and multilingualism have raised the reflexive question of whose vantage point and on whose terms are the readers being judged (Lin, 2005; Lin & Martin, 2005). Related to this is the point about how different perspectives about language proficiency are formed when they emerge from either the monolingual or the multilingual model standpoint (Tan & Rubdy, 2008). This means that from the monolingual model perspective, bilinguals may be viewed as being disadvantaged when they are considered less proficient in a second language in contrast with monolinguals who are often more proficient in that same language which is their first and only language. On the other hand, scholars from the multilingual model perspective consider bilinguals as having an advantage because they possess the ability to negotiate in more than one language. Thirdly, the element of globalisation and internationalisation must be included in the discussion of language learning and language use. This is because the commodification of the English language impacts heavily on the way learners identify and experience English and other equally relevant languages (Chng, 2008; Tan, 2008, Tan &
Rubdy, 2008). The reader’s language of identification and the commodified language may not match. As such, an individual may choose to read materials that are represented in the language of their identification but not of commodification. Such a choice is less privileged and sometimes seen to be less legitimate.

2.2.3 Materiality of reading: mode, affordance and frames

In my discussion of the literature thus far, most of the selected research on reading are those which revolve around the conventional understanding of the reader in transaction with conventional texts. This assumption speaks to the level of the materiality of the reading act. In much of the above-mentioned contexts reading is necessarily logocentric and often book-bound. That the assumption was made points to a ready acceptance of a particular form of reading that seems to be more commonly practiced. The logocentrism of reading goes back to when writing was introduced to the sphere of knowledge. Writing was destined not only to replace oral literacies but to become central to what it meant to be literate. Yet, writing is by no means the only resource through which ideas and meanings can be conveyed or represented. In the time before writing was even invented, pictures and symbols, gestures and facial expressions, touch and sounds were just some of a host of other modes which were and continue to be responsible for transporting ideas, meanings and messages. This explains why today, we read road maps and shop signs; we read people’s minds and palms; the visually-impaired read braille through touch and pre-literate children read through the sound of their parents’ voices reading aloud to them. The presence of new forms of materiality in meaning-making has engendered an unexpected collision between the traditional ways of reading as opposed to modern and especially technologically-dependent ways of reading. Amongst scholars and educators, this divide has brought about at least two strands of thinking which often appear to be in conflict.

The first strand can be said to be represented by the thinking that privileges the traditionally-linguistic-based form of text representation and the associated understanding of reading. As such, proponents of this strand consider reading to be legitimate only or largely when apprehended through print-based texts. Many of these proponents also regard the arrival of the technological revolution to be not only unhelpful but damaging to the enterprise of reading. Commenting more on the infiltration of television and media, Postman warns of how children are amusing themselves to death and are on the cusp of losing their childhood
because of the technological distractions around them (1985, 1986). According to Postman, children seem to be less interested in reading as they spend increasingly more time on apprehending non-linguistic images on screen. Harsher is Birkerts’ lament of how the rise in technologically-dependent materials for meaning-making will render books and reading obsolete (1994). According to him, if information can be drawn from such non-linguistic-based sources, there may well be no more need for reading in the traditional sense. Within the field of undergraduate reading, Deekle (1995) discusses the need to preserve reading as the centripetal force behind liberal education. Specifically, Deekle takes into consideration the reading of books in undergraduate education in the United States of America. Deekle cautions that the reading of hypertext brought about by multimodality in general and new media in particular could be a barrier to how reading of printed text should be carried out. While Deekle acknowledges the advantages of reading in multimodal forms, he criticises this new form of reading for its inability to allow for in-depth and critical reading. Where multimodal reading is involved, Deekle anticipates a reduced depth of reading. According to him, this decline is caused by the absence of linearity in hypertexts and the speed with which information can be tracked, traced and transferred through new media (Deekle, 1995). These scholars highlight how such new ways of accessing texts through less traditional materials may threaten the traditionally laborious process which is essential to print-based reading.

The second strand of thinking is related to a broader sense of meaning-making than the linguistically-based one. This strand of thinking often takes the socio-cultural and social-semiotic turns. Perhaps most notably, the work of scholars in New Literacy Studies is pivotal in bringing about broader notions of what had been up until the 1990’s, a narrow understanding of what reading is (Coiro, et al., 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000; Kress, 2000b; Street, 2005; The New London Group, 2000; Wyse, Andrews, & Hoffman, 2010). Research in this area has significantly expanded especially in the last fifty years. Amongst other reasons, the most crucial is perhaps the progress and proliferation of technology which changed the field of media and communication (McLuhan, Fiore, & Agel, 1967; McLuhan & Powers, 1989) as well as literacy and education (Gee, 2000, 2003, 2013; Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Martin & Veel, 1998; Nichols, Rowell, Nixon, & Rainbird, 2012; Rowsell, 2012). Challenging the early to mid-20th century formalist perspective that reading can only legitimately be experienced through the source of writing, these scholars and researchers in the area known as multimodality suggest that
meaning can be apprehended arguably through any source and materiality. Rowsell (2012) for example who bases her work heavily on Kress' social semiotic theory of multimodality, suggests that much can be learnt from seeing how designers make sense of their creations across a range of materiality from paper to fabric. Today in the 21st century, research work in multimodality and its association with media, message and literacy has forced us to reconcile and break down strictures that tend to attribute a singularity to the nature of reading. What these researchers have done is push back and by that force open the conventional boundaries of what reading, language and literacy have come to mean. Essentially, they have attempted to equalise the modes in which meaning-making is continually constructed and created.

The perspectives from both strands raise legitimate questions. The first question revolves around the mutual exclusivity between a decline in motivation for reading and the increase in time spent engaging with the computer. Specifically, the question challenges the neat dichotomy between what appears to be a reduction in one area of engagement and the increase in another and questions if they can be comparable. The second question pertains to the mutual exclusivity of the traditional linguistic-based and print-based forms of reading from the new often non-linguistic and screen-based forms of reading. Increasingly, it is important to examine in what ways these questions play themselves out in the context of the real reader. This is particularly important to my research because one of the concerns I raised was how undergraduates in the present time experience reading when the means and materiality of their reading materials have so dramatically expanded. Within the broad notion of multimodality lie the key concepts of mode, affordance and framing. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss these three key concepts that were important in further informing my thinking.

2.2.3.1 Understanding mode

According to Kress (2010) the term 'mode' in the simple meaning-making sense refers to the actual resource with which the meaning-maker relies on to make meaning. In other words, an individual could apprehend writing on a signboard in order to understand instructions. Thus, some common examples of modes are writing, image, facial expressions and sounds. However, Kress goes further to differentiate the way 'mode' is understood through the linguistic, pragmatist and social semiotic turns. "(L)inguistics provides a description of
forms... (p)ragmatics tells us about social circumstances... (s)ocial semiotics and the multimodal dimension... tell us about interest and agency...” (2010, p. 59).

Drawing on the social semiotic turn, Kress argues that a social semiotically-informed perspective allows for considerations which not only account for the meaning-maker’s context but also how her motivations and choices play a part in her meaning-making. The social semiotic turn paradoxically examines the function of mode by striving to suspend the examination of mode. This means that a useful examination of how a meaning-maker makes meaning requires an analysis that looks beyond the mode. “It does not deal with the resources used, the modes” (Kress, 2010, p. 57, emphasis author's). Simply put, the ‘survival’ of a mode depends on how it has been socially-determined and how it continues to be socially-practised. Mode is the resource through which meaning inextricably tied with culture, history and context can be made. By extension, multimodality refers to the meaning-maker’s experience in negotiating with various modes or resources. Through the social semiotic turn, multimodality also takes into account the meaning-maker’s interest and agency when negotiating a mode’s potentials and limitations.

2.2.3.2 Understanding affordance

According to Kress, modes have affordances. Affordance refers to the “potentials and limitations of a mode” (Kress, 2010, p. 84). The significance behind this thinking is illustrated through the following questions that Kress poses.

What is the social and cultural domain that (mode) covers or that it does not cover?
What can this mode do in the cultural domain that it covers and what can it not do?
What semiotic features are in the mode and which are not, and why? (Kress, 2010, p. 84)

Once again, the critical nature of the above-mentioned questions draws on the thinking that not only equalises across modes but that foregrounds the effects that the meaning-maker continually experiences because and in spite of a mode’s potentials and limitations respectively. For example, the writing mode will possess the potential to record and transmit information but will be limited in terms of transmitting tonal expressions. As such, the experience of reading words off a page only brings about meaning that the physical materiality can allow or can afford to provide. At one and the same time, this thinking draws our attention to the limitation of any mode while sharpening our focus on how a mode most
ably contributes to meaning-making in terms of the meaning-maker’s interest (motivation) and agency (choice).

2.2.3.3 Understanding framing

Kress (2010) refers to the concept of framing in a broad and encompassing sense. Framing could mean the physical layout of a sign-complex which could be a website or a museum display. Framing could also refer to how a sign-maker thinks about and creates the website or museum display based largely on his or her interest and understanding of the context. Framing could also refer to the meaning-maker in terms of how he or she interprets and understands messages or information from the website or museum display. How the meaning-maker chooses to interpret meaning through negotiating with the affordances of a mode is important. Essentially, the meaning-maker and creator’s role and position within the meaning-making or meaning-creating context will shape their interpretive frames. This frame in turn continues to inform the meaning-maker and creator about new ways of meaning-making and creation. Specific to my aim of understanding reading experience, it is the meaning-maker’s frame that I will later focus on.

2.3 Drawing from history of reading

Historians of reading have shown that a detailed analysis of intellectual lives can demonstrate how reading is experienced differently from one time period to another, between one nation and another and certainly from one individual to another. According to Rose (2007), it stands to reason that historians of education should also examine “the intellectual experiences of actual students” (p. 595) in order to really understand the phenomenon of reading. Elsewhere, Nord (2001) suggests that “What is needed...is more empirical research that links actual readers not only to texts but to social contexts in which the readers lived and the texts were read” (p. 266-270).

Questions like ‘What is reading? Why is reading carried out? How is reading experienced? How has reading changed?’ pervade the literature on reading research. Such questions can only be meaningfully answered if they are appended with the phrase ‘for whom’. For policy makers for example, reading is assumed to be measureable. Standardised and international assessments like PISA, PIRLS and an ever-increasing amount of reading inventories are
evidence that in some respects, reading is assessable, measureable and even standardisable. Such assessments have been able to provide some form of base measure that can be useful for large-scale and longitudinal international comparisons. The long history and increasing international reach of these assessments do attest to the value and validity of these measures. An important implication of these assessments is the assumption that texts can and must be read in a correct way. However, caution must be exercised when policy makers and even educators begin to make use of these assessment data. Beyond making facile judgments about how much more poorly one nation has performed in comparison with another, these powers-that-be must understand how differently students across and even within nations respond to reading and why these differences in their range of contexts could have possibly occurred. More critically, such broad generalised measures could bring about a flattening-out effect wherein the individual and unique experience of reading could be lost. I argue that it becomes more important for us to retain that facet which provides the specific characteristics of each individual’s experience of reading. This resonates with PISA’s definition of reading which centres on the “individual’s capacity to understand, use, reflect on and engage with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society” (Walker, 2011, p. xii). When traced, these measures ultimately return to the individual reader.

Known for his work in recreating what he terms as the intellectual lives of individual readers of past eras, Rose (2001) offers a contrasting perspective to what it means for a group of people to read. His extensive work shows the unexpected ways in which reading was experienced in the lives of ordinary British people in the working classes. His work challenges the notion that a specific set of people should experience reading in a specific way. His analyses of actual readers’ diary entries, memoirs and marginalia offer a possible version of how people lived their lives around their challenges, motivations, choices and effects of reading. This demonstrates that regardless of how a text could have been meant to be read, nothing is to stop a reader from reading and experiencing reading in his or her individual way. For Rose, “all things are texts, which can be read, and are open to interpretation” (2007, p. 596). In his quantitative attempt to describe the British reading nation in the Romantic period through the analyses of print runs, price lists and information from publishers and book-sellers, St. Clair (2004) also cautions that close analyses of texts alone are insufficient. The real effects of reading cannot be known until “looser models of
reading, reception and dissemination” are used to “produce a more truthful understanding” of any reading experience (p. 401). At many points in his book, St. Clair refers to the engagement of reader response theory when he identifies the notion of horizons of expectations in the reading experience. Prior to Rose and St. Clair, Darnton (1982) pursues the history of books and makes important connections about book circulation in 18th century Europe seen specifically through the perspectives of the author, publisher, printer, shipper and bookseller. Although Darnton is able to produce a systematic tracing of book circulations by connecting these points in the book circuit, he readily acknowledged that when a book is in the reader’s hand, “reading remains a mystery” (Darnton, 1982, p. 78). Darnton identifies this final stage of the book circuit as being the most elusive because the extent to which reading affects and changes readers can never be fully apprehended.

Historians of reading are probably among those who are most confronted with this issue of what reading could have possibly meant to different people in different contexts, for different purposes and at different times. This is because their search that requires them to cross the boundaries of time will mean that they are faced with the evolving nature of reading. This evolution can be demonstrated for example, by a contrast of how reading aloud used to be practised as opposed to how modern individuals now read in silence (Manguel, 1996). Readers in past eras also practised intensive reading where the same few books were read and re-read which highly contrasts with how modern readers practise extensive reading caused by the flood of reading materials. Negotiating such a broad spectrum, historians of reading have demonstrated that one way of pursuing this subject is to first ask the question, “Reading for whom, in what context and at which time?” Through this, historians of reading are essentially examining the real reader within his or her lived context. Because there is autobiographical evidence that readers and their literate lives are often inseparable and are seen to be permeable, it can be considered that reading is foremost, a lived experience.

2.4 Drawing from theories of reading motivation

The field of motivation research seems to be one that is fraught with contradictions and a lack of consensus. However, amidst the contradictions, at least two characteristics remain recognisable. Firstly, theorising of motivation as a concept “lies at the heart...of psychology” (Weiner, 1992, p. 1). Although heavily challenged by behaviourists who criticised psychologists’ less scientific efforts in studying non-observable “sensation, perception...and
even thinking” (Watson, 1931, p. 5), the understanding that motivation is also tacit and in the mind eventually prevailed. This implies that through a careful consideration of how the individual experiences it, motivation could be better understood.

Secondly, the attempt to understand motivation must be accompanied by a consideration of contexts. Yet, this was less apparent in very early studies of human motivation. Tracing the history of motivation research in general and within the field of education specifically, Weiner (1990, 1992) found that early mainstream studies on motivation were about physical equilibrium and homeostasis. This meant that motivation researchers in the early 1900s believed that the way to understand motivation was to see it as a mechanism. However, in the field of education, pertinent questions were raised. How does motivation interact with an individual’s decision to learn? What drives an individual to read or write? How do external factors influence an individual’s degree of motivation? As much as motivation research is recognised as belonging to the field of psychology, researchers in the field of education have found that focus on intra-psychological effects still tended to leave out integral questions about how socio-cultural factors and contexts play an important part in an individual’s motivations, decisions and actions (Sivan, 1986).

By the end of the 20th century, more cross-field work was carried out in educational psychology, social psychology and organisational behaviour than had been done at the start of that century (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Locke & Latham, 2004). This advancement took shape as researchers became critical of the dominant view which positioned motivation as something exclusively within and isolated in the individual. The rise in cross-field studies also came from the practical needs of understanding human motivations and behaviour in organisations like schools, universities and workplaces. Researchers set out to understand how an individual’s or a team’s motivation interacted with surrounding factors. Very tellingly, Sorrentino and Higgins’ (1996) third volume of their handbook was subtitled The Interpersonal Context. In the first decade of the 21st century, Shah and Gardner’s (2008) Handbook of Motivation Science represents recent directions in motivation research that are concerned with the broader scope of personal, social and professional contexts.

As I highlight these two recognisable characteristics of research in motivation i.e. the individual and his or her surrounding context, I essentially argue for the following two points. Firstly there is enough evidence to view the experience of motivation as an inwardly-
perceived, intrinsically-experienced and psychologically-controlled phenomenon. This means that an appropriate way of understanding the crux of this experience is a return to that specific individual and his or her unique experience of motivation. Secondly, the historical development of research in motivation shows us that individuals cannot possibly experience motivation in isolation or in isolated contexts. Understanding motivation is almost always about understanding the interplay of various forces in dynamic circumstances surrounding the individual. Understanding an individual’s motivation is also about understanding his or her socio-cultural context. Although reading researchers have more recently recognised the role that motivation plays in the act of reading, more attention is understandably given to reading motivation in school-going children than university undergraduates. Because of the larger body of research carried out with children and motivation, I went on to examine this body of work.

My review of research work on reading motivation amongst school children showed up at least two significant bodies of studies which have been carried out in United States for more than a decade. These two bodies of studies are significant because they are both theoretical and empirical in nature. The first of these two bodies of studies revolves around the reading attitude acquisition theory and model (Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, 2001; McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). In essence, the reading attitude acquisition theory and corresponding model is built on the understanding that very complex external and internal factors come together to form an individual’s beliefs about reading. Amongst the factors, these researchers consider the individual’s attitude to be crucial in shaping that decision to read. Specifically, McKenna et al. (1995) argue that an individual’s decision to read is contingent upon “subjective norms”, “intention to read” and “attitude toward reading” (p. 940). According to their research work, the more positive is the attitude, the more likely will be the individual’s decision to read. While Mathewson’s (1994) work is rooted within the field of psychology, McKenna and his associates seem to ground their work in education psychology and literacy education. Perhaps because of the influence from the school of psychology, many of the accounts of these studies are built on broad-based surveys. These surveys are carried out across a range of schools in United States. One such example is a study by McKenna et al. (1995). In their study, McKenna and his associates carried out a large-scale survey on 18,185 US children from Grades 1 through 6 in order to gauge their reading attitudes. Although their findings are useful in expanding the scope of comparing and
contrasting recognisable patterns of reading attitudes amongst these children, McKenna and his associates readily acknowledge that “alternative paradigms” (pp. 952-953) are still necessary to account for how the children acquire their beliefs about reading and how those beliefs inform their attitudes. Specifically, McKenna et al. refer to “qualitative inquiries involving structured interviews with boys and girls, (and) documentations of their habits and situated observations” (McKenna, et al., 1995, p. 953) that could provide useful means to draw out contextualised and experiential data. McKenna’s call to engage with different and even contrasting paradigms seems to foreshadow the succeeding development of reading motivation research during the first decade of the 21st century which saw the emergence of a more sensitive stance towards how heavily contextualised and subjective motivation can be.

The second body of studies is related to the theory of reading engagement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Guthrie, 2001; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Guthrie et al., 2007; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2006; Mosenthal, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997b). These scholars base their research work on the work of other scholars who study the engagement perspective and achievement motivation theory often rooted in the broader empirical field of teaching and learning. This means that the reading engagement perspective is based on an understanding that reading motivation is about “competence and efficacy beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and purposes for achievement” (Baker & Wigfield, 1999, p. 452). Differing from the above-mentioned reading attitude acquisition model, the reading engagement perspective is situated closer to the perspective of learning theories. As such, the reading engagement theory seems amenable to contexts that include institutionally-formed systems like schools and colleges or universities. Thus, when these scholars attempt to understand the concept of reading motivation amongst school-going children, they readily take into account the complex factors of in-school and out-of-school circumstances. One important contribution of these scholars and their work in the reading engagement theoretical perspective is their developmental work on understanding children’s contexts to be made up of various domains. Because the conceptual notion of domain is important for my research, it will be discussed further in section 2.5.2.

Regardless of the difference in focal points, these two bodies of work are significant in terms of how they closely examine children’s reasons to read. These studies are also important for flagging up the complexities that underpin an individual’s decision to read. Whether they are
conceptualised as reading attitude or reading engagement, these studies offer a wide breadth of empirical findings as well as sound theorisations about the phenomenon of reading and motivation.

2.5 Linking past and present: the way forward

Across the decades in the 20th century, important work which looked at reading as a skill and a process was carried out (Chall, 1967, 1983; Goodman, 1968; Goodman & Gollasch, 1982; Russell, 1958). However at the turn of the century, it became increasingly clear that the conventionally narrow definition of reading as being about the ability to decode or recognise print on paper was no longer sufficient. The “new basics” came to be about “the ability to personalize meanings to individual experience...in the real world, under many different circumstances and with many different types of texts” (Strickland, 1999, p. xix). In Meek’s (1983) work Achieving Literacy, Meek and her team of six teachers meticulously recorded their experience of teaching and encouraging literacy practices amongst secondary adolescent students. Meek’s work encourages researchers to analyse underlying principles and theoretical approaches which serve to drive their own educational and social practices as they are situated in a larger context. Such empirical and theoretical knowledge is useful in grounding those educational and social practices within significant events along the course of social history. In order to move forward, researchers must pay significant attention to linking past and present knowledge through a careful negotiation of theoretical perspectives. In that light, Tracey and Morrow (2012) select and draw up a useful synthesis of theories of literacy development which offers some theoretical perspectives to how reading and writing can be understood from Platonic time to present neurolinguistic studies in literacy research. Pertinent to my research is how Tracey and Morrow situate the theoretical perspectives of transactional theory and reading engagement theory within the same research paradigm. The compatibility of these two theoretical perspectives was useful for paving the way forward for my research. Both the theoretical perspectives will be discussed in turns.

2.5.1 Theoretical perspective 1: transactional theory and embodied reading

Rosenblatt’s transactional theory is fundamentally based on the notion of transaction, language and selection. Drawn from Dewey’s pragmatist epistemology, Rosenblatt borrows the term ‘transaction’ which finds its basis in the concept that “the knower, the knowing and
the known are seen as aspects of one process” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 3). In terms of reading, Rosenblatt refers to the triadic relationship of the knower, the knowing and the known as the “reader”, the “text” and the “poem” with the poem denoting the abstract space for the fluid transaction of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt emphasises the subjective, non-entity and highly unpredictable sense of the reading transaction. I may go so far as to say the “poem” represents the ‘subjective’ what of the reading transaction. Rosenblatt also goes on to argue that this fluidity has important implications for language use because “language is always internalized by a human being transacting with a particular environment.” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 4). This concept of language being contextualised is important because it accounts for the social, cultural and even historical aspects of the way language is formed and used. However, the linguistic transaction is not without ambiguity. The linguistic transaction is constantly guided by selective attention which refers to what the mind chooses to focus on or not focus on. By highlighting the ambiguity that is inherent in language, Rosenblatt foregrounds the role of the reader as being critical to how any text can be interpreted. Refer to Figure 2.1 for my graphic representation of the components of transactional theory.

Figure 2.1: Components of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory

Based on this framework of linguistic transaction and selective attention within the reading process, Rosenblatt goes on to suggest that necessary to any reading process is the individual’s conscious or unconscious choice of stance. According to her, a stance determines the way in which meaning is forged within a particular reading context, how it comes across and how it is situated within the reader (Rosenblatt, 2005). Indeed if Rosenblatt’s “poem”
represents the space for what is occurring, then “stance” represents the space for how and why that what is occurring. The poem (what) and stance (how and why) can be understood to be embodied in the intertwining forms of reader, text and context. Refer to Figure 2.2 for my illustration of the connections.

Figure 2.2: transactional and empirical terms of the reading experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSACTIONAL TERMS</th>
<th>embodied within</th>
<th>EMPIRICAL TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem (what) + Stance (how/why)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reader + Text + Context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When overlaying Rosenblatt’s conceptual sense of the poem and stance as the transactional experience over the empirical experience of reading, the what, why and how of the reading experience can be argued to reside in the reader precisely because any embodiment can only be meaningful when actually embodied. Such a consideration of poem and stance requires a broad scope which will allow texts to be interpreted in ways beyond the specificity of genre. This means that the reader’s accounts of reading varying texts can be understood without the texts being necessarily aligned to pre-determined definitions and conventions of what genre(s) they originally belong to. Rosenblatt has herself reiterated that different genres and corresponding texts must not lead us into thinking that their inherent and fixed meanings lie within the printed word or that any response to the texts and genre is therefore, predictable.

Rosenblatt theorizes that any reader’s stance is situated along what she terms, the efferent-aesthetic continuum where “efferent and aesthetic reflect the two main ways of looking at the world, often summed up as “scientific” and “artistic”” (2005, p. 12). Although not always the case, the “scientific” sense is often paired with the functional purpose of reading while the “artistic” sense is paired with the emotionally “lived-through” sensibilities of encountering texts. Also, the efferent stance is often associated with a more “public” sense of space because it is assumed that functional reading can be shared. On the other hand, aesthetic reading is often understood as being situated within a more private space as it can only be
carried out, appreciated and enjoyed by the individual reader. Still, Rosenblatt constantly cautions against the simplistic dichotomous view of the stances and conceptual spaces. In the excerpt below, Rosenblatt emphasises the word text because the text is easily recognisable when it is categorised.

Confusion about the matter of stance results from the entrenched habit of thinking of the text as efferent or aesthetic, expository or poetic, literary or non-literary, and so on... The reader is free, however, to adopt either predominant stance toward any text (Rosenblatt, 2005, pp. 11-12, author's emphasis).

Of the dichotomies that Rosenblatt highlights in the above excerpt, I further scrutinise the literary/non-literary dichotomy. For the most part, transactional theory is applied to understanding how a reader interprets literary texts. This is because the origins of this theoretical approach emerged from a narrower definition of what is considered to be the aesthetics in reading conventional, western-based literary texts. I argue that this somewhat narrow view is problematic in at least two ways. Firstly, this view inherently privileges the text in terms of what genre the text can possibly fall into. This contradicts the transactional reader-text approach that transactional theory argues so strongly for. Secondly, an exclusive focus on literary texts seems today, to be a myopic one, seeing as how the reading experience in the present time cannot fit into neat boxes. Languages, modes and mediums have brought about an unprecedented amount of criss-crossings in what used to simply be the making sense of print on paper. Within the scope of my study, this development will be discussed through the theoretical perspective of domain-specific motivation.

2.5.2 Theoretical perspective 2: domain-specificity in motivation for reading

At the end of section 2.4, I referred to a large body of work that has been and continues to be done in the area of reading engagement. Specifically, the developmental work in reading engagement amongst school-going children brought into focus the issue of how the different domains in the children's day-to-day living function to influence and shape their reading experience. In terms of the reading experience, I understand the term 'domains' to be conceptual spaces situated within the larger overarching context that any reader is necessarily situated. Significantly, these domains are important for the boundaries they possess. In a special publication issue of Educational Psychologist, a group of scholars came together to raise several questions about how the concept of motivation is situated in reading research.
Specifically, Wigfield and Guthrie (1997a, p. 57) point out that “because reading is an effortful activity that involves choice, motivation along with cognition, is crucial to reading”. However, even as researchers investigate the role of motivation in how readers choose to read, the finer details of contextual differences are often not accounted for. “Many motivation theorists, even those defining specific motivation constructs, have not considered how their constructs may differ in different domains” (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997a, p. 57). Building on the reading engagement perspective, they suggest that it is more useful to view reading motivation as a concept that is domain-specific. Motivation for reading in the domain-specific sense refers to how an individual is deeply affected by factors surrounding his or her various domains. Domains can be defined in broad terms (i.e. physical, academic and social) or along more narrow terms of specific subjects (i.e. science, English, mathematics). Factors like teacher influence, movement in school levels, new reading programs, alterations in patterns of socializations and even gendered-based differences appear to be important to the reader’s domain and its relation to reading motivation.

Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Perencevich (2004) adopt the domain-specificity view in motivation for reading and carry out two intervention programmes so as to track the motivational changes across the children’s different domains. Guthrie and Alao (1997) apply the concepts of domain-specificity in proposing useful designs for classroom contexts. This includes suggestions for student activities, teacher actions, reading texts and school policies that serve to encourage reading in different domains among school-going children. From a more encompassing perspective, McCombs (1997) commends the timeliness of such inclusivity in research in reading motivation. She proposes that the concept of domain-specificity be applied on a systemic level in educational policies and actions. Specifically McCombs proposes that issues in education and literacy education should be addressed within personal (students, teachers and parents), technical (curriculum, assessment strategies and instructional approaches) and organisational (management) domains. To an extent, this intertwining of research located within education psychology and to a lesser extent, in literacy education, may be useful in providing some basis for systematic examinations of the reading experience.

At least two important implications can be derived from the development of the theory of domain-specificity in motivation to read. Firstly, the concept of domain-specificity not only
acknowledges the generalised (nomothetic) principles assumed to reside in most readers, but also the significance of an individual's unique (idiographic) influence on the construct of motivation. Increasingly, we need to "elevate our attention to both the common and unique backgrounds and experiences of all learners as these relate to motivations for reading" (McCombs, 1997, p. 134). This shift is a timely one considering the changing landscape of our classrooms in schools and universities. Secondly and more important to my research is how the concept of domain-specificity keeps open the door to seeing motivation for reading as being a dynamic construct. This means that even as individuals categorise themselves as being a highly-motivated reader, the real day-to-day experience of choosing to propel or postpone reading is not absent. Understanding how these fluctuations exist in the various domains may be useful in helping the readers to better maintain their motivations for reading. In the same vein, the domains of multilingual readers from multiethnic and multicultural backgrounds may hold significant interactions that could further inform the field of motivation for reading. McCombs (1997) points out that "the cultural differences among a variety of ethnic and different language groups" of readers has not been directly addressed (p. 134). Although some work in this respect has since been carried out (Yandell, 2008), more empirical work is still needed so as to provide richer insights.

Developments from research in domain-specificity within reading motivation resonate with fairly recent discussions about motivation relativity (Shah & Gardner, 2008). This more inclusive theoretical perspective of motivation relativity moves away from traditional concepts of "objective" hierarchies of motivation (for example Maslow's hierarchies of needs) to "assume a subjective relativism" of motives and needs (Shah, 2008, p. xii). This means that needs and motives may embody some form of consistency, but individuals' ongoing pursuit of these needs and motives cannot remain perpetually consistent. When this concept is distilled into the complexities of real experiences, questions about how people maintain their motives or abandon them and how these fluctuations depend on their past or recent experiences begin to be addressed.

As a concept, reading motivation may not benefit from being over-categorised. By this, I am referring to research efforts that analyse motivation for reading through highly and often exclusively statistical methodological approaches. While I acknowledge the strength of statistical analyses in offering some measure of prediction and generalizability, I am cautious
about the extent to which such categorising can be useful in my understanding of the concept of reading motivation. The very nature of these methods dictates that the construct under examination must be suspended from the messiness of other immeasurable or unaccountable constructs. However, this move to categorise the construct will strip away the critical element of how it is associated with humanness and human individuality. What is left is one facet of the construct that when lifted out of its context immediately becomes unrecognisable. Because the experience of being motivated, compelled and encouraged to engage in reading cannot take place unless it is embodied in a reader within a context and through some form a text, I argue that a better way to examine motivation for reading is through examining the reader’s response to texts and contexts.

2.6 Research questions and framework

The main objective of my study is to explore how reading is experienced by Malaysian undergraduates in a British university. The aim of this objective is to draw out a detailed representation of how highly-literate undergraduates experience reading within their contexts so that a picture of how they maintain and manage their motivations to read can be produced. Thus far, my review of some important pieces of literature on undergraduates and reading has turned up at least three main concerns surrounding how the issue of undergraduates and reading has been thus far been understood.

With regard to the first concern of what appears to be aliteracy amongst undergraduates, I have argued that the issue of aliteracy amongst undergraduates must be understood beyond the facile conclusion that seems to point to its presence. In other words, research that claims aliteracy to be present must be accompanied by an examination of how and why the undergraduate made that choice to (not) read. Questions surrounding the nature of aliteracy and what it could mean to the undergraduates themselves must be further addressed. This is because this concept of aliteracy is first and foremost a research construct and could have also been brought to bear by the researcher’s attempt at measuring an immeasurable phenomenon. Thus in order to better understand the condition of aliteracy amongst undergraduates, we must explore the various domains that an undergraduate may engage in reading. This includes both academic-related and non-academic-related domains. The second concern revolves around undergraduates who experience reading in countries abroad. Specific to my study is the issue of how multilingual undergraduates who are literate in two
or more languages experience reading in a context that is largely monolingual. The third concern revolves around how undergraduates today seem to be less interested in reading and more interested in 'viewing'. However there is evidence that undergraduates are engaged in reading through multimodal contexts. Here, the definition of reading must be expanded and made inclusive. Whilst acknowledging that printed texts could still hold a very significant role in the undergraduate's experience of reading, this research concern moves beyond considering printed texts as the sole legitimate form of text. An examination of how computer-mediated texts are used and engaged within the undergraduate community may show up how the reading experience could have taken on a new shape and new meanings.

These three concerns formed the basis of three research questions. They are:

1) What is the undergraduate’s experience of reading within academic and non-academic domains?
2) How does the multilingual undergraduate experience reading in a largely monolingual context?
3) How does the undergraduate experience reading in multimodal contexts?

Underpinning my research are two substantive theoretical perspectives. I set out to utilize the fundamental structure of Rosenblatt's transactional theory which places importance not just on the reader but the reader’s experience with reading texts and the context surrounding the reader. This brings the argument back to Rosenblatt's (1938) early conviction that the reading experience is a dynamic process that resides differently in different individuals and in how the individual transacts with the text and context. Also, more and more evidence from studies of reading motivation has demonstrated how the intensity of reading alters when gauged across specific and differing domains. My overall conceptual framework was based on my research aim, research concerns, research questions and two substantive theoretical perspectives. Refer to Figure 2.3 for the overall conceptual framework of my research.
Although some observations have been made that research on adolescents’ reading experiences have often been neglected (Moje, 2002a, 2002b), research on secondary school students and their day-to-day reading and wider reading experiences has more recently been carried out (Cliff Hodges, 2010a, 2010b; Moje, 2008; Westbrook, 2007, 2010, 2013). This has been because of some scholars’ consistent reminder that reading specifically and literacy in general mean very different things for different readers and in different circumstances (Bearne & Cliff Hodges, 2000; Cliff Hodges, 1993; Styles & Drummond, 1993). Not limited to only literary texts, research on readers’ response to both literary and non-literary texts has also been carried out among primary pupils and university undergraduates (Squire, 1994; Strømsø, Bråten, & Samuelstuen, 2003; Taylor, 2011). However, research work on students’ reading in Malaysia is not prevalent. Where they are carried out, most of these studies are largely situated within the post-positivist research paradigm. This means that the research methods for these studies entail the engagement of large-scale surveys that use questionnaires to gauge research participants’ overall attitudes towards reading. Statistical analyses are used to calculate and provide an average gauge to these attitudes. Without question, these studies have been useful in providing a general picture of the situation. These studies have pointed out that there appears to be reading reluctance amongst Malaysian undergraduates specifically and Malaysians in general. Yet, in a field like reading research “(w)e have much
to gain from searching for convergences among research perspectives” (Stanovich, 1990, p. 229). In other words, fundamental questions that look into how a researcher may define and present reading differently from a research participant or how a research design could incorporate inquiry openness in order to anticipate the unexpected are necessary. Such questions can best emerge from a research epistemology that is amenable to inquiry openness. Where the post-positivist lenses are unable to account for the differences and uniqueness of individual experience, the qualitative lenses are equipped to draw associations.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to situate my concerns within the broad but relevantly selected literature with regard to the reading experience of students at the higher levels of education. I have attempted to show that there remain gaps in how we can better understand the ways in which undergraduates experience reading. In the following chapter, I will discuss the epistemology, methodology and methods that underpinned my empirical data collection.
Critical to the methodological design of any study are a researcher's sensitivities towards the research questions, how those are epistemologically understood and how they are placed within a suitably-designed and carefully-executed research project. In this chapter, I will discuss significant methodological issues that I took into consideration before arriving at my proposed research design for my study. I will also deliberate on the actual fieldwork in terms of how the proposed research design was applied and where relevant, discuss how the design was altered and re-fitted. Due to the way in which the methodological issues were differently significant at the proposal (pre-fieldwork) stage and the practical (fieldwork) stage, the discussion in this chapter will necessarily reflect the difference. Before proceeding to the discussion, I must recapitulate my arguments thus far.

Firstly, I have argued that reading is fundamentally a dynamic, non-generalisable experience which can only be constructed when individuals transact with texts and in contexts. We know this through studies in the history of reading. As such, the reading experience for individuals across time is perpetually in flux. Secondly, proponents of reader response theory have not only supported this notion of the dynamic experience of reading but have also provided an increasing body of evidence which demonstrates how transactions between reader and text and in contexts can be useful in yielding important insights about the reading experience. Thirdly, because the reading experience is argued to be in flux, motivation for reading will arguably also be in flux. This is supported by the theoretical perspective of domain-specificity in motivation for reading. In my research, these three arguments are situated within the current dynamic context of undergraduates and their reading environment within and outside the university. In order to understand the complexities, I drew up a detailed representation of how highly-literate undergraduates experience reading within their contexts so that a picture of how they maintain and manage their motivations to read can be generated.

3.1 Developing my research design

An account of my role as the sole researcher in how my research was viewed before, during and after the research process is critical to how my research can be reasonably understood and acceptably justified. However, an attempt to discuss the fundamentals of methodological issues will necessarily be challenging. This is because of the variations and inconsistencies
that emerge from cross-comparisons of methodological perspectives and research designs. Confounding the situation is the way in which terminologies are differently defined and understood in research literature and texts within social science. The intermingling of methodological issues has also been deeply and dialectically discussed in a number of significant texts (Creswell, 1998; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lewis, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2004; Silverman, 2010). These significant texts offer important arguments about research paradigms, approaches of methods rooted in the different paradigms as well as many useful and practical accounts of real research carried out in line with some of the research traditions. In and among the range of definitive works, one in particular was significant to the way I shaped my research design. I found Crotty’s (1998) theorisation of the fundamental foundations of social research to be useful to underpin the rationale of my research design.

There were two reasons why I found Crotty’s (1998) work important. Firstly, Crotty argues for deeper questioning of conventional understandings of the quantitative/qualitative divide in terms of the paradigm wars. According to him, “this divide...is far from justified” (p. 15) because quantification that involves forms of counting or numbers for example, can sometimes be used in qualitatively-informed research. If there should be a divide, that divide would be better understood when perceived through epistemological terms of objectivist against constructionist (or subjectivist) worldviews. This perspective formed through a critical understanding of epistemological matters is useful for how it foregrounds questions beyond the methodological divide. Secondly, Crotty (1998) links high-level epistemological questions with more practical approaches of some methodological traditions and methods. This means that Crotty demonstrates how epistemology, methodology and theoretical perspective are intertwined and exemplified. Crotty argues that it is necessary for researchers to continually question their assumptions if research is to be a meaningful endeavour. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate further on how my research design took shape based substantially on Crotty’s arguments. In so doing, I hope to provide a traceable path to how my research design was formed so as to situate my study within the nexus of social research.

Crotty (1998) explains that in designing a research proposal, researchers must ask themselves fundamental questions of which methodologies and methods they will adopt and why they have chosen to engage them. He further links methodologies with the aim of the research and
the issues that the research questions set out to address. Although these questions intermingle, Crotty categorises them into four elements. The elements are epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods. Basically, epistemology refers to what people believe to be the nature of knowledge. Specifically, human beings live and develop particular worldviews which form the basis of how they construe and make sense of their existence with their relationship with knowledge. To be sure, such perceptions or worldviews are organically and ontologically ‘formed’ through a dialectical-on-going web of thinking and re-thinking which often gives rise to inquiry into epistemological issues. Often, the objective ways in which ontological, epistemological and methodological issues appear to be discussed by researchers belie the ironic impossibility of such discussion. These discussions are in and of themselves un-objective. This means that the researcher can never discuss these issues through neutral lenses. Thus in research terms, epistemological perspectives can range from being objectivist to constructionist or subjectivist (Crotty, 1998).

### 3.1.1 Constructionism and interpretivism in my research design

Discussions about epistemological matters are often couched in very abstract terms. This is inevitable because of how discourse on epistemology is in and of itself very complex. Among the many abstract epistemological notions, one that forms a fundamental basis of epistemology is the question of how knowledge is constructed and how we come to know what we know. This refers to contrasting perspectives of whether knowledge is ‘out there’ and as such, objectivist, or constructed by the one(s) perceiving, i.e. constructionist or constructivist. Crotty (1998) makes a distinction between the concepts of constructionism and constructivism. According to him, constructionism places at its epicentre the inextricability of the social dimension of meaning and meaning-making. This refers to an individual’s meaning-making as meaning that can be made in as much as it is tinted by the very context he or she is born into. In contrast, constructivism is about the individual’s mind and the unique experience of unencumbered meaning-making. This pragmatic sense of constructivism pays tribute to “each one’s way of making sense of the world as valid and worthy of respect as any other” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Although Crotty can be assumed to present constructionism and constructivism as contrasting ways of thinking about knowledge and human experience, he does qualify that they are contrasting “at least in the first instance” (p. 79). Constructionism explicitly acknowledges the presence of pre-existing elements that colour one’s worldview.
when experiences occur whereas constructivism foregrounds the immediate, perceivable and knowable experience. This means that constructivism and constructionism, whilst not epistemologically incompatible, contrast in terms of how deeply the cultural context is considered in the construction of the individual’s notion of knowing. In epistemic sense, constructionism is critical in its approach whilst constructivism is pragmatic. I argue that when carefully combined, critical constructionist and pragmatic constructivist perspectives are potentially useful for research that draws on and aims to understand human experience.

Closely connected to the researcher’s epistemology is his or her theoretical point of view. Not to be confused with substantive theory that serves to frame the content of any research, a theoretical point of view is what underpins a person’s philosophical assumptions of how knowledge is formed in relation to the way it can be grasped and engaged with. Thus, theoretical views can range from a disengaged positivistic position that distances the researcher from the researched to a co-constructive and interpretivist view that can only exist and be grasped through engagement between the researcher and the researched. For the range of theoretical perspectives, Crotty (1998) refers to positivism and post-positivism through to interpretivism and critical inquiry. Again, a research design benefits from there being some compatibility between the researcher’s epistemological perspective and theoretical view. I argue that if a critical constructionist and pragmatic constructivist epistemological perspective is able to illuminate research that sets out to understand human experience, then it stands to reason that the interpretivist view will ensure that the constructionist/constructivist perspective is justified.

3.1.2 Phenomenological methodology in my research design

Research methodology revolves around how research is designed so as to best fulfil the research aim in the way it has been rationalised and situated within an epistemological and theoretical perspective. Research methodology therefore provides the “plan of action” that ties together the various steps that have been carefully chosen to address the research questions (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). Among many established research methodologies, phenomenology is one that researchers consider to be important. Phenomenology has today come to carry various facets of meanings through scholars’ on-going discussions of its philosophical and ontological underpinnings. Phenomenology is known to be based on Edmund Husserl’s (1931) philosophy which advocates phenomenology as the scientific and
structural study of a phenomenon. Husserl bases his work on Brentano’s (1874/1973) philosophical discussions on what he would refer to as the ‘intentionality’ of human experience. The ‘intentionality’ of human experience is seen as an exercise in the objectification of an individual’s experience so that the individual may see and apprehend the experience anew. The seemingly paradoxical distancing of the self from the self is understood to be the basis of going back into the things in themselves. Early phenomenologists argue that an experience is in essence its own phenomenon. This would mean that for example, a phenomenological investigation of an individual’s anger will reveal not his or her perception of anger but the actual essence of anger. In doing so, phenomenological investigations strive towards getting to the heart of lived experience. To be sure, scholars who discuss phenomenology are faced with complex and differing understandings of what phenomenology actually means. The disparity is said to have come from the different philosophers who went on to develop the Brentano/Husserlian concepts of intentionality and essence of experience (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004, 1962/1989) and from differing traditions of reading and understanding philosophy in Europe and North America (Crotty, 1998). One important difference is how the basis of early phenomenology in the Brentano/Husserlian sense was objectivist in its epistemological sense while the later developed idea of phenomenology was subjectivist. This meant that there appears to be a moving away from the view of pure objectification of experience to perceived experience.

Although the focus of my thesis is not to deliberate on the complexities of phenomenology in any great length, I highlight some aspects of this philosophical discussion because it is important to provide the underpinning to a particular research methodology. Many of the tenets of phenomenology have been applied by scholars like Schutz (1967) and Giorgi (Giorgi, 1985a, 1994) amongst others, so as to be developed into phenomenological research methodology. The phenomenological research methodology sets out to “provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Phenomenology as a method has been applied in fields like psychology, education, nursing, and organizational behaviour. Below, I provide a summary of what I consider to be significant contributions of the phenomenologically-informed research methodology. The methodology is able to:
1) examine a phenomenon that is taken-for-granted
2) arrive at the heart of the matter by focusing on the essence, meaning and structure of that specific human experience
3) account for how a phenomenon is a construction of the individual’s socio-cultural make-up
4) account for the researcher’s role, presence and influence over how the meanings are constructed and interpreted.
5) generate new and unencumbered meanings to the phenomenon being examined

Perhaps most importantly, an ontological contribution of the thinking behind phenomenology is the ‘creation’ of the self-conscious (i.e. reflective) and self-consciously critical (i.e. reflexive) researcher.

3.1.3 Some methodological problems in my research

While key precepts of phenomenology are critical in scrutinising the complexities of human experience, phenomenologists have found it challenging to apply these precepts to empirical research (Giorgi, 1985b). This is because firstly, “phenomenology...is a first-person exercise. Each of us must explore our own experience, not the experience of others...” (Crotty, 1998, p. 84). The centrality of the preceding sentence is in the phrase “our own experience” because it points to there being no medium between the self and the experience. While this is ontologically possible when an individual is or exists in real, physical time, it becomes problematic when that event is considered retrospectively. In a research context where accounts are often formed through retrospection, phenomenological researchers are encouraged to bracket off their own and even find ways to bracket off the participants’ pre-conceived notions so that the participants’ accounts are as much as possible, essentially pure (Husserl, 1931). However, phenomenological researchers often acknowledge that the bracketing process is in itself problematic because they are essentially imprisoned within their own consciousness and such a process could bring about solipsism (Giorgi, 1985b; Schutz, 1967). For all its philosophical focus on reaching the centre of a particular lived experience, a transcendental form of phenomenology may pose its own challenges.

Secondly and from an analytical angle, findings from phenomenological analyses often portray phenomena as event-like. This indirectly means that a phenomenon would
presumably have a beginning, middle and an end thus lending the phenomenon a shape. To some extent, this could explain why phenomenological psychologists, investigated ‘events’ like divorce, childbearing, homesickness and falling victim to robbery (Giorgi, 1985b). What made these phenomena seem event-like was how they are deemed to have occurred at some point in the participants’ lives (often with a cessation afterwards). Thus morphologically, these phenomena were considered to be noun-like rather than verb-like. Because my study was initially informed by this thinking, my treatment of the notion of reading (at the research design phase) also took on a noun-like state. The use of “what” in my first research question (What is the undergraduate’s experience of reading within academic and non-academic domains?) was indicative of my thinking then. This line of thinking may have also been brought on by the fact that I had then been conceptualising the topic of reading which eventually objectified the act of reading. However, reading when conceptualised is different from reading when experienced.

Thirdly, my realisation that conceptualised reading was very different from experienced reading came about when my fieldwork began. As the participant interviews began to take place, I realised that the reading experience as it was seen through the participants’ eyes was not set in neatly bound segments nor bordered by a fixed text within a fixed context. Even if the texts the participants were reading appeared categorical (i.e. academic/non-academic materials) and contexts seemed predictable (i.e. term/vacation time), the abstract space wherein the transaction took place was unstable. Reading, it appeared, did not have a beginning, middle or an end. Instead, the reading experience was unpredictably fluid and ongoing although ironically, sometimes in an indefinite kind of way. For the participants, reading was not noun-like. Rather, it was verb-like. This shift that forced me to expand my heretofore narrower understanding of the reading experience had a direct bearing on the way I had initially relied solely on phenomenological lenses at the research design stage and the way in which those lenses had to be further adjusted during the fieldwork and analysis phases.

3.1.4 Phenomenographic research methodology: a methodological shift

As a critique of pure phenomenology, Marton (1981) developed phenomenography based on Säljö’s (1979, 1982) work. According to Marton, phenomenography is a kind of research that is aimed at “description, analysis and understanding of experiences” (1981, p. 177). Marton
(1981) describes the purely phenomenological way of viewing the world as “first-order perspective” (p. 178). Refer to Figure 3.1 for my illustration of “first-order perspective”.

Figure 3.1: First-order perspective

As described in the preceding sections, first-order perspective can be conceptually problematic. Marton argues that for researchers investigating the social world, a “second-order perspective” becomes necessary wherein “we orient ourselves towards people’s ideas about the world (or their experience of it)” (p. 178). This second-order perspective allows the participant to think about how they are experiencing a particular phenomenon (Brew, 2001; Marton, Fensham, & Chaiklin, 1994). Refer to Figure 3.2 for an illustration of “second-order perspective”.

Figure 3.2: Second-order perspective

It was this second-order perspective that was more suited to the way reading was experienced by my research participants. This development and shift in my research design meant that the purely phenomenological method progressed into the empirically-based approach of phenomenography during the latter phases of fieldwork and data analysis.

3.1.5 Before and after the shift: my position in my research design

Due to the fact that I have been a lecturer for almost 17 years, I may have begun to take for granted what the reading experience is for Malaysian undergraduates. Such a taken-for-granted lens was not useful in applying a critical stance for understanding the phenomenon of reading among these undergraduates. In terms of my research that aimed to examine individual reading experience, I argued that reading is a phenomenon that cannot be experienced objectively. Rather, the conception of what it means to read will benefit if it is
understood to be continually constructed and co-constructed through the reader’s transactions with text and context. Because my research aimed to capture each individual undergraduate’s response to reading different texts and in various contexts, my constructivist perspective that provided room for individual responses was useful. Because I also acknowledged the constructionist perspective that accounts for a ‘self-conscious’ worldview, I did not exercise bracketing. Instead I ensured some measure of distancing when I carried out my data analysis. This meant that in line with the phenomenological view, I saw myself as the socio-culturally self-conscious researcher. I was also aware that corresponding to my constructivist/constructionist epistemological perspective was my interpretivist theoretical perspective. I understood that my findings would inevitably be based in part, on my interpretive lens. My overall self-aware and critical perspective allowed me to question my data so that I could re-interpret the phenomenon towards generating fresh findings. Although my epistemological position pervaded the length of my research, I gradually shifted from a purely phenomenological methodology to a more empirically-based phenomenographic methodology as my fieldwork got under way. This shift was significant especially in terms of how I applied the phenomenographic analysis when I analysed my data. The details of phenomenographic analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.2 Research methods

As research methodology is the undergirding principle to the research design of a study, research methods are the concrete procedures and tasks that are executed so as to arrive at some form of empirical evidence that can be collected and analysed. In the following sections, I will discuss two main research methods that I adopted for my data collection. The research methods are interviewing and diary-writing.

3.2.1 Phenomenologically-informed interviews

In qualitatively-informed research methodologies, the interview is considered to be a highly-suitable method to engage the research participants and draw out their descriptions of the experience under investigation. In a phenomenologically-informed study, the interview must be carefully and intensively carried out in order to come as close as possible to the heart of the experience as it is recounted by the participants. This is because an experience cannot be referred to whilst it is being experienced. For example, one is unable to describe one’s anger
at the point that one is angry. Thus, a participant’s reflective stance as it is situated along a temporal dimension is important as a basis for a systematic data collection method. Based on Schutz’s (1967) phenomenological conceptions of time and experience, Seidman (2006) proposes his version of the phenomenological interview as a systematic, thorough and viable method for capturing the research participant’s recollections and reconstructions of a phenomenon as it is experienced through the passing of time. The rationale underpinning this interview method is the systematic attempt to capture the participant’s past experience as well as the “concrete details” of that participant’s on-going lived experience (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). This means that the researcher must tap into the participant’s detailed and direct account of the experience as it has occurred in the past and as it has been experienced most recently. Seidman suggests that semi-structured interviews should be carried out across more than one meeting. In each interview session, the focus of the session should revolve around a specific time period that the experience is assumed to have taken place. For example, the phenomenon of reading could be examined through an investigation of the reader’s accounts of past and present reading experiences. In my research for my degree of Master of Philosophy, I employed the phenomenological interview as a research method (Chong, 2011). In that particular research, I carried out the phenomenological interview in two separate sessions. Between the sessions was a minimum of three gap-days. I found the separate sessions to be useful in terms of how I could systematically address the specific temporal aspect of the experience and also how the participants could keep focused on that aspect of the experience. The gap-days between each semi-structured interview also seemed useful for the participants to prepare and stay reflective. For this current study on undergraduates in a British university, I continued with the application of the phenomenological interview and similarly planned to divide the semi-structured interview into two main interview sessions.

Crotty (1998) and Garrett (1998) also highlight the distinction between phenomenological interview questions that explicitly address the phenomenological experience and those that fall short. The phenomenological perspective is interested in what an experience is for the participant as opposed to what it feels like. Using loneliness as the phenomenon to be examined, Garrett illustrates this distinction by pointing to the difference in asking the questions “What is loneliness to you?” as opposed to “What is it like to be lonely?” (p. 37). In the preceding section, I highlighted the difference between a conceptualisation of reading and the actual experiencing of reading. I found it important to be aware of what I considered to be
an epistemological difference because it provided the distancing that was necessary for me. This distancing allowed me to be cautious about objectifying the phenomenon I was scrutinising. This meant that I explored what the reading experience was for the participants without necessarily avoiding the participants’ feelings about it. I found that the actual experiencing of reading involved how the participants’ emotions interplayed with transactions with their texts and contexts.

Specific to my study was the undergraduates’ navigation of texts in and the contexts of their academic and non-academic domains. Based on this focus, the semi-structured interview was carried out along two tracks. In the first interview, the history of their academic and non-academic reading was examined through their recollections of past experiences in terms of what they have read, what they remember experiencing when they read, why they read, why they stopped and with whom they read or discussed their reading. In the second interview, the undergraduates’ most current reading experiences were explored. In my early research design, I planned to use a reader-response-styled method to tap into the participants’ current reading experience across texts in the academic and non-academic domains. However, this method was ultimately not used because the participants’ reading materials were very varied. As I did not want to limit my research only to the participants’ prescribed academic texts, I decided to continue with the semi-structured interview so as to engage broadly with the participants. Where they could, the reading diaries captured some details of the texts and responses to the texts the participants engaged with. On the whole, I designed an interview protocol that mapped out how each interview question corresponded to my research questions. Refer to Appendix A for phenomenological interview questions for the first and second interviews. Based on my registration upgrade examiners’ advice, the interview protocol was condensed so as to allow for a more open-ended reception to the participants’ potential responses. Refer to Appendix B for the condensed form of themes and questions/prompts for the interview protocol.

3.2.2 Reading diary

Although many empirically-designed phenomenological studies use the in-depth interview as the main and sometimes exclusive research method, it is by no means the only method that can be adopted within this research tradition. Written documents that are kept by the participants can also be used as a source from which meanings can be derived (Sanders,
1982). In reading research specifically, journals, diaries or logs have been found to be useful for research participants to keep track of their reading through their individual preferences (Cliff Hodges, 2010b). In my previous research, I explored the use of a reflection log that was kept by the research participants for a span of three to five days (Chong, 2011). In that study, I found the written document to be another potentially useful way of capturing lived experience. This was not surprising considering how “...empirical responses to a text (mainly written protocols) form the basis of much of the research on methods generally referred to as reader response or transactional....Protocols provide indirect evidence about the students’ evocation, the work as experienced, and reactions to it” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 32). Drawing from the history of reading about ordinary people and their reading experience as well as evidence from transactional theorists and their practical research experiences, I found the following aspects about the individual reader’s experience to be useful for the diary-writing approach (Burnett, Vincent, & Mayall, 1984; Rose, 1992, 2001, 2007; Stevenson, 1990). These aspects revolve around:

1) what they read  
2) why they chose a particular title  
3) how long they spent reading  
4) how they felt about what they read  
5) how they responded  
6) how they related what they read to their context.

Based on these characteristics, I constructed a grid that provided a frame for the reading diary. I also wrote a sample diary entry in the event that my research participants may have an idea of what it could look like. However, I made sure to inform them that the sample served only as an example. They should write their diary entries in the way that they were most comfortable to do. Refer to Appendix C for the reading diary grid and sample diary entry. I also designed a document that provided specific guidelines for the participants’ diary-writing so as to capture their reading experience as it corresponds to the concerns surrounding undergraduates and reading. Refer to Appendix D for the guide to reading experience diary entry. Representing the overall research design, Table 3.1 maps out the details of the research methods as they corresponded with the concerns and research questions of this study.
Table: 3.1: Linking methods to research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My study's concerns</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Undergraduates responding to:</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Details of methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A literacy and domain-related reading</td>
<td>What is the undergraduate’s experience of reading within academic and non-academic domains?</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>The undergraduate’s reading history is pieced together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual context</td>
<td>How does the multilingual undergraduate experience reading in a largely monolingual context?</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>The undergraduate talks about current reading experiences across academic and non-academic domains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Diary writing</td>
<td>The undergraduate’s reading in the academic and non-academic domains are tracked across time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimodal context</td>
<td>How does the undergraduate experience reading in multimodal contexts?</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>The undergraduate’s multimodal reading history is pieced together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>The undergraduate talks about current reading across languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Diary writing</td>
<td>The undergraduate’s reading in multimodal forms is tracked across time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must be noted that although the interviews were generally guided by the questions in the protocol, each participants’ response was carefully considered which further guided the direction of the participant’s following interviews. As such, I ensured that specific follow-up questions were prepared for each participant before his or her next interview. These follow-up questions were based on what they captured in their reading diary as well as what they had talked about in the previous interview(s).
3.3 Fieldwork and data collection

Essentially, the fieldwork phase of empirical research functions as a testing ground. This testing ground provides the space for how a researcher’s initial justifications of epistemological, theoretical and methodological arguments play out. In the following sections, I discuss how my research was carried out.

3.3.1 The reconnaissance phase

Before actual fieldwork began, I carried out a reconnaissance process of exploring the proposed research site so as to ensure the feasibility of doing meaningful fieldwork and potentially recruiting suitable research participants. While the suitability of the research site will be further discussed in a later section, suffice it to say that the research site was a public research university in England. I utilised a range of ways in order to gain initial access into the research site. I began by making contact with a university society that is both organised and participated in by Malaysian undergraduates of that university. Early communication with one of the main committee members provided me with useful information regarding the statistics for Malaysian undergraduates attending the university. I was informed that cutting across the faculties in that university, 104 Malaysians were reading for their undergraduate degrees. With the help of that committee member, I was able to put up a call-for-volunteers in the electronic newsletter that was circulated monthly via their university electronic mail system. This call for possible volunteer participants was publicised twice across the span of approximately two months. However, a few initial responses to my call via the electronic newsletter were found to be unsuitable for my research design.

At that point, I changed strategies. I met with the president of the society and discussed my research intent with him. Upon his recommendation, I attended two major social events where I was introduced to potential volunteers. I found that some of them were aware of my call via the electronic newsletter but had needed more information. Thus through the combination of the initial publicity, extended explanation on my part and continued support from the committee members of the society, I was able in principle to secure 14 potential research participants during the reconnaissance phase. At that point, I was careful to inform the potential participants that their agreement to volunteer for my research was still only in principle. I was aware that the participant number may change.
In qualitatively-informed research, access into research sites and meaningful contact with potential participants are important factors that contribute to purposeful fieldwork. Potential participants must be chosen based on very specific characteristics and from suitably accessible sites. For my research, I considered a non-randomised purposive sampling to be a critical way of ensuring that the targeted group of participants would be suitably recruited. Before proceeding further, I must identify some pre-determined boundaries that informed the way the research site and participant group were selected. My research was designed to investigate multilingual Malaysian undergraduates' print-based and computer-based reading experiences. As such, I determined that the following participant characteristics should apply. Firstly, the participants must be Malaysians who had attended formal primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Secondly, the participants must have been pursuing either a Science or Arts-based degree at a reputable international university during the time they were involved in my study. This was so that the participants’ active and on-going records of their reasons to continue or truncate reading would be within the context of their lives as undergraduates. Thirdly and most importantly, the research participants must be genuinely keen and committed undergraduate students because this study aimed to examine the undergraduates' reading experience.

Based on the preceding characteristics, three assumptions were made about the potential participant selection and selected research site. Firstly, I assumed that all the participants were literate in at least two languages. This was because their education in the Malaysian national system necessarily provided them with minimally bilingual abilities. Therefore, their bi- or multilingual abilities meant that their range of potential reading materials would necessarily be broad and not monolingual in terms of range. Secondly, because Malaysia’s national policy prioritises the role of higher education in the aim to become a developed high-income economy through developing and retaining a “first-world talent base” (Economic Planning Unit, 2010, p. 192), I assumed the research site was well-suited if it were a highly-ranked university in a country that has had the developmental experience of growing from being a pre- to becoming a post-industrial nation. This meant that the Malaysian undergraduates drawn from this research site would potentially be representative of such a talent base. Thirdly, I assumed that the participants possessed academic and intellectual
abilities. This was because such qualities are pre-requisites to the undergraduates’ entrance into university. This also meant that the focus of my study was on individuals who would not be facing fundamental coding or de-coding issues. However, I ensured that I kept an open mind to any issue the participants may have or have had regarding their reading abilities. Campbell and Butterworth (1985) for example, show evidence of a highly-literate undergraduate who experienced developmental dyslexia while in the university. Any unexpected finding would be written into the analysis. Also, these undergraduates would be assumed to be self-regulated learners. Extensive research in the area of self-regulated learning (SRL) shows evidence of what we have known for very long; successful learners practise various forms of self-regulation (Schunk, 2012; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). By association, their self-regulatory ways will be useful for the diary-writing phase of the research. As such, the participant characteristics required by this study meant that the selected group had the potential to be committed to the study and be accessible to me as the researcher.

For these characteristics, it was important that the participant group was drawn from a relatively reputable institution which I could access without facing excessive challenges. The latter condition was important considering the time limitation I had in carrying out the fieldwork. Chief among fieldwork challenges is a researcher’s ability to gain access to the lives of such a highly-specific set of individuals and the feasibility of remaining long enough in the field to gain an in-depth view into an aspect of their lives. As mentioned above, the selected research site was a public research university in England, United Kingdom. This university was considered to be suitable because it is known to admit committed and successful learners into its degree programmes. Its reputation in Malaysia is also long-standing. In terms of the Malaysian national education policy, this university would qualify as being suitably positioned to develop “first world talent base” (Economic Planning Unit, 2010, p. 192). Also, in terms of how it contrasted with the research site in my previous study which only admitted undergraduates into its Engineering and Technology degrees (Chong, 2011), the current research site is an institution that offers courses across the disciplines of Science and Arts. This provided the necessary scope for me to engage with undergraduates whose reading experiences were situated across the disciplinary divide. Finally, because my research design required me as the researcher to meet with the participants at multiple points and across a minimum of four months, my accessibility to the research site also had to be
continuously facilitated. Because of the important contact made during the initial access stage with significant members of that particular university’s Malaysian society, I recognised the potential of maintaining contact with the participants across a length of time. For all the above reasons, I found the research site to be suitable.

### 3.3.3 Participant group selection

The participant group selection took place in three stages. These stages were based broadly on my timeline from the early to final phases of data collection. Refer to Table 3.2 for my data collection phase in terms of my timeline.

**Table 3.2: Data collection phase in terms of timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection phase</th>
<th>Timeline (year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
<td>Began in November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD upgrade</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The early stage of selection was carried out during the reconnaissance phase across the months of November 2011 through to January 2012. During the reconnaissance phase, 14 Malaysian undergraduates agreed in principle to be a part of the research. They gave me their contact details so that I could keep them informed. Of the 14, five are female and the remaining nine are male undergraduates. The 14 were from the disciplines of Economics, Law, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine, with nine undergraduates in Science and the remaining five in the Arts. They ranged from first to final year students. Some methodologists are known to suggest that the number of research participants in a phenomenologically-informed study be kept to no more than ten (Creswell, 1998). This seemingly small number is in anticipation of the amount of transcribed data that will be
generated from the in-depth interviews. I considered it important to take into account the feasibility of data collection and analysis as it would be carried out solely by me working within a limited time frame. My advisor and upgrade examiner also offered similar advice to not only pare down the participant group and but also balance out the numbers across the Science and Arts disciplines and across the gender divide. They suggested that perhaps eight participants would be ideal. I was also advised to include a Malaysian who was pursuing a degree in literary arts.

This brought me to the second stage of my participant group selection. I re-examined the list of participants and began to streamline the group with the aim of balancing out the numbers in the gender and disciplines categories. Because the gender and discipline categories were essentially only dichotomous, I decided to maximise the variation in the participant group by ensuring that there would also be a balanced number of undergraduates across the study years and across the faculties within both the Science and Arts disciplines. As I was aware that my study potentially required long-term commitment from the participants, I was intent on securing a slightly larger number in anticipation of those who may later decide to pull out due to busy schedules and work load. I also attempted to find a Malaysian undergraduate who was pursuing a literary arts degree. Thus with the re-examined rationale, the participant group was purposefully reduced from 14 to 11, with five being female and six being male undergraduates. Out of the 11, six were pursuing their degrees in Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine respectively while five were pursuing their degrees in Law and Economics. In trying to get in touch with the one Malaysian undergraduate who was pursuing a degree in literary arts, I discovered that she attended primary and secondary education outside of Malaysia. As such, she could not be included in the research. This meant that I formally began my fieldwork with 11 participants.

In the span of the ten to eleven months when the actual fieldwork was carried out, eight out of the 11 original participant group participated completely in the research. This meant that they met with me from between two to four occasions for the semi-structured interviews, and kept a weekly diary (and in one case, an almost daily one) for four weeks during term time and another four weeks during vacation time. Out of the 11, three participants dropped out of the study. By the completion of the fieldwork, I had collected data from eight participants.
Refer to Table 3.3 for details of participant group reduction from the reconnaissance phase to completion of fieldwork phase.

Table 3.3: Participant group reduction according to discipline and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION PHASES</th>
<th>NO. OF VOLUNTEERS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of fieldwork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of fieldwork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I had earlier anticipated, not all 11 participants who had agreed to be a part of my study and whom I had also found most suited were able to commit to the study from start to finish. Of the three, two attended the first interview but were no longer in contact afterwards. After attempting to get in touch with them via the email and mobile phone and failing to receive any reply, I had to exclude them from the research. The one other participant who did not complete his participation could not even attend the first interview. This was because his timing could not be suited to that of the research. Despite showing keen interest at our initial contact point during the reconnaissance phase and even through the months before the start of the fieldwork, the final year undergraduate found himself too busy with his final exams. Although he was willing to participate in the research after his exams and just before his graduation, he no longer fulfilled the requirement of being an undergraduate. As such, he would have been unable to complete the diary-writing phase which necessitated his reflections across term time. Refer to Table 3.4 for selected details of the participants' background and status of participation. As such, actual fieldwork began in June 2012 with ten participants. By the time it was completed in May 2013, eight research participants had very generously shared a small slice of their reading lives with me.
Table 3.4: Participants’ background and status of participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>PSEUDONYM (GENDER)</th>
<th>DEGREE</th>
<th>YEAR OF STUDY</th>
<th>FIELDWORK STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jen (F)</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fong (F)</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Khong (M)</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jon (M)</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jack (M)</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yen (F)</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Zee (F)</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nick (M)</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chin (M)</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Incomplete (one interview only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nat (F)</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Incomplete (one interview only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dave (M)</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Incomplete (not interviewed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.4 Participant vignettes

In qualitative-informed research, research participants are often more significantly regarded for what they say rather than who they are. This also often means that the research participants remain in the background and are only summoned when segments of their responses are used to illustrate the conceptions. However in the context of my thesis, before segments of the participants’ recounted experience are utilised to illustrate the emerging conceptions, vignettes of all the eight participants will be presented. These vignettes offer glimpses of the participants as they responded or reacted to me and as they were seen through my eyes thus paying heed to the interpretivist-researcher position in the methodological sense. These vignettes will ground the data not just in the theoretical but also personal levels
thus presenting the participants’ stories of what were initially the researcher’s research questions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Although not deliberately considered for the research design, it happened that seven out of the eight research participants were born and schooled in west Malaysia. Except for one, the other seven participants hail from four different states on the west coast of west Malaysia. Nick on the other hand hails from east Malaysia. Refer to Figure 3.3 for the location of the participants on the map of Malaysia.

Figure 3.3: Participants and their location on a map of Malaysia

![Map of Malaysia with participants' locations marked](image)

The following participant vignettes capture significant features that provide a facet of the participants’ character and background. Because my study revolved around the participants’ reading experience, the vignettes were necessarily anchored in the participants’ education and literate lives. The participants were given a pseudonym so as to ensure anonymity. As closely as possible, I replaced their real names with pseudonyms that reflected the ‘ethnic’ origins of their names. This explains why some names took on eastern or oriental origins while others took on western origins. It is not uncommon for Malaysians of Chinese and Indian descent to have western-influenced names.

3.3.4.1 Jen

Jen’s confidence was the first characteristic to shine through; her firm handshake and eye-contact were strong indicators of her self-assuredness. She was 21 years-old during the time of the first interview and was a first year Engineering undergraduate. Jen was a very accomplished young woman. She had been an exemplary student whilst in Malaysia and had
won a scholarship for her undergraduate degree in Britain. She was also an accomplished sportswoman having played competitive sports nationally in Malaysia and a talented musician having mastered at least two musical instruments. It is not uncommon for young school-going Malaysians to academically pursue music which entails formal lessons and internationally-recognised assessments. It was clear that Jen had been used to being at the forefront and had taken on leadership roles in school. Jen is ethnically Chinese and was trilingual and biliterate. She spoke fluent English, Malay and although less fluently, also spoke Mandarin and another Chinese dialect. She read and wrote fluently both in English and Malay. She attended national primary and secondary schools in which the medium of instruction was Malay.

3.3.4.2 Fong

Fong was easy-going and quite unreserved. This almost 22-year-old final year Mathematics undergraduate was very forthcoming and talkative all through the three interviews. Her fluent (spoken) English belied her relatively recent struggle approximately four years ago, when she was compelled to communicate almost exclusively in English during her A-level study in a private college in Malaysia. This struggle was traceable to the combination of her ethnicity and early educational background. Like many ethnically Chinese students who attended Chinese vernacular primary schools, Fong had spoken almost exclusively in Mandarin both at home and in school during her formative years. Ironically, her discomfort with spoken English then did not adversely affect her writing skills. This showed up most clearly in her impressive academic achievement through primary and secondary school where linguistic ability in Malay, English and Mandarin was necessary. Her diligence seemed to have carried on. As an undergraduate, she described her ease with negotiating highly technical academic texts in English.

3.3.4.3 Khong

Khong who was a second year Engineering undergraduate seemed shy at the beginning of our conversations. Interestingly he had at first clarified by asking, ‘Are you sure you want to talk to me about reading? I don’t do very much of it.’ Khong’s very candid question piqued my interest at the start of what would become three meetings of conversations about what, how and why he did read. Despite his initial shyness, Khong was also very forthcoming both
during the three interview sessions across four months and through his diary entries across eight weeks. Khong who is ethnically Chinese, attended Chinese vernacular primary school. Because his parents intended for him to carry on learning Mandarin in secondary school, he attended a private secondary school for three years. In that school, he continued with the national curriculum but with the added subject of Mandarin language. Ironically, despite his parents’ effort to provide and pay for formal Mandarin language lessons, Khong readily admitted that he was most comfortable when reading, writing and speaking in English. This perhaps had a lot to do with the fact that his two elder sisters were educated in national schools and were not well-versed in Mandarin. The English books they read were naturally handed down to Khong. That largely made up his reading diet.

3.3.4.4 Jon

Jon was a second year Engineering undergraduate and was the most candid of the eight. By candid, I am referring to his open and often animated way of expressing himself. Confident and talkative, the 21-year-old was very forthcoming throughout the three interviews. Of the eight, Jon appeared to have the most casual attitude when it came to thinking and talking about undergraduate academic work. However, that impression of effortlessness could not mask what appeared to be his relentless quest for new knowledge. This deep curiosity seemed traceable to his childhood when he would question the answers his teachers gave him. He remembered not being easily satisfied. When the internet significantly entered his literate world, the then-18-year-old found himself seeking answers via websites like Wikipedia. His ease with all things electronic also showed up in this study when instead of a descriptive diary, he kept an electronic footprint of the electronic material he had chosen to read across the weeks. Like many of the other participants who are ethnically Chinese, Jon was also trilingual and comfortably triliterate. Whilst having been more strongly literate in Mandarin before entering the university in Britain, Jon has since found himself to be most confident in reading and writing in English.

3.3.4.5 Jack

Jack was the oldest amongst the eight participants. He was almost 23-years-old when we met for the first interview. He was in his final year of his Engineering degree. Although all the other participants were also interested in this study, Jack was perhaps the keenest. He clearly
considered himself an ardent reader and was very ready to share how he experienced reading. Jack’s keenness came across not only in his willingness to talk at length about his reading experience across the three interviews, but more importantly, in his voluntary effort of documenting an almost daily diary about his reading experience across at least 11 weeks. His seriousness towards this academic research was perhaps hardly surprising considering his constant commitment to academic work whilst in school. As a child, Jack was surrounded by books and remembered spending a lot of time reading. Jack’s parents encouraged him to read but were themselves uninterested in reading. Although ethnically Chinese and having attended Chinese vernacular primary school, Jack considered English to be the first of three languages.

3.3.4.6 Yen

This 20-year-old first year Economics undergraduate struck me as being organised and highly disciplined. Despite being rather young, she seemed to have that assuredness which made up for what she did not have in age. Her parents were professionals and held significant roles in their respective companies. Hers was a family that would be considered typically middle-class. Yen was told by her parents that she started learning how to read when she was just two years of age. She interestingly described her emergent literacy as the time she was “trained” to read. Reading time was built into their schedule as a family. Yen remembered how she and her siblings were expected to join their parents for quiet reading. Yen would say that she and her siblings would have no excuse because both her parents would also be there with their own books. In the present time, Yen had become a habitual reader. Her parents’ awareness about their children’s literacy skills was also recognised in their decision to school them in Chinese vernacular primary schools. Yen became strongly trilingual and triliterate. Yen may have a preference for written materials in English but can quite comfortably switch to reading materials in Mandarin and Malay.

3.3.4.7 Zee

Zee had a pleasant disposition and an easy openness about her. The bespectacled 21-year-old, second year Law undergraduate was very forthcoming throughout the interview conversations across a span of approximately five months. She seemed aware that she cut a figure of someone who was a keen reader but yet, appeared almost shy about it. If she seemed
to downplay the intensity of her reading experience when asked about it in the interviews, that intensity nevertheless came across very clearly in her reading diary. Because Zee had been in the habit of previously keeping a personal diary and was comfortable with being self-reflective, her diary-writing for this research project was written in detail. Like the others, Zee was a conscientious student whilst in school. Being ethnically Chinese, Zee attended Chinese vernacular primary school. She was strongly trilingual and triliterate. Although she usually conversed in Mandarin whilst at home in Malaysia, she found that she had begun to be more comfortable in spoken English ever since she began her degree in Britain.

3.3.4.8 Nick

Nick was different from the other participants in that he is not ethnically Chinese. His mother who has lived for many years in Malaysia was originally of Korean descent while his father is ethnically Indian. This 22-year-old second year Law undergraduate was very confident, articulate and driven. Having attended national primary and secondary schools, Nick was strongly bilingual and biliterate in both English and Malay. Apart from being passionate about the degree he was pursuing, he was also actively involved in university-wide events. Nick was also very committed to his religion and was involved in various social and religious groups across the university.

Although brief, the selected details of the eight vignettes above have been chosen so as to foreshadow the important themes that will be discussed in the following chapters.

3.3.5 Ethics

“Specific ethical issues are, explicitly or not, nested in larger theories of how we decide that an action is right, correct, or appropriate” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 289). This means that ethical issues are necessarily intertwined and embedded in and across the research. To illustrate this, I will refer to my previous research project. During the fieldwork of my research for the degree of Master of Philosophy, I was aware of the power relations at play not least because of my recognisable position as a senior lecturer in that Malaysian university in which I had served for more than a decade (Chong, 2011). Although I did place some form of measure to mitigate it, I was aware that the limited time allocated for the data collection in
that earlier study meant that I was not able to carry out the fieldwork entirely devoid of the recognised power relation.

Very importantly, one of my realisations then was that any of my follow-up study would benefit from being located in a research site whose participants did not see me as the powerful other. Thus, this current research that was not carried out in Malaysia but in England was in some sense not ethically mired in the same way. This is because in the current context, I did not hold a position of a lecturer. To the current participants, I was just a researcher. I was not their lecturer. Thus, I did not need to diffuse that specific sense of authority or perceived authority with the current set of research participants. On the flipside however, the challenge I had with my current research was in terms of how I gained and maintained access with a particular social group within which I was not positioned as an insider. In her discussion on fieldwork within educational settings, Delamont reminds the researcher that “access is not negotiated once and then settled for the whole of the fieldwork” (2001, p. 95). In this spirit, I expected to constantly navigate new routes in order to maintain access and relationships. I was careful not to be overly insistent when I maintained the relationships. A means through which I attempted to be reflexive was my constant journaling in what I call my analytic diary. This diary was kept across the length of my research.

I continued to exercise the same formal and informal ethical measures that were implemented in my earlier study. Such measures are critical to humanistic studies because these studies entail a researcher’s entrance into the lives of research participants. There is evidence which demonstrates how the researcher and research participants’ lives alter when in-depth studies are undertaken (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Silverman, 2010). I provided a detailed letter to the research participants which described what was expected of them during the length of the research. The letter also informed them of their right to anonymity and confidentiality in my thesis and any other academic presentations or publications. The letter to each research participant was adapted from Trumbull 1993 (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, pp. 177-178). Refer to Appendix E for the letter to the research participants. I also requested their permissions and informed consent to grant me the use of what was essentially a slice of their personal world. The informed consent form was adapted from Creswell (1998) and Jones et al. (2006). Refer to Appendix F for the informed consent form. I read and completed the “Research Ethics Review Checklist for Faculty of Education” and “Risk Assessment”
documents that required my declaration regarding the nature of my proposed data collection methods and treatment of my research participants. Across my fieldwork, I referred to the *BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011) when necessary. As such, my research participants were made fully aware of their commitment and contributions to my research.

### 3.3.6 Outcomes of methodological approaches in the field

On the whole, the proposed methods of this research were carried out in the way that was initially designed for the study. However, this did not mean that there were no unexpected occurrences. "It is more important to have thought carefully about (methods), documented the process and to have recognised the strengths and weaknesses of what was done than to have followed a 'correct' recipe" (Delamont, 2001, pp. 171-172). At the research design phase, I argued that this study would benefit from a theoretical perspective that is qualitatively-informed. Based on the proposed design, each participant was to be interviewed twice and was expected to keep a reading diary (typed or handwritten) for four weeks during term time and another four weeks during vacation time. If necessary, the participants were to meet me for a third time for an exit meeting. However, I was aware that my methodological design which was grounded in my epistemological and theoretical perspective would only serve to initiate the fieldwork. This meant that as a researcher with the interpretivist theoretical perspective, I was open to allowing the on-going construction of the participants' reading experiences to shape the latter stages of the fieldwork. This resulted in subtle but important modifications to how the interviews were carried out and how the diary-writing part of the fieldwork occurred differently for some of the participants. In the following section, the modifications to the interview and diary-writing will be discussed.

Firstly it became clear that most of the participants' accounts of their academic and non-academic reading experience during the interviews were critical in expanding on the entries in their reading diaries. This meant that as they continued to re-construct their reading experiences during the interviews, their conversations became increasingly richer and more in-depth. They demonstrated greater self-reflection. The interview sessions were also critical for at least one participant whose diary-writing was differently administered. This participant was Jon. During the second interview, Jon a second year Engineering undergraduate admitted that he did not consider himself very expressive and found that along the course of the first
four weeks, the diary structure that I had provided was not helpful. Instead, he used the internet browser history function to capture very detailed information of the time, date and title of what he read across four to five weeks. However apart from that, Jon provided little else in his diary. Therefore, what he did not get to include in his diary was to some extent addressed during the three interviews that spanned seven months and over 190 minutes of conversation. In terms of the research design, this meant that I recognised the value of the conversations during the interviews and began to see the exit meeting as less optional and more as a necessary third interview. As such, I was intent on allocating sufficient time for the exit meeting to also be an interview session. However it must be acknowledged that for Jen a first year Engineering undergraduate, this modification did not take place because she had been the first participant and had understood that the exit meeting was optional. Also, she took the liberty to keep the second phase of her diary before meeting me for the second interview. This meant that when she did meet me for the second and what would be her final interview, she had completed eight weeks of diary entries.

Another modification that took place during the fieldwork had to do with the means through which the participants documented their diary entries. Jack, a final year Engineering student demonstrated keen and genuine interest in the research even at the reconnaissance phase. When posed with the prospect of writing into his reading diary at least once a week, Jack offered to do more. Having kept personal diaries whilst in high school, Jack appeared to be self-reflective. He asked if he could keep an audio diary where he would voice-record a daily entry of his reading experience. He explained that this way, when it was time for his weekly diary entry he would remember better what he had done throughout that week. Because I had earlier explored the feasibility of having the participants keep an audio diary instead of a written one, I was aware that its feasibility lay largely in the participant’s willingness and comfort level as it depended on who the participant imagined the listener or audience to be (Worth, 2009). At the point of agreeing that he could keep an audio diary instead of a written one, I had already had three face-to-face conversations with him and several short exchanges over electronic mail. I ensured that he was comfortable with the fact that I was his audience. We also explored the feasibility of how the audio recordings could be carried out, stored and sent. Although Jack was given the same diary-writing guide and structure as all the other participants, I was aware that his diary entries captured more. As I began receiving some of the participants’ typed diaries, I started seeing the diversity in the kinds of materials they
were engaging with. The way the participants were negotiating their reading experience within their specific and emerging daily contexts meant that they were transacting with not just different texts but different materiality of texts. At this point, I encouraged the participants to keep samples of significant texts they were engaging in and to bring or send them to me before the next time we met. As a result, some participants sent me the links to internet articles and softcopy versions of texts and notes while others brought along hardcopy texts. However, because this study was not designed to analyse the texts in an in-depth and isolated way, the sample texts will be used as secondary-level data in the way that they can help to illustrate the participants' reading experience and reading response.

In terms of my study, the modifications occurred whilst resonating with my underlying epistemological, theoretical and methodological arguments. Specifically, my initial argument that proposed viewing the reading experience as being transactional and by that necessarily grounded in text and context was maintained in the course of fieldwork. The modifications made at the methods phase illustrated the diverse ways that reading was experienced and transacted. Once the fieldwork was under way, I was very aware that my biggest challenge was sustaining the participants' interest across a minimum of four months. This time-range of four months was calculated based on the way the university’s term and vacation time interspersed and coincided with the participants’ willingness to begin and more importantly sustain their diary-writing. On the other hand, I would also have a unique insight into how some of their reading interests changed across time. Because I prized the participants’ continued commitment to the research above all else, I prioritised their availability and schedules over insisting that they must complete their diary-writing stages, one immediately after the other. Specifically, I paid heed to the undergraduates' repeated cautioning in our conversations during the reconnaissance phase regarding the practical challenges of fitting in the diary-writing during particularly busy, pre-examination months of March through May. This resulted in my effort to ensure that seven of the eight participants completed the interviews and diary-writing before the busy period. Because my study was not time-sensitive in the way that it must be controlled for synchronicity, flexibility was given to the participants in terms of them fitting in the diary-writing. This therefore resulted in each participants’ contrasting time spent being involved in the research. Refer to Table 3.5 for the approximate time taken by each participant from the point of their first to final interviews.
Table 3.5: Selected details of actual fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>PSEUDONYM (GENDER)</th>
<th>DEGREE / YEAR OF STUDY</th>
<th>NO. OF MONTHS**</th>
<th>NO. OF INTERVIEWS / TOTAL TIME</th>
<th>DIARY ENTRY (frequency/form)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jen* (F)</td>
<td>Engineering, 1st</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 (139 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fong (F)</td>
<td>Mathematics, 2nd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (179 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Khong (M)</td>
<td>Engineering, 2nd</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 (139 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jon (M)</td>
<td>Engineering, 2nd</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 (189 mins)</td>
<td>Once in 4 weeks / typed***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jack (M)</td>
<td>Engineering, 3rd</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (260 mins)</td>
<td>Almost daily / audio recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yen (F)</td>
<td>Economics, 1st</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 (90 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Zee (F)</td>
<td>Law, 2nd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (193 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nick (M)</td>
<td>Law, 2nd</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 (240 mins)</td>
<td>Once weekly / typed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*First participant to be interviewed.

**The number of months was rounded to the nearest whole number.

*** "Typed" here refers to the data captured automatically by the browser history function.

On the whole, I collected over 1430 minutes (24 hours) of interview conversations and daily to weekly diary entries from between eight to eleven weeks.

3.4 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the epistemological, theoretical and methodological principles relevant to the design and development of my research. I also showed how I wrestled with some epistemological and methodological issues especially in terms of how the principles in their abstract sense played out in the empirical part of my research during the fieldwork phase. In the following chapter, I will go on to delineate how the collected data were analysed.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will discuss the rationale behind how the data were analysed and how the findings were organised. Data that were collected across the nine months of fieldwork began to be pieced together even before the fieldwork ended. Apart from the volume of the data, the range and different directions in which the participants shared their accounts of reading were wide. Whilst a semi-structured interview protocol was prepared so that the starting points were similar, it was to be expected that the unpredictable ways in which the participants experienced reading across a period of time meant that there would be clear divergences. For such a seemingly complex mesh of data, a guiding frame will help to ensure that “coding fetishism” did not occur such that all and any emergent theme from the data was coded (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, pp. 8-9).

I developed two organisational frames for the analytic process. Fundamentally, these two frames represented my different but complementary vantage points. The first vantage point represented a view that positioned me as the interpretivist researcher who made various decisions to analyse the raw data. I called this first frame the “analytic guiding frame” (AGF). The second vantage point represented my bird’s-eye view of the research as a whole within which the more intricate and detailed data analysis process was nested. This second vantage point was important for positioning my biographical and epistemological point of reference in terms of the overall organisational structure. As such, it provided the necessary orientation of my data with reference to my overall research design. I called the second frame the “overall guiding frame” (OGF). Although the frames will be discussed separately, it is important to note they were conceived and utilised in a fluid and co-constructive sense. As will be shown in the following findings chapters, the rationale behind the choice of employing either or both guiding frames for the analytic process will be provided. Refer to Figure 4.1 for a graphic representation of the interposition of the vantage points.
The following sections surrounding how the guiding frames were formed necessarily engendered a discussion that was at some points, dialectic and discursive. Due to the fact that it was during the actual fieldwork stage that one facet of my methodological design shifted and affected the actual data analysis stage which came after, I decided that the discussion of the shift should also be located in this chapter. This decision helped to characterise the shift as being driven not just by a methodological issue but also an analytical one.

4.1 Analytic guiding frame (AGF)

The AGF was built upon two significant principles. The first principle was informed by my philosophical argument which threaded through my epistemological, theoretical and methodological decisions as have been set out in Chapter 3. This meant that my philosophical argument was important in grounding the AGF within the overarching constructionist-phenomenological perspective even as the philosophical dimension eventually boiled down to an empirical phenomenographic view in the data analysis stage. Although the overarching perspective was significant for my initial, broad-based analysis, I decided that a micro analytic view would benefit the analysis. This meant that on top of a broad-based analysis, a close analysis was also applied to the data. This brings us to the second significant principle.
The second principle revolved around the requirement for close analysis of significant data segments generated from talk (interviews) and text (diaries). While phenomenographic analysis was useful in broad terms which guided the thinking behind how my data were to be arranged and classified, it was also open enough to embrace other analytic methods that could help illuminate the finer associations across the data set. I found that as an analytic method, discourse analysis was useful in unpicking the finer motifs of the qualitatively different ways in which the participants transacted with selected texts. The scope and role of phenomenographic and discourse analysis as analytic methods will be explicated in detail in the following sections.

4.1.1 Phenomenographic data analysis

Phenomenographic data analysis aims to describe, analyse and understand experiences (Marton, 1981). As simplistic as that may sound, phenomenographic researchers attempt to trace a basic pattern of how the phenomenon is experienced across the participant set. According to Marton et al. (1994), it is analytically possible to arrive at a finite number of different ways in which a group of research participants could experience a phenomenon. This necessarily means that that group would already share some fundamental similarities perhaps in the form of cultural or social backgrounds. The phenomenographic analytic sense retains focus on the experience of a particular shared phenomenon and still allows for a systematic way to organise the data. One characteristic of phenomenographic analysis is its focus on an individual’s perspective of a specific experience or phenomenon. Another important assumption of phenomenography is the qualitatively different ways in which individuals perceive an experience. Marton et al. (1994, p. 459) describes the basis of this principle in terms of a stack of transparencies:

We might use as a metaphor for our idea of using this material a stack of overhead transparencies. Imagine that the view of each participant, expressed in no more than fragments, is held on an individual transparency. There are partly differing fragments of the same whole on the differing transparencies: when we superimpose them on each other the whole pattern emerges (p. 459).

Based on Marton and Booth (1997), Brew (2001) usefully drew up several important steps when carrying out phenomenographic analysis. These steps include separating out the different ways in which the phenomenon is experienced, mapping the structural relationships between the component parts and interpreting the referential meanings that emerge from the
relationship mapping (Brew, 2001, p. 274). These steps function only as a general guide and will require suitable application to my study. Refer to Table 4.1 for the phenomenographic steps and its application into my research.

Table 4.1: Phenomenographic steps and its application into my research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis applied to my research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out the different ways in which the phenomenon is experienced</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships between the component parts</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify and interpret the referential meanings that emerge from the relationship mapping</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This three-step analytic approach formed the basis of the AGF. Because phenomenographic analysis acknowledges the qualitatively different ways in which a group of participants account for a phenomenon, I found it to be suitable not least because of how it resonated with the epistemological, methodological and theoretical underpinnings of my research. The observation in my analytic diary below is referred to.

This methodological area of phenomenographic analysis fits into what I am investigating and by that provides a useful prism through which my participants’ version(s) of how they read can be laid out, analysed and understood. Because phenomenography pays tribute to how experiences are differently lived and construed, it resonates with the underpinning principles of reader response theory and the significant basis of history of reading which points to an evolutionary and ever-changing face of the reading experience (analytic diary, 27th September 2012).

This means that space can be made for both similarities and divergences in the experience as it was reported through interviews and documented through the diaries by the participants. Refer to Figure 4.2 for an illustration of a phenomenographic analysis of participants’ transaction with text.
As with any methodology, its theoretical and conceptual argument can never completely address the full extent of the ‘reality’ it sets out to understand. Indeed, that should not be its aim because methodological straight-jacketing will mean the end of social investigation. In the same way, phenomenography as a developing field of methodological and analytical approach continues to be improved. In a detailed critique, Richardson (1999) points out some epistemologically-bound challenges with respect to how interview data should be treated in phenomenographic analysis. Richardson’s argument is tied to the issue of data objectivity in terms of whether phenomenographic researchers acknowledge that their data is not the phenomenon but is, at best, discursive language about the phenomenon. While I have earlier justified that my study shifted from an examination of the phenomenon to an examination of how the participants experience what they consider as reading, Richardson’s point is still important because he points out that data as discursive language can and have been subjected to discourse analysis even and especially within phenomenographic analysis (1999, pp. 67-68). In focus here is Richardson’s less explicit but equally important precautionary reminder that language data which is drawn from talk and text data is necessarily discursive. A purely naïve take on such kinds of data may bring about ill-formed conclusions. For this reason, the analysis used in this thesis is based not only on the broad principles of phenomenographic analysis but also on discourse analysis.

4.1.2 Discourse analysis

Within the scope of my thesis, I understand discourse analysis to be an analytic method that requires the researcher to pay close attention to how language-based data can be analysed in-depth with the aim of scrutinising the data beyond obvious themes. To begin with however, discourse analysis as we know it today, tends to mean different things in different contexts. Discourse analysis is traceable to and recognised as having initially taken root in the field of linguistics (Halliday, 1973). Within that domain, discourse analysis is largely understood as being about language especially in the form of written text. The grammar of clauses,
sentences and paragraphs is at the centre of these analyses. Eventually, discourse analysts informed by sociolinguistics, social psychology and politics amongst other disciplines, brought to bear richer perspectives that were important in putting forward more inclusive and critical approaches to understanding the human condition (Jones, 2012; Stubbs, 1983; Wood & Droger, 2000). These approaches broaden the scope of analysing talk beyond just examining grammatical structures in isolated contexts. The deep consideration of social context brought about Discourse analysis which accounts for how socio-culturally-related factors play a part in meaning-making. This form of Discourse analysis, distinguished by a capital ‘D’ in some circles, is known for its role in emancipatory and critical research that grapples with issues of power, subjugation and marginalisation (Gee, 1999, 2008). Discourse analysis as an analytic field is also often seen to overarch ‘specialist’ analytic work like conversation analysis, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001a).

Perhaps another way of understanding the development of discourse analysis is in terms of research paradigms. A very significant factor for the expansion of discourse analysis as an analytic tool was the shift in social science research trends in the last two decades of the 20th century (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). The social science research community found itself moving towards exploring the interpretive research paradigm where qualitative methodology and methods were increasingly employed. Thus instead of questionnaire surveys and experiments, observations and interviews were used as main methods of research. As a result, large amounts of talk and text data were produced (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001b). This new wave encouraged the re-thinking of how a researcher sets out to seemingly ‘apprehend’ a phenomenon. Specifically, the researcher must now tread carefully so as to avoid the straightforward thinking of language as being simply referential. The researcher must remember to step back in order to acknowledge that words and by association language, do not always nor simply point to an objective ‘reality’ out there. This is especially pertinent when qualitative data appear to fit neatly into predictable categories. The reason for such caution is the assumption that language, far from being neutral or ideologically-free, is loaded and constitutive. When things are said or written, they are done so in context. Similarly, when things are not said nor written, they are also ‘done’ in context. And because we are social beings, language is situated amongst other things, within social and cultural contexts. The advantage of paying detailed attention to language is to make visible what is hidden or
implied and to offer alternative ways of understanding social and cultural phenomenon. Gee (1999) for example, provides a close analysis of a discussion between a curriculum consultant and a group of teachers regarding a potential joint-project. The curriculum consultant refers to the project as “small, finite, little and a pilot because from earlier talk…she fears that the teachers think” that there is “too much work” (pp. 204-205). However, Gee argues that the very same words may come across as “belittling the importance of the project and (the teachers) work in it (s)ince they are already concerned about issues of status and power…” (p. 205). Thus, the meanings and implications of language is often fragile and open to (mis)understanding. Another very important feature of discourse analysis is its necessary inclusion of the role of the researcher in an interpretivist sense. The position of the researcher is clearly acknowledged so as to minimise what could be a naive take on the research findings. This means that any finding cannot be assumed to have been ‘out there’. In turn, this epistemologically-grounded consideration attempts to address the fundamental question of how objective and ‘out there’ or intersubjective and co-constructed knowledge is.

Within the scope of my thesis, specialist discourse analysis was not immediately applicable because my study was not designed to exclusively examine talk in and for itself. However, it is in the broader respect (as discussed above) that I chose to bring the data analytic approach to bear on my data in this thesis. Relevant here is how discourse analysis encompasses “the close study of language and language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life” (Taylor, 2013). “The point of discourse analysis is not to generate esoteric accounts of interaction, documents and so on, but to show precisely how the features of the discourse make particular readings or reactions possible, plausible, and understandable” (Wood & Droger, 2000, p. 92). Following Gilbert and Mulkay, the discourse analytic stance not only acknowledges but is sensitive to “interpretative variability among participants” and seeks to “understand why so many different versions of events can be produced” (1984, p. 2). The broad principles of discourse analysis were found to usefully complement the application of phenomenographic analysis in my data analysis. The reasons were three-fold. Firstly, both phenomenographic and discourse analysis share the common use of talk and text as important material for broadly understanding phenomena. Secondly, the epistemological challenge of phenomenographically assuming the participants’ words about a phenomenon to be the actual phenomenon is somewhat accounted for when discourse analysis is applied to the data. Such
‘second-level’ analysis acts as a checking mechanism. Finally, the researcher’s position in both these analyses is important in shaping the findings.

However, the application of discourse analysis to any language data is not without its challenges. Chief amongst them is the epistemological question of what language stands for. For example, Taylor (2012) questions and challenges the use of direct biographical data within research reports. According to Taylor, such an affordance may potentially run foul of any effort which sees language to be constitutive. However, such thinking raises further questions. If all language is necessarily constitutive, then when is it referential? Is the resolution, then, to swing the other way and to consider all the participants’ utterances as perpetually facile? Taylor readily acknowledges that this critique is also caught in its own web because it is pointing to and yet is constitutive of its own critique (Taylor, 2001).

I argue that such thinking is not useful for analytic work because it perpetuates a solipsistically-bounded way of apprehending data. Instead, I advocate middle-ground thinking. How I account for middle-ground thinking is to see the situation as not one of mutual exclusivity. Referential talk is not exclusive from constitutive talk. To begin with, a researcher has to assume that at a minimum, the research participants’ language carries the intent to refer to the topic at hand. This means that unless there are compelling reasons under hyper-sensitive circumstances (e.g. court cases) where there is cause to doubt the intent of the participants’ talk, those who do elect to respond to and talk about a topic at hand would to an extent be referring to aspects of the phenomenon in question. Therefore in such circumstances, it is more likely that language can be and indeed must be referential first. However, language is also referentially constitutive. By this, I mean that it is only in the language’s first intent to refer to or at least towards something that it can potentially be constitutive. In returning to Gee’s (1999) example of how language can mean differently in different contexts, the words “small, finite, little” (p. 204) must firstly refer to the direct meaning of size or volume for it to constitute the nuanced notion that implies position or power. Without the referential sense, the constitutive one is meaningless. Perhaps then, careful analysis on my part entails my decision of when language is referentially constitutive. It was this line of thinking that guided my analysis. I attempted to bridge both the referential and constitutive parts of language by incorporating both levels of analysis in exploring the data. This means that albeit cautiously, I necessarily considered selected data to be
referential, while temporarily suspending the notion of language being constitutive. Then, when the ensuing analytic process flags up variations and negative cases, a more detailed analysis where language is viewed constitutively was applied. On the whole, the intertwining application of phenomenographic and discourse analysis functioned to address analytic challenges as well as provided a systematic way for me to make sense of data. This was so that I could arrive at a substantively nuanced understanding of the issues that were central to my research. Specifically, these issues related to my research aims, objectives and questions.

4.2 Overall guiding frame (OGF)

The analytical guiding frame (AGF) cannot exist in isolation. It is essential that the analytical process of working with data from the field must continually be underpinned by the overall research aims, objectives and research questions of a particular study. As such, an overall guiding frame (OGF) that encompasses these elements is necessary to ensure that the findings are well-grounded. As I have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, my research was built on my concerns, research questions and substantive theoretical perspectives. This further informed my methodological considerations and my choice of methods. During the research design phase, I could only linearly link my research questions with my research methods. This was because I had not apprehended my data through analytic lenses. Refer to Figure 4.3 for the ‘linear sense’ of research questions and methods.

Figure 4.3: ‘Linear sense’ of research questions and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1: What is the undergraduate’s experience of reading within academic and non-academic domains?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How does the multilingual undergraduate experience reading in a largely monolingual context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: How does the undergraduate experience reading in multimodal contexts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods: Semi-structured interviews and reading diary across eight weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In the case of my research, the principle underpinning my overall guiding frame was based on the origins of my study. Specifically, this refers to the issues that emerged first from my biographical position and later, from selected and relevant literature review. Then, on top of the principle is the structure which provided the scaffold to my analytic guiding frame. This structure was based on three other fundamental aspects of my study. They were the research questions, research methods and the collected data interwoven into a logical map. The reason these three aspects of the research were chosen as structures for the overall guiding frame was because they formed a traceable link to the way the study was methodologically designed. This meant that any analysis and theorisation that were done would be accurate to the extent that they could be mapped on to this context.

How the similarities and divergences were initially linked was based on what I observed to be the strongest emerging theme during the early analysis phase. Thus, in order to link the similarities and divergences I decided first, to identify the more general and encompassing themes prior to analysing the divergent themes. This meant that I would work from what was expected to what was unexpected. This decision to progress from the familiar to the unexpected is based on the fundamental notion of apprehending the less-known in terms of what is already known so that the unfamiliar and the unexpected will be made familiar when understood in terms of a known context. From the initial interviews of the first three participants I found that in an oblique way, my pursuit of the dichotomous sense of academic and non-academic reading brought out not just references to the idea of separation but also to the idea of border-crossings between the domains. This meant that the more the participants talked about the two domains, the more they found themselves referring to the many instances in which reading in one was associated with reading in the other. This then, essentially placed the first research question at the centre of the study thereby turning it into a running theme. This meant that the remaining research questions about multimodality and multilinguality were analysed in reference to how the participants experienced reading in academic and non-academic domains. Here, I acknowledge that if the emergent overarching theme had been construed differently, the guiding frame and the resultant analysis would have been different. Because all three research questions were tied with the participants' past and current contexts, I decided that their reading experiences in the varied domains, modes and languages should be considered against a chronology. This meant that it was important to compare and contrast the ways in which their experiences of reading in a range of modalities
and languages have changed across time specifically through their primary and secondary school years as well as in their more current time as undergraduates in the university.

In the sense of the analytic organisation, the three research questions which were based on the research aim and research concerns represented three separate sides of the analytic guiding frame respectively. Because the association between the participants' past and present reading experiences were considered to be crucial for understanding the participants in context, I regarded the notion of time as being an important factor of consideration. Finally because the research methods were crucial in the way the data was collected and shaped, the consideration of how the research methods shaped the answers to the research questions was placed at the centre of the analytic frame. Refer to Figure 4.4 for the overall guiding frame using the interwoven sense of research questions, the notion of time and the significance of the research methods.

Figure 4.4: Overall guiding frame (OGF)

![Overall guiding frame (OGF)](image)

4.3 Codes, categories and conceptions (CCC)

As much as the AGF and OGF functioned as the scaffolding for the analytic process, the triadic notion of code-category-conception functioned as its nuts and bolts. Indeed, for most qualitative research regardless of analytic procedure, the act of sorting, coding and categorising in order to form themes and broad conceptions is indispensable. Saldana (2013)
recommends a useful way of linking codes, categories and conceptions (CCC). Saldana’s link is useful in terms of how it connects “real” (empirical) data to the “abstracted” form of theory. He proposes the “streamlined codes-to-theory model” (Saldana, 2013, p. 13). Refer to Figure 4.5 for my simplified adapted version of the model.

Figure 4.5: Adapted version of streamlined codes-to-theory model

As described in Chapter 3, the main data sources of this study were from fieldwork which comprised my semi-structured interviews with participants, the participants’ diary-writing and selected samples of participants’ academic and non-academic reading materials. To a lesser extent but no less important, references were also drawn from the notes in my analytic diary. On the whole, the coding process was carried out in at least three stages. The first stage consisted of free coding. This meant that the participants’ transcriptions were read and sections that corresponded broadly to identifiable themes were placed together. These early codes were considered ‘free’ because they were not yet associated with other codes. As free codes continued to emerge, I began to draw connections across them. This then led to the second stage of coding. This stage entailed what I called hierarchical coding. This meant that while general coding was still carried out, it was done with the awareness that some codes were broader and more encompassing than others. As these broader codes corresponded to the way my analysis was guided by the AGF and OGF, they were shifted and were considered as categories under which the other codes subsumed. Finally, based on the structural and referential explanations of the relationships across the codes and categories, plausible overarching conceptions were formed. On the whole, I used Nvivo 8 software which was developed by QSR International as a data management tool for the coding and categorising process.
Although the development of computer-based software is acknowledged for how it can greatly assist in data management processes, we are often warned that software cannot actually analyse data (Bazeley, 2013; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This means that researchers must ensure that significant analytic thinking is carried out as the data continues to be managed. As a way of managing my on-going thinking and analytical work, I ensured that I kept my own analytic diary which I have earlier referred to. Apart from the keeping a diary, I also created an off-stage work grid. This grid was designed not only to capture the domains but also to map out how the details corresponded with the research questions. Refer to Appendix G for an extract of the grid\(^1\).

On the question of how reliable is the analytic process, some researchers advocate the practice of having an external person to also code the data in order to verify the accuracy or consistency of the coding process. In other words, if the external person also codes the data in the same way as the researcher, the initial coding process is considered to be reliable. However, the value of this exercise is questioned for projects that are carried out by individual or solo researchers (Bazeley, 2013; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The fundamental nature of qualitative analysis sees the individual researcher as the research instrument and therefore prizes the divergent ways in which the same data set can appear differently to different researchers. As such, the aim for data to be coded consistently by more than two researchers becomes misplaced and counter-intuitive. Instead, the issue of reliability in solo-researched projects is addressed through careful accounting of critical turning-points which shaped the data transformation. In this case, the accountability comes in the form of a constant and accurate meta-observation of how the raw data was gradually transformed, theorised and conceptualised by that single researcher, such that it “builds a case supported by the data for the conclusions reached” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 93). Part of this careful account is the declaration of items that seem contradictory. In my analysis phase, such occasion was coded and annotated so that I continued to keep track of both consistent and contradictory data. In other words, positive and negative cases were accounted for and included in the analysis.

\(^1\) Due to space limitation, I was not able to include the whole grid. As much as I could however, I ensured that many of the headings of the grid are visible.
On the whole, the qualitative nature of my study presumes that the findings cannot be generalisable. Instead, its research design together with its analytic frameworks will focus on distinctively differing descriptions that share conceptual threads. This means that the phenomenon will be tested at a ‘meta’-descriptive level such that not only what the participants read but how they experienced making reading choices at the conceptual and fundamental level will be examined. This according to Heath is the “meta language” or “how we come to know” (1983, p. 342).

4.4 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the rationale behind the specific analytical frameworks which I placed together so that my data analysis will be consistently based on my choice of analytic methods. My data analysis would also be traceable to the overarching aim and objective of my research. In the following chapter, significant analysis and findings in relation to the first research question will be presented.
CHAPTER 5: ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC READING

5.1 Tracing the boundaries

In the preamble of my thesis, I described a signboard that was painted by Ambrosius Holbein in 1516. On this signboard was the imagery of students learning to read in school. The familiar scene of students “hunched over their texts” is perhaps recognised both for the tenacity they possess and the torture that they endure (Manguel, 1996, p. 76). Indeed, it is of no coincidence that Holbein’s imagery includes the teacher’s bundle of birches. Academic reading and non-academic reading are not new concepts. When I initially set out to understand why Malaysian undergraduates seemed to be averse to wider reading despite their wider linguistic access and expanding multimodal contexts, I found that I had to first understand how they negotiated reading within academic and non-academic domains. Following from there, my first research question emphasised the domains and divide of academic and non-academic reading. The participants were asked to talk about what they remembered of their reading experiences across primary, secondary and their more current time in the university. In order to systematically capture the participants’ recollections, questions in the first and second semi-structured interviews were formed so as to gain insight into their past and more current experiences of reading in these two domains. Refer to Appendix B for the overall questions/prompts for the interview protocol. All interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

Because the interviews were semi-structured, the questions were not always necessarily asked in the same order. Nor were they asked in the same way. At the least, I ensured that the sense of the questions was present during the interviews. My analysis began with general multiple readings of the participants’ interview transcripts. These general readings provided me with early impressions of my data set. These early impressions eventually became the ‘testing’ ground for deeper analysis. This meant that when themes began to emerge, more careful analysis was applied so as to account for not just what but why and how the participants shaped their discourse. As the analysis was carried out, annotations were made so as to capture both expected and unexpected findings. I continued to make annotations all the way through the data analysis. Because the data analysis was necessarily developmental, I will
present this findings chapter along the same lines. This structure will serve as an audit trail to show how my findings were arrived at.

As would have been expected, much of the collected data was about the undergraduates' past and more current reading experience in the two domains of academic and non-academic reading. In preparation for the data analysis, I created two a priori codes. They were “academic reading experience” and “non-academic reading experience”. These two initial codes were meant to capture the overall structure of how certain kinds of experience could be classified as academic reading as opposed to other kinds of experience that could then count as non-academic reading. Because the participants were asked to talk about their experiences whilst in school as well as in the university, the data began to cleave along chronological lines. I decided to retain this structure all the way through the analysis because the sense of chronology was important in providing a link between the participants' recollections of reading as school students and as university undergraduates. Because I will discuss these two time-lines separately, the primary/secondary school and university time-lines were considered to overarch the academic/non-academic reading codes. Thus, the time-lines functioned as overarching categories to the reading domains. Refer to Figure 5.1 for the development of codes and categories for the first research question (RQ1).

Figure 5.1 Development of codes and categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic reading</td>
<td>Primary/Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-academic reading</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections will attempt to capture how the more significant findings took shape. In keeping within the scope of the thesis, all “off-stage” work could not be presented. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the analytic process was necessarily selective. The
decision for the selections were made based on issues and questions central to my overall guiding frame (OGF). Where required, justifications were provided.

5.1.1 Analytic process: tracing the boundaries

To begin with, the data analysis of the participants’ talk about the reading domains experienced whilst in primary and secondary school will be discussed. Although all eight participants hail from various parts of Malaysia, all of them underwent the national curriculum through primary and secondary school. When talking about academic reading as school students, the participants had little problem remembering what they were expected to do. While most of them were unable to remember exact portions of time spent on academic reading, their recollections provided a snapshot of the stance and attitude they took when it came to school work. What I gathered was that although they appeared to label themselves differently in terms of how studious or conscientious they remembered having been, they seemed to have shared notions of reading academic materials. This formed my initial impression of the participants’ academic reading experience whilst in school. At this point, I must acknowledge that such a selective and arguably biased impression is necessarily problematic because of how much is left out. However, this initial impression formed the genesis of my later analysis. As such, my decision to begin the analysis with this impression is to demonstrate how my analytic process was later developed and built. Table 5.1 presents briefly my initial impressions of the participants’ take on their academic reading experience as school students. All direct quotations in the Table 5.1 were drawn from the participants’ first interviews respectively.

At this early point of the analysis, I considered the participants’ talk about their remembered past to be fairly referential. This was because a general impression needed to be formed first. The snapshot of the participants’ previous experiences of academic reading as school students may tentatively suggest that overwhelming academic work as well as extra-curricular activities inside and outside school occupied a significant amount of their time. At this point, I would like to account for Jon and Nick who seemed to describe themselves as having been less conventionally studious. When I probed further, talk of their reading outside of academic domains as well as their deep curiosity in wanting to know appeared significant. This meant that in responding to my interview questions, they may have been compelled to see themselves in conventionally-shared characteristics of reading in academic domains (which
they did not think they shared). This early finding foreshadowed the question of along whose terms these notions of academic and non-academic reading were experienced.

Table 5.1: Participants' academic reading experience through school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS' ACADEMIC READING EXPERIENCE THROUGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>Selected quotation from interview transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Considerably studious, read widely</td>
<td>“In terms of science, I was kind of ahead of whatever was being taught in school...I was doing so much external reading.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>Particularly studious, systematic and ambitious, paid careful attention to good teachers</td>
<td>“I really saw myself as a student. I really wanted to do very well in my studies ... in school they expected so little from us, I always wanted to do more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>Systematically supported by tuition</td>
<td>“I used to go to a lot of tuition....English class, Mandarin class, Mental Math, Science...for English I started before I went to primary school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Not particularly studious but deeply curious</td>
<td>“I do less academic reading than non-academic reading. I can understand things quite fast...the science-y bits that can be explained with usual logic.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td>Particularly strategic and analytical</td>
<td>“It’s sort of natural for me to know how to answer exam questions. I just have to know...these set of patterns and I will be fine for exams.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>Conscientious, systematically supported by school and tuition</td>
<td>“The tuition...I did that to strengthen my Math and English. The school (also) drills us a lot.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>Consistently studious, paid careful attention to good teachers</td>
<td>“I remember having to memorise a lot of articles...because it’s the way Chinese vernacular schools work....the teachers were...very helpful.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Not particularly studious but read widely</td>
<td>“Just having fun. Reading, going outside to play.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How then, was this related to their non-academic reading? Non-academic reading appeared to have reduced as they progressed in school years. It came as little surprise therefore that at least five out of the eight participants attributed their reduction of non-academic reading to
being about reduced time. Refer to Table 5.2 for my initial impression of participants’ non-academic reading experience as school students. The details of what they remembered reading is not indicative of quantity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Initial impressions of non-academic reading experience (by authors/titles/genre)</th>
<th>Reading volume (across time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Picture cards, Sherlock Holmes, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, G.K. Chesterton, Encyclopaedia</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>Picture books, Heidi, Pollyana, Anne of Green Gables, Little Women, Peter and Jane, Disney stories, Mallory Towers, Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Harry Potter</td>
<td>Lord of the Rings (J.R.R. Tolkein), Harry Potter (J.K. Rowling), Andrew Matthews, Dale Carnegie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>Peter and Jane, Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, Harry Potter, Narnia, Fairy tales, Artemis Fowl</td>
<td>Lord of the Rings, Silmarillion, The Hobbit, newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Pictures, Fairy tales, science-y books (illustrated), general knowledge,</td>
<td>Science fiction, non-fiction, newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td>Chinese novels, Chinese magazines</td>
<td>Chinese novels, Chinese non-fiction, Chinese newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>Fiction (Enid Blyton, Famous Five) Peter and Jane, Chinese fiction, Malay fiction</td>
<td>Non-fiction (Reader's Digest, The Economist, Times, Chicken Soup series), Fiction (James Patterson, Sydney Sheldon, Darren Shan), Chinese fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>Picture books, Peter and Jane, Dune, Chinese magazines, Chinese fiction (Huan Chu Ghe Ghe series), Malay novels</td>
<td>English and Chinese manga, English, Chinese and Malay non-fiction and fiction, English and Chinese newspapers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nick         | Enid Blyton, comics, Christian-based fiction                                      | Reduced                   

It was clear from the participants’ recollection that they were individuals who enjoyed wider reading. Influenced either by familial or social circles, all eight participants seemed to hail from literacy-rich environments. Therefore, their references to a reduction in non-academic reading would have presumably been made in spite of what could have been a highly-literate environment.

2 Unless indicated, all reading materials were in the English language. All these titles were lifted directly from the interviews. This explains why I was not able to provide a bibliographic list for the texts referred to here.
5.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: tracing the boundaries

All through the analysis phase, “off-stage” work in terms of specific and general impressions of how each participant referred to their academic and non-academic reading experience was captured on my off-stage work grid and built up across time. In order to be systematically accountable, principles of phenomenographic analysis within my analytic guiding frame (AGF) were applied. This meant that I constantly looked for how similar or differently the eight participants may have experienced reading. In the analysis, I retained the original “academic reading” and “non-academic reading” codes division as phenomenographic subgroups. This was because the issue of the participants’ reading experience in these two domains was central to my first research question. Therefore, it was important for the analysis to be traceable to the research questions in the way they had been set out within the overall guiding frame (OGF). Also, this academic/non-academic reading motif will function as a constant point of reference for the evolving ways in which the participants experienced reading across languages and modes perceived particularly through changing times. In other words, explanations about these changes will be made with or against this motif.

On the whole, the participants seemed to talk about what appeared to be the dichotomous domains of academic and non-academic reading. Non-academic reading seemed to be associated with out-of-school activities. The genres of non-academic reading material cut across fiction and non-fiction. Non-academic reading seemed to be relegated to the periphery of mainstream academic reading. This relegation seemed to be more profoundly referred to when the participants talked about their secondary school years. In the participants’ talk about their past reading choices, hints of illiteracy seemed present. This was spotted through the participants’ talk surrounding their lack of time to pursue wider reading. Early allusions to computer games were also detected in all four male participants. Interestingly, all the four female participants either did not mention games or categorically stated that they did not like playing them. Where the word ‘game’ was used amongst the female participants, it was taken to mean board games or sports. In contrast, academic reading seemed to be mostly about fulfilling requirements. The decision to read was almost exclusively about reading academic texts. Texts were often “textbooks”, “workbooks”, “reference books” and “notes”. Apart from the materiality of texts, the academic reading domain was also described in terms of school hours, tuition classes, examinations and memorisation drills. It was also clear that they
experienced forms of pressure. They had less autonomy and agency whilst at school. Their remembered experiences seem to capture the sense of them being duty-bound. Going to school and doing well were simply something they had to do. To most of the eight participants, this notion of choosing to read in one domain seemed to translate into a choice of reading academic texts over non-academic texts. In terms of boundaries then, there seemed to be a clear separation. Where the boundaries appeared more obvious, the negotiation of choice was likely to be more distinctively felt. In such circumstances, it would have been likely that the choices the participants had to make would have seemed stark. Refer to Table 5.3 for the phenomenographic overview of the participants' talk on academic and non-academic reading as school students.

Table 5.3: Academic and non-academic reading as school students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-academic reading sub-group</td>
<td>Academic reading sub-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>Out-of-school, they read fiction and non-fiction texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>Non-academic reading was an option. When not carried out, it felt like a loss for some more than for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>The boundary between academic and non-academic reading seemed clear. Choices that were made seemed stark although the loss of time and space for non-academic reading was differently negotiated across the participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As highlighted in Table 5.3, when I began to interpret the structural relationship across the participants in terms of how they were experiencing reading in any particular way (step no. 3), I noticed that there were variations. The variation seemed to come from the participants' talk surrounding how they negotiated the boundaries between academic and non-academic domains. This may have meant that despite sharing common vocabulary about what could be understood as academic and non-academic reading, the actual reading transaction could be very differently negotiated. In order to further understand this negotiation, discourse analytic
approach was used. This was to examine not just the participants’ referential but also constitutive language so as to capture possible hidden meanings.

5.1.1.2 Discourse analysis: tracing the boundaries

In research of readers and their reading experience, discourse analysis has been found to be a useful analytical method because it is a method that acknowledges what is said and how it is said (Alldred & Briod, 2005; Cliff Hodges, 2009). Of the five participants who alluded to having reduced time for wider reading, Jen’s take on this notion of reduction was selected for further analysis. This decision was made because out of the five participants’ talk, Jen’s talk revealed significant instances of very rigorous academic reading. As such, I thought that her talk may provide a useful contrast in terms of how her experience of reading academic texts differed from her wider, presumably non-academic reading. Below is an excerpt from her first interview. From this point forward, boldfaced phrases within interview excerpts indicate that they will be the focus of ensuing discussion. Refer to Appendix H for more details of transcription symbols as they relate to my analysis of the participants’ talk.

Researcher: And again, the motivation behind always talking about exams and academic was your wanting to achieve, is it?

Jen: Yeah, I wanted to know if people was as stressed as I was. I’m sure those were stressful times as well. It’s like oh god, thirteen hours, it’s like how am I gonna fit thirteen hours, you know? It’s like I only have eleven hours to do everything else including sleeping!

Researcher: And so during that time, thirteen hours of academic studying, I suppose there was no non-academic reading?

Jen: No, [Even newspapers?] Oh, newspapers, that’s my guilty pleasure in the day. [Guilty pleasure?] Ya, I remember reading, flip, flip, flip, don’t bother with all the politics and world issues, skip to section 2. Yeah, Star, I used to read the Star, like for one hour then oh shit! Read too long already, do and study and study. I don’t know why, I used to be so good at studying, you know. And sit down and study. It’s like, it’s really inconvenient that I outgrew that phase so fast.

The dialogue preceding this excerpt revolved around how Jen remembered being the odd-one-out in school because she constantly talked about academic work. In her first turn of talk in this excerpt, Jen explained that she wanted to know if others were as stressed out as she was. As foreshadowed by Jon and Nick’s earlier response to conventionally-shared notions of academic reading, Jen’s direct reference to other “people” indicated that her experience was...
also socially and culturally bound. Negotiating academic reading meant complying with external rules and conventions and nowhere was this more tangible than to have the experience compared with others. My follow-up question in the next turn of talk reflected my underlying assumption of the division in the domains. As if in compliance, Jen referred to reading the newspaper as clearly being non-academic. Not only did there appear to be a division, her use of the words “guilty pleasure” and the expletive in her language also indicated conflict. That conflict possibly arose from what she believed she had to do (i.e. conventions) with what she wanted to do (i.e. autonomy). This conflict further played out in the subtly different words she used to denote the experiences in the different domains. While she “read” the newspaper, she “did” and “studied” her academic texts. To be sure, Jen was not the only participant who used the terms “read” and “study” in her talk. However, this excerpt is arguably most illustrative of how the words were so closely juxtaposed to imply the presence of division and conflict. More importantly, this conflict flagged up where and even why the domains could conventionally be seen as receptacles of pleasurable (aesthetic) and functional (efferent) reading. At this point, I must draw attention to the last boldfaced phrase in which the word “study” was used. Jen’s allusion to how that had changed indicated that she noticed the contrast between her memories of reading in school as opposed to her more current experience of reading as an undergraduate. I will return to this motif in a later section.

In contrast, I had formed a different impression for three of the eight participants. These participants were Fong, Yen and Zee. In terms of variation, I had found that three of the participants did not necessarily appear to have experienced significant time-reduction in their non-academic reading as they progressed in their academic years. I re-examined specific portions of these three participants’ transcripts which pertained to their talk surrounding their recollections of reading whilst in school. This was so that I could work out what, if anything, seemed to set them apart. One of the three participants who seemed to have been able to remember keeping abreast with non-academic reading was Zee. At this point, I will refer to two separate portions of talk in Zee’s first interview. These portions are important because they demonstrated how her utterances could have come across as contradictory based simply on her words. Below is the first excerpt.

Researcher: Then secondary school, were there any challenges?
Zee: **Not enough time to read**, probably.

Researcher: What caused the time to be **severely diminished** in secondary school?

Zee: **It’s the, I guess the number of things that I wanted to read was a lot more.** Yeah, there were more things that I wanted to find out. And there were more things that I was involved in than in primary school. There were positions of responsibility and yeah.

To my question of what she remembered as challenges to non-academic reading whilst in secondary school, Zee’s immediate response was about the lack of time. This response if taken at face value, could have given the impression that Zee had found herself reading less non-academic material. Indeed, my use of the phrase “severely diminished” in the follow-up question is perhaps rather telling of what I may have too quickly assumed to be the conventional factor underpinning issues of aliteracy. Perhaps responding directly to the gravity of my emphasis on reduced time, Zee’s follow-up clarification provided an unexpected and interesting take to how one can alternatively view the phenomenon of diminishing time. For Zee, more than being about diminishing time, it was about the contrasting increase in the things she wanted to read and wanted to find out about. In sum, that would take more time. So while she may have had to grapple with managing her time, she had every reason to maintain her wider reading. This meant that compared to when she was in primary school, she was still, if not more, driven to read non-academic texts as a secondary school student. However, I cautiously carried out this interpretation because Zee is remembering her experience. Her slight hesitation in terms of the words “It’s the, I guess” could indicate that she may have herself just realised the inversion. This finding would have important implications for how an individual like Zee could have come across as aliterate when in fact, she was intent on reading. Therefore, her earlier use of the words “not enough time to read” can here be seen as a representation of both the stated and unstated circumstance. In this instance, it was important for the unstated circumstance to emerge in order to show up a more nuanced explanation for how Zee could have seen the academic and non-academic divide in terms of her reading choice. Her clarification that she had kept pace with her non-academic reading came up later in the same interview. The excerpt is below:

Researcher: So you said **just now** that as you go on to higher secondary **you read less of non-academic**, you had less time for reading non-academic reading, am I right?
Zee: Yeah, but I think **what I meant was** in higher secondary there was less time to get involved in debate, yeah, so I did less of the debate sort of reading, but I think I still managed to **to do all sorts of other reading**. So I started reading newspapers and all...it's a different sort of, yeah...

Researcher: **So you still kept on reading?**

Zee: Yeah.

From the boldfaced phrases within my first turn of talk, it was obvious that I had still maintained my impression of Zee as having reduced time in terms of her non-academic reading. However, I also slipped in phrases like “you said just now” and “am I right?” which appeared to perform the function of seeking clarification. In the next turn, Zee seemed to have picked up on my request and does clarify her statement. She proceeded to explain that the notion of reading non-academic texts was tied to the time she spent as a school debater. Here again, the notion of time and engagement with non-academic reading seemed to be more than a matter of quantity. Zee’s palpable memory of reduced time spent as a debater may have meant that she identified with having fewer non-academic texts. This statement alone is insufficient for laying the simple claim to a reader’s loss of time for non-academic reading. For a reader like Zee, the reduced time spent as a debater also meant available time for a pursuit of new reading sources (like newspapers). As such, any sense of reduced time in one aspect of her non-academic reading domain was possibly less compelling.

**5.1.2 Findings: tracing the boundaries**

Thus far, I have presented four consecutive accounts of analysis which utilised the analytic guiding frame (AGF) and overall guiding frame (OGF). These accounts represented how I formed initial impressions of the participants’ references to academic and non-academic reading when they were school students. The initial impression seemed to confirm the common sense notion that there would be a division between the academic and non-academic reading domains. I further pursued this line of thinking by applying phenomenographic analysis so as to identify structural connections across the participants in terms of how they experienced reading. At this point, the phenomenographic analysis was useful in flagging up what appeared to be variations or negative cases in even so small a sample set. This then led to the next level of analysis in which discourse analytic approach was used. Talk drawn from the interviews of two participants were utilised for close analysis. The findings show that on
one level, there seemed to be an acknowledgment of the academic and non-academic divide as perceived by the participants. On top of possibly sensing the division because of the \textit{a priori} design of my study which had set out to understand the division in the first place, the participants seemed to also be responding to culturally-shared symbols of what counted as academic or non-academic reading. Conventions and constraints from externally-formed structures seemed to overarch their experience. Yet on another level, the way the boundaries were negotiated and perceived could be quite contrasting. This subtle difference in how the participants experienced reading across the domains was important in highlighting how the domain boundaries can be crossed in very different ways. This finding raised the question of whether the division of academic and non-academic domains should always be presumed to be so predictably dichotomous. If these domains were continually perceived in this manner, what kinds of implications will such a division have on the way the individual transacts with the chosen material? The divergences in the analysis thus far are useful because they flag up the presence of subtle variations in the reading transaction. This points to the idea that boundaries alone cannot determine the full extent of how the reading experience occurred. The key lay in the individual reader’s experience of crossing the boundaries. Thus far, I have analysed sections of data that pertain directly to the participants’ talk surrounding what they remember about reading as school-going students. In the following section, I will discuss the category of university to further understand how the participants experienced reading as undergraduates.

5.2 Crossing the boundaries

As undergraduates, these participants can be considered to have crossed at least three significant and new boundaries. Firstly, they would have moved from a more rigid education system in school to what appeared to be a less constrained one in the university. Secondly, these participants would have also crossed the boundaries of disciplines. This was because they were no longer simply shunted into a discipline based on the rationale that outstanding grades meant becoming a science student. In principle, they could now \textit{choose} the discipline in which they would pursue their course. Finally, they would have crossed geographical and as such, linguistic and socio-cultural boundaries when they left Malaysia for their university in England.
one level, there seemed to be an acknowledgment of the academic and non-academic divide as perceived by the participants. On top of possibly sensing the division because of the *a priori* design of my study which had set out to understand the division in the first place, the participants seemed to also be responding to culturally-shared symbols of what counted as academic or non-academic reading. Conventions and constraints from externally-formed structures seemed to overarch their experience. Yet on another level, the way the boundaries were negotiated and perceived could be quite contrasting. This subtle difference in how the participants experienced reading across the domains was important in highlighting how the domain boundaries can be crossed in very different ways. This finding raised the question of whether the division of academic and non-academic domains should always be presumed to be so predictably dichotomous. If these domains were continually perceived in this manner, what kinds of implications will such a division have on the way the individual transacts with the chosen material? The divergences in the analysis thus far are useful because they flag up the presence of subtle variations in the reading transaction. This points to the idea that boundaries alone cannot determine the full extent of how the reading experience occurred. The key lay in the individual reader’s experience of crossing the boundaries. Thus far, I have analysed sections of data that pertain directly to the participants’ talk surrounding what they remember about reading as school-going students. In the following section, I will discuss the category of university to further understand how the participants experienced reading as undergraduates.

### 5.2 Crossing the boundaries

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5.2.1 Analytic process: crossing the boundaries

Unlike the ease with which I formed my initial impression of how the participants experienced their earlier reading, I found it significantly harder to form an impression of the participants’ talk about their reading experience as undergraduates. I attribute this largely to the research design. This was because by the time the participants began to talk about their reading experiences as undergraduates, it was done in the second interview. This had two implications. Firstly, my research questions began to be guided by what the participants may have said in the first interview. Therefore, the protocol necessarily became less consistent across the participant cases but more consistent within the participant case. Secondly and closely connected to the first, the protocol was also guided by how the participants had carried out their four-week diary writing. As such, my questions also revolved around what they had (or had not) written in the diary.

Because the diaries began to be significant data source, I shifted my focus towards these materials. However before proceeding any further, I must first discuss how this data set was accounted for and utilised. As a recapitulation, I will briefly outline the three main components that the diary was designed to capture. The components revolved around:

1) what the participants read
2) how much time they spent reading
3) what that experience meant to the participants.

In keeping with my research questions, the participants were expected to categorise their diary in terms of academic and non-academic reading. As I have pointed out in Chapter 3, the participants responded to the diary-writing in different ways. Pertinent to my discussion here are two somewhat interconnected aspects of the diary-writing that proved difficult to streamline. Firstly, it involved the issue of time. Not all of the participants found it easy to log the approximate number of hours they spent reading in either domains. For example Jon, the second year Engineering undergraduate only captured the electronic footprint of his reading. He had been reading heavily from Wikipedia and had modified his diary to only capture the automatic time stems and titles of the websites he accessed. It is worth noting that the automatic capture of time stems is not equivalent to the actual time spent reading by the individual. When addressed in the follow-up interviews, I discovered that Jon found it a challenge to decide into which domains his reading fell. This implied that when he could not
determine which domain the reading fell into, he would not have been able to quantify the time spent. This flagged up the second issue. Some of the participants only considered non-academic reading to actually count as reading. Because not all the participants kept their respective diaries in comparable ways, I was not able to present a systematic constant comparison analysis across the participant set. However drawing on both the participants’ diary entries and interview data, I have put together a profile of their reading diet independent of term or vacation time. To be sure, this profile represents only a small selection of what they read. Refer to Table 5.4 for the selection of titles or topics read and the reasons for reading them.

Table 5.4: Selection of titles or topics read and the reasons for reading them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>ACADEMIC READING</th>
<th>NON-ACADEMIC READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected titles</td>
<td>Reason for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>“Derivatives and Alternative Investments”</td>
<td>To prepare for Chartered Financial Analyst exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>“Fluid mechanics handout no. 5”</td>
<td>To prepare for Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>“Software Engineering and Design handout”</td>
<td>To prepare for supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>“Linear systems and control”</td>
<td>To prepare for exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>“Statistical physics”</td>
<td>To complement lecture notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>“Microeconomics”</td>
<td>To revise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>“The independence and impartiality of the judiciary – the case of Tunisia”</td>
<td>To carry our research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>“Foskett v. McKeown case”</td>
<td>To prepare for revision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the participants who did keep more consistent diaries, what showed up was how their academic reading choices seemed largely to be guided by the month(s) during the academic year. This meant that almost independent of term or vacation time, the participants
appeared to engage with heavy academic reading if they were in between the end of December and before June. Where they had term breaks, these participants would easily spend up to eight hours a day, five days a week engaging with academic-based reading. Interestingly, this was noticed across the arts and science disciplines. Where it was captured, non-academic reading appeared to take on the role of providing leisure or even escape from the academic rigour. Once again, this early impression albeit incomplete, showed up the expected divide.

5.2.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: crossing the boundaries

In this next stage of analysis, I consulted my “off-stage work grid”. Similar to the analysis of the data surrounding the participants’ reading experiences in school, principles of phenomenographic analysis within my analytic guiding frame (AGF) were also used to account for how the participants experienced reading as undergraduates. Specifically, similarities and differences were looked for in the interview and diary data sets. The iterative process of consulting my grid through phenomenological lenses helped engender some overarching thoughts. What emerged was a sketch of how similar but also separate the ways in which the undergraduates experienced reading academic and non-academic texts were.

Because my design of the participants’ diary-writing grid was done in a way that separate spaces were allocated for both academic and non-academic reading, what resulted was a division in the participants’ diaries, brought on largely by the a priori design. To an extent, this was helpful in pointing out the kinds of materials they considered most likely to be non-academic. Typically, fiction and non-fiction were present. Unlike their past experience, the distinct and constant presence of online news, magazines, general websites and articles recommended via social media were captured in their diaries. Very often, these materials were ‘perpetually’ present on their laptops. Among the reasons cited for engaging with these materials were to relieve academic stress, keep up with world issues and pursue their own interests. Depending to some extent, on which point of the year the diary was kept, the approximate time that most of the participants spent reading non-academic materials was generally low.

In terms of academic reading, the participants referred to external structures like course subjects, examinations, supervisions and deadlines. Giving ‘right’ answers was no longer so
important. Instead, thinking through any answer seemed to be valued. Although to a large extent, texts still meant "textbooks" and "reference books", the materiality distinctly expanded to include "lecture notes", "websites", "articles", recommended "links", "videos" and even "online lectures". On the whole, the sense of obligation was still very pervasive across all the participants. This meant that they were often driven to carry on with their academic reading because as undergraduates, they were duty-bound to themselves and their parents.

Despite the initial impression of division, one finding that was remarkably clear was how differently the participants continued to talk and write about their reading experience when they generally considered the academic and non-academic reading as being domain-bound. For some of the participants, the division between the domains were distinctively less stark. Lines sometimes blurred. While this did not mean that the dichotomy was entirely absent, it did mean that the participants described their reading experience in terms that were not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, the participants would talk about reading academic texts for course-based projects and further in the interview, realised that the text captured their interest in spite of being a prescribed text. Yet for others, the distinction appeared to be clear. Materials that fell into one domain almost never fell into the other. In these cases, the participants could not bear to read the academic texts beyond what was minimally necessary. This difference in the way they seemed to think about the domains may have implications for the way they thought about and negotiated their reading choice. While for some, reading in one domain may not mean it was done over another, for others, investing in one may mean contending with opportunity cost in terms of the other. As this pattern began to emerge, I pursued it and made it central to the latter part of my fieldwork. Specifically, the notion of boundary-crossing was captured. Refer to Table 5.5 for the phenomenographic overview based on the participants' talk and diaries of their academic and non-academic reading as undergraduates.
Table 5.5: Academic and non-academic reading as undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>Non-academic reading and academic reading were either indistinguishable or markedly different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>Sense of option, spare time reading, felt like a loss for some more than for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>The boundary between academic and non-academic reading seemed very clear for some and much less clear for others. There seemed to be a mitigating factor for such contrasting perceptions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the participants talked about their undergraduate reading experience independent of each other, it was important for me to examine how and why they still seemed to cleave along particular lines. Once again, as I continued to consult my “off-stage work grid” with the codes that had emerged, I detected what I called a mitigating factor. In order to further understand this factor, discourse analysis was used. This was to examine the participants’ referentially constitutive language so as to understand how and possibly why they referred to their experiences along those lines. The following sections were broadly arranged along those lines, represented specifically through and across two clusters.

5.2.1.2 Discourse analysis: crossing the boundaries (cluster 1)

In this first cluster five participants in whose talk notions of the criss-crossing of boundaries was present, were placed together. As their interview and diary data were consulted, I found that all five did refer to the academic and non-academic domains as separate entities. However, the presence of some small but telling incidents drew my attention away from the obvious. One specific example worth elaborating here was a participant’s series of diary entries. Zee, the second year law undergraduate, wrote about a particular website she spent time reading during the vacation weeks. She placed that particular diary entry into the non-
Table 5.5: Academic and non-academic reading as undergraduates

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
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<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-academic reading sub-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>Non-academic reading and academic reading were either indistinguishable or markedly different</td>
</tr>
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<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
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academic reading section of the diary. That was ‘Week 1’ of her diary. In ‘Week 4’ of her diary, the same website was referred to. This time, the reading of the same website was placed in the academic reading section of the diary. To be sure, the website offered a variety of articles at different points in time. However, for the articles to be published on this website, they would have had to share common ground. More importantly, this signalled that when read by an individual, reading materials did not necessarily fall into neat categories.

As this notion of boundary-crossing was introduced, the participants talked increasingly about the blurring of lines. Refer to Table 5.6 for a glimpse of the five participants’ impressions of boundary-crossing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Course)</th>
<th>Perspective on reading domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khong (Engineering)</td>
<td>Both (are) not mutually exclusive in a sense that I could be curious about some academic thing which actually made me read further about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon (Engineering)</td>
<td>I can’t draw venn diagrams to describe all of this (academic and non-academic reading) cause everything is a blurry blob... that’s sort of entangled together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong (Mathematics)</td>
<td>It’s fun. Like you get to understand what is it about then it sort of... link with what you’re studying then if you like the subject, then you feel very contented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee (Law)</td>
<td>And some of the non-academic reading that I do I find relates still to the academic reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen (Economics)</td>
<td>Academic is more technical whereas non-academic is more opinions, stories... Yes, (I enjoy both).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From looking at the above excerpts, I am able to draw some useful connections. Firstly, it seemed that when the domains fused, academic reading did not come across as being unnecessarily burdensome to these participants. In fact, they found academic reading to be enjoyable. When I compared their individual backgrounds, what I found in common across these five participants was their early realisations about their areas of interest. Each one of them was able to pinpoint the root of their seemingly unshakeable belief in what interested them. From the time they were in primary school, Jon and Khong had respectively found
topics about science and technology very intriguing. Fundamental logic became their way of understanding the world. They both went on to pursue Engineering in university. Fong, for whom an affinity with logic and strategy had helped her along her academic journey, was inspired by her Mathematics teacher in high school. She then forged ahead to pursue an undergraduate degree in Mathematics. Whilst in secondary school, Zee was deeply affected by a particularly high-profile judiciary crisis that afflicted the nation. For her, that was a turning point when she knew that she wanted to become a lawyer. Yen, whose mother was a central banker, remembered being fascinated by her mother’s accounts of the financial crises which rocked the nation and the world. It was only natural that she aimed to become an economist. Tellingly, all five of them applied exclusively for their selected degree. As such, their deep interest and commitment to their respective undergraduate courses in Engineering, Mathematics, Law and Economics seemed to be traceable to their school days.

It was also clear that whilst they shared a recognisable sense of passion for their undergraduate course, they represented courses across the discipline divide. This meant that regardless of whether the participant was an Arts or Science-based undergraduate, the notion of the domains being somewhat seamless seemed to be present. This is an important finding because it signalled how even very differing experiences of apprehending texts which are rooted in contrasting disciplines could still bring about similar notions. An individual could enjoy reading an engineering textbook as much another could find the latest best-selling novel pleasurable. This notion ties back with the idea of seeing reading as being about a transaction, rather than simply being determined exclusively by text or genre. In contrast with the participants’ recollection of their reading experiences whilst in school, apart from some memories of a favourite subject or two, what seemed missing from the eight participants’ accounts was a perceptible interest in the texts they transacted with. While it is arguable that the participants could have found it challenging to remember accounts from so far back as compared to their more current recollections, something as significant as deep interest or disinterest would have been hard to miss. This made the noticeable presence of interest in their university courses all the more compelling. In order to better understand this element of interest, a specific case will be examined. However, it must be acknowledged that in selecting this specific case, I necessarily left out the other four. Suffice it to say that this case was chosen because it best exemplified the participant’s reading across boundaries.
As I have pointed out above, Zee had known from early on that she wanted to become a lawyer. Unsurprisingly, as a law student her reading choices mirrored her academic interest. Predictably then, academically-determined legal texts consistently showed up across her eight-week reading diary. However, it was her reference to reading one particular text which defied ordinary conventions. That experience revolved around Zee’s experience of reading the Malaysian Federal Constitution. I first encountered the topic when it came up towards the end of her first interview. I had asked if there had been any particular text that she was reading in the manner of what is known as bedside reading.

Researcher: And do you have for example a book that you have that you must read before you sleep [(slight giggle)] or you, anything like that?

Zee: Er (hesitates) no I don’t (hesitates), but very oddly (laughs), sometimes (laughs), I like to read the Federal Constitution (laughs).

Researcher: Yeah?

Zee: Yeah.

Researcher: Because then, is that, do you enjoy reading [when I’m] that?

Zee: Mmmhh?

Researcher: You enjoy reading that, right?

Zee: Yeah.

Researcher: Right. I mean, I know you think that it might appear odd because you might think that it’s not fiction...

Zee: Yeah, it’s not fiction, [conventionally thinking] it’s not motivational or anything [right] but sometimes when I just want to get away from other things or when I’m feeling very stressed just continue reading whichever article I stopped at.

Researcher: And why does that give you pleasure? Why is that interesting to you?

Zee: Em probably reminds me why I am doing what I am doing now. Yeah, like why why am I studying law, why am I working so hard now (laughs).

The first turn in the interview represented my question about her bedside reading. I noted that Zee made an involuntary giggle immediately after the word “sleep”. In the next turn, a few other unexpected elements occurred. Her initial hesitation followed by a marked rising intonation before the word “not” followed by another hesitation indicated that she had some
difficulty saying what she next said. Zee went on to contradict her negation of the fact to, in effect, say that she did do bedside reading. She read the Malaysian Federal Constitution. She buffered that sentence with the phrase "very oddly" and more laughter. Clearly, she would not have believed what she did was odd if she had been doing it consistently. It was possible that those words were uttered in anticipation of how unusual it may have come across to me. I seemed to have picked up that notion and responded with the assumption that she might think it "odd" because it was "not fiction". My words indicated that I did have pre-conceived notions of the division (academic/non-academic vs. pleasure/function vs. fiction/not fiction) which would have made the constitutional text seem like an improbable choice. This observation was important because it revealed that despite the improbability, the Malaysian Federal Constitution still seemed to be a significant text to Zee. The improbability only emerged when one saw it as a non-academic, preferred and pleasurable text. In this light, the text had unexpectedly crossed the academic/non-academic domain boundaries. Although Zee did carry on to explain why it was important to her, I pursued that topic with her across the three interviews so as to understand how such an unlikely text could have had such a central place in her life. Essentially, I wanted to unpick the transaction motif ("poem" and "stance") (Rosenblatt, 2005) and examine that motif in terms of its empirical embodiment (reader-text-context).

In the following interview, I raised the topic once again. The following is an excerpt from Zee’s second interview.

Researcher: But again bottom line is you enjoy doing that?

Zee: Yah...(laughs) I’m such a nerd.

Researcher: No, makes me want to read it.

Zee: Yeah, you should, you really should. You can buy it at any book store in Malaysia (laughs)

This excerpt was selected because of what appeared to be the recurrence of Zee’s hesitation with regard to her enjoyment in reading the text. To my question of whether she enjoyed it, Zee’s affirmation was followed by laughter and a self-castigating “I’m such a nerd” with a verbalised emphasis on the word “nerd”. On the face of it, it could appear that Zee’s response demonstrated embarrassment. However on further inspection, the language in the excerpt
revealed something else. If Zee had felt embarrassed about her choice of text, it could be possible that it was also a co-constructed outcome within our talk. This was because, in the first turn of talk, my own use of the conjunctive “But” immediately indicated that her experience was contrary to common practice. Once again, if she were presumably reading this text by choice, she would probably not be disparaging about it. She would probably not think herself a nerd. Thus it was possible that her phrase “I’m such a nerd” could have been albeit silently, preceded by “You must think…”. When I carried on to affirm her choice to say that I too felt compelled to read it, her quick reply that I “really should” confirmed her stand. In another part of the same interview, Zee would refer to how some of her friends have been influenced by her passion for the constitution and that they too had gone to get hold of the text.

There was little doubt that Zee considered the Federal Constitution as an academic text. Her diary across five weeks captured her reading of various other nations’ constitutions which also required numerous references to the Malaysian Federal Constitution. In line with Rosenblatt’s reading stances, many of Zee’s functional dipping in and out of the Federal Constitution was her taking on a predominantly efferent stance. Yet at the same time, across the three interviews, Zee seemed to describe the text as being more than efferent. The specific language she used was very telling. She saw it as somewhat bearing “sentimental value” (interview 2), where a “sense of purpose is being hammered home” (interview 2), where she felt “like (she was) being anchored back somewhere” (interview 2) and how it “brings (her) back to where (she) think(s) (she’s) supposed to be (interview 3). Refer to Appendix I for the larger context of the interview excerpts. The terms used by Zee would be what Rosenblatt had elsewhere referred to as “private meanings” of the reading experience (2005, p. 10).

The pleasure Zee had felt from reading the text was at one and the same time conventional and unconventional. It was conventional in how “the reader draws on images and feelings and ideas stirred up by the words of the text”, how the transaction became a “lived experience” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 96). The feelings and “private meanings” drawn from Zee’s accounts of her transactions with the Federal Constitution indicated that a predominantly aesthetic stance was taken. Yet, it was unconventional in the way that there was no plot, characters, climax or dénouement within the Malaysian Federal Constitution as it is not a conventional literary text. It must be acknowledged that the absence of narrative
characteristics within the text could point to the possibility that the aesthetic stance was here, aesthetic creation. In fact, there is arguably even more aesthetic creation on the part of the reader when private meanings and emotions can be evoked from transactions with texts that are not explicitly designed with obvious aesthetic themes - indeed texts that are at the margins of otherwise mainstreamed, aesthetically-framed texts. This provided insight into the problematic and entrenched ways in which we may tend to allow the labelling of texts and genres to govern our responses. It was as if it were legitimate for Zee to say that she enjoyed reading a story book but unacceptable if the text happened to be the Federal Constitution. Her, and evidently my, initial marginalisation of the Federal Constitution belied the significant role it had in her context.

The talk and diary evidence of her experience with this text provided a unique insight into how the academic and non-academic reading domains were criss-crossed when they were embodied in and by Zee. The opportunity of being able to associate Zee’s current with past albeit selected memories of reading allowed me the scope to draw together the links. The mitigating factor of an individual’s interest for what she is apprehending in reading is critical in dissolving the boundaries. Ultimately what made Zee’s reading of the Federal Constitution stand out was the way in which she transacted with the same text through both the predominantly efferent and predominantly aesthetic stances. This not only supports Rosenblatt’s argument that the stances need not be determined by the texts, but also demonstrates that the same reader and the same text can evoke different transactions to the reading when shaped by the context. Perhaps more than that, we may need to ask if there should be such a thing as the ‘same’ reader or indeed even the ‘same’ text.

This next example demonstrated not so much the blurring of lines but how a participant’s reading experience in one domain influenced her choice of reading in the other domain. Through this example, associations across the domains were made. The example was Yen’s talk about her interest and experience in reading different texts in both domains. Yen acknowledged that although she often differentiated between the academic and non-academic reading domains, she enjoyed reading in both domains. However when making a choice, Yen’s decision pointed to an interesting outcome. The following is an excerpt from my third interview with Yen.
Researcher: How did that affect your non-academic reading? Or did that affect it?

Yen: I will still do the very, like I will still browse through when I’m taking a break so I will still do the customary ones. But I won’t do story books. No, no! (laughs)

In the dialogue preceding this, Yen had described how even during vacation weeks, she spent long hours in the library catching up on academic work. Specifically, these vacation weeks were those that led up to the final term of the year. Understandably, intensive academic reading was expected. To my question of how such intensive academic reading affected her non-academic reading, Yen explained that she would still read “customary ones” which referred to general news and magazines or websites but she “won’t do story books”. Her follow-up “No, no” indicated that there was a sense of inhibition at the thought of reading story books. Approximately four minutes later, this topic of intensity of academic reading resurfaced.

Researcher: Like why do you, at nights why do you like, ok I don’t want to do anymore reading. I must watch videos.

Yen: Oh, because by that time I would be finished with my quota of the day. Yeah, then I would just do whatever I want to do.

Researcher: So why not read a story book?

Yen: No, I’ll get hooked. It’s very dangerous.

In my second turn of talk, I pursued the question of why Yen had chosen not to read a story book when she had finished with her academic work for the day. This time, Yen used adjectives to explain why she chose not to “do story books”. The phrases “get hooked” and “very dangerous” are often associated with addiction, even if it is common to hear people getting hooked on books. However, when Yen talked about her choice of reading story books during the time of intense academic pressure, she referred to her being hooked on books in a less positive light. The metaphoric language that couched her talk denoted addiction and danger. Ironically, Yen’s deep interest and motivation to read story books were the reasons behind why she had chosen to avoid them.

5.2.1.3 Discourse analysis: crossing the boundaries (cluster 2)

In this second cluster, three participants talked and wrote about their academic and non-academic reading experience as located in clearly contrasting domains. Incidentally, these
three participants did not significantly capture their academic reading in their diaries. Despite experiencing much academic reading, they did not consider it to count as reading. This was because for them, academic reading was essentially, studying. This immediately brought my attention back to Jen, who through my close analysis of her talk, had seemed to differentiate her memory of academic and non-academic reading in school as being about studying and reading, respectively. Perhaps not coincidentally, Jen was one of the three here. Refer to Table 5.7 for a glimpse of the participants’ impressions of clear domains.

Table 5.7: Participants’ impressions of clear domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Course)</th>
<th>Perspective on reading domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jen (Engineering)</td>
<td>Studying, yes, I hate it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack (Engineering)</td>
<td>No, I never was really interested in engineering. Yeah. So I guess I never was really that motivated to read any of the engineering related material. So it was more of a chore...it was something I had to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick (Law)</td>
<td>I guess because we do enough (academic reading) during term time. I couldn’t be bothered (during vacation time).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These impressions came across very differently from those of cluster 1. Here, academic reading appeared to be burdensome, even hated. It was something that the individual can only take up to a certain measure. It also appeared that the boundaries could be externally imposed such that when lectures were on hold, the academic reading could possibly be tucked away. When I examined their backgrounds and history, they had not talked about having a clear sense of knowing what they may have wanted to pursue in the university. On the contrary, they talked about other disciplines that they were or had been interested in. Jen was doubtful if she wanted to carry on with her Engineering course as she found herself constantly thinking about pursuing music or journalism instead. She referred to at least two people, one of whom is her father, who expressed doubt that engineering really suited her. Jack, who was in his final year, had no doubt that he did not want to become an engineer. On top of managing his academic work (and doing significantly well), he was then, also studying for an external professional examination in order to qualify as a chartered financial analyst. Nick also found himself interested in various disciplines. It was particularly telling that he had
applied for Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Medicine and Law for his university application. He was offered Law. In stark contrast with those in cluster 1, Jen, Jack and Nick could not claim to have genuine interest in their course. How would such an element play out in these undergraduates’ reading experience? More than that, how would this impact on their reading choices? In order to answer these questions, both Jen and Nick’s cases were further examined.

In terms of reading, Jen’s accounts had come across to me as being the most extreme amongst the eight participants. In her interview about her past experience, she had talked candidly about her love of reading. Not only did her repertoire appear wide, she seemed to have invested a large amount of time on this activity. One illustration of this was how whilst in her teens, she had re-read the sixth book in the Harry Potter series, up to fifty times. On the other hand, she had also spent many hours engaging with school work and academic texts. Perhaps among the eight, Jen came across as the only one who seemed to like school work. This was particularly tied to her deep sense of achievement and ambition. It is important for me to have provided this vignette because of how it contrasted so starkly with her references to reading as an undergraduate. In her first interview, Jen had referred to her deep disinterest in her undergraduate course. At that point she was at the end of her first year. This issue inadvertently came up during the second interview. By that time of that interview, she had become a second year undergraduate.

Not surprisingly, Jen talked about her academic workload in very functional terms. She used phrases like “fill in equations”, “working through”, “very methodical”, “skim through”, “help with supervision” and “do example sheets”. The following is an excerpt from my second interview with Jen.

Jen: But my lecture notes are just dry equations.

Researcher: Are they wordy?

P: It’s mostly concise and then I just fill in equations and derivations and stuff like that. I don’t even consider those reading. It’s just working through.

Researcher: Some people don’t consider it reading but I do.

P: Oh, ok. Yeah, so it’s mostly very methodical kind of stuff that I read on a daily basis. The only say more wordy stuff is when in this course that I have called
introduction to Chemical Engineering. Then we are usually given sort of like supplementary handouts where they talk about an ethylene plant, they talk about safety processes, safety procedures on an oil rig, say, then those are just like small excerpts from magazines that they photostat and then they just give us. So...

Researcher: So it can be quite descriptive as well?

P: It is but it’s just (makes sighing noise) one of those lecture notes so I just **skim through**, stuff like that.

Researcher: Are you interested when you read those?

P: Probably during the winter break I will be cause it doesn’t **help me now with my supervision** questions so I don’t bother with them.

Researcher: So it’s a matter of like relevance as well?

P: Ya, so basically to sum it up, my reading now is enough to **do my example sheets**. That’s it.

Most of the phrases begin with verbs. This probably reflected the way in which academic reading came across to Jen. It was something which needed **doing**. This notion is in itself not unusual as the other participants had also referred to academic reading as being about doing or fulfilling requirements. However, for Jen, the contrast between ‘work’ reading and ‘leisure’ reading was very sharp and it was obvious that the once-ardent reader, now, found academic reading to be arduous. At one point in the interview, I asked for the kinds of reading she did when she was not attending lectures. She then talked about her reading of *The Casual Vacancy* by J. K. Rowling which according to an entry in her reading diary, she found to be wanting. When followed up in the interview Jen explained.

Jen: Cause it’s like firstly if it has to be really really amazing, if not I don’t feel it’s **worth my time**. It’s like for that time that I spend reading it, it’s just enough to put me to sleep.

Researcher: **If you were more interested then probably you won’t fall asleep?**

Jen: Yeah, I wouldn’t. like because maybe I haven’t been getting the right books also. Like last time there used to be something. Like if there was Dan Brown’s, one of Dan Brown’s books, those are suspense and it’s engaging and it always makes you wonder what’s going to happen next and he always puts a twist at the end of the chapter, you still always want it, and it, it’s a smart book as well. So but I haven’t been able to find books like that. So that’s why...
Researcher: So in a sense, only because so happen you’re not able to find those books, but otherwise were you able to find those kinds of books, you...

Jen: I would probably read more, yeah. And also because it’s like then I feel if it’s a chore to read and I still have to do so much of the same kind of activity as in Facebook’s and actually read and digest stuff I will, I would much rather like, save my stamina for the academic stuff that I have to do.

Researcher: Has it always been such a calculated affair?

Jen: No, that’s why I’m so kiam siap now I come to university.

In her first turn of talk, Jen used the term “worth” to explain how a reading choice would merit her decision and action. In the next turn of talk, I associated her reference to “worth” as being about “interest”. Jen picked up my reference to the notion of interest and talked about Dan Brown’s books but returned to the notion of worth. By her third turn of talk, Jen described how because reading in one domain was such a “chore”, it felt like it required “stamina” (note the recurrent notion of “doing”). The division between the academic and non-academic domains seemed clear when notions of consumption in one domain meant notions of depletion in the other. Thus, more than being about interest, Jen’s reading choices seemed to be about investments and rates of return. If Jen’s descriptive language revolved around the notion of ‘doing’ when it came to academic reading, then her language of description when it came to non-academic reading revolved around ‘calculating’. Probably picking up on that nuanced description, in my next turn of talk I asked if reading had always been a “calculated affair”. In describing her actions, Jen used the Chinese Hokkien dialect term transliterated as “kiam siap” or 守財奴 in translated Mandarin. Interestingly, as either a noun or a verb, this Hokkien term and its Mandarin counterpart refer to a miser or being miserly. Therefore, to be “kiam siap” or 守財奴 is to be calculative in the monetary and economic sense. Jen may have crossed language boundaries but her reference to her Scrooge-like behaviour offered continued evidence to her earlier references surrounding investments and rates of return. Her non-academic reading choices became increasingly underpinned by principles of economy. For Jen, the lack of pleasure combined with the depth of pressure of academic reading may have altered her expectations when it came to non-academic reading. Pleasure and satiation became almost sacrosanct. It had to be worth everything or it will be worth nothing.
While Jen’s case represented an individual with deep disinterest in her course, Nick’s case took on a slightly different trajectory. As I had earlier pointed out, Nick had not been sure about his area of interest when he applied into university. Yet, across the three interviews, when Nick did talk about his course, he seemed to exhibit interest. So in contrast with Jen, Nick was not disinterested in his course. Still, he talked about the academic and non-academic domains in a way that seemed to require separation. In Nick’s words, “the last thing you want to do when you take a break is to do more of what you’re taking a break from”. This separation seemed marked by a sense of sufficiency. In the second interview, Nick talked more about this separation in terms of interest.

Nick: ...I mean academic reading is, it’s work. And you know one has to do his work. Otherwise you get kicked out and stuff. And then, and also I like my work. But yeah, it’s work. I see it as work. I don’t see it as reading as such. When I say reading as such, I think of it as ‘This is interesting. I pick it up. This is interesting. I click with it’.

I will analyse the first three sentences of the excerpt above. Here, Nick described academic reading as work. When he did so, he switched from the use of first person pronoun “I”, to third and second person pronouns “one”, “his” and “you”, respectively. This switch was an interesting one because it appeared to relate to what he was describing. His change in pronouns could signal that the kind of work that he sometimes had to do was ‘situated’ away from him; in other words, that work did not ‘belong’ to him. In the remaining excerpt, when he talked about the work he liked and the reading he would “pick up” and “click with”, Nick reverted to using the first person pronoun “I”. This form of academic and non-academic reading was situated somewhat nearer to him. As such, it appeared to ‘belong’ to him. At that point, I sought clarification for how he found academic reading to be distant and interesting at the same time.

Researcher: Isn’t work interesting as well?

Nick: It is but the, the reason I’m doing it is not because it’s interesting. I happen to find it interesting. But I’m doing it because it’s work.

Researcher: Mmm so the root of doing academic reading isn’t because it’s interesting.

Nick: Yeah. It’s not triggered by the fact that it’s interesting. Even if it’s not interesting, I’d do it anyway. Whereas with normal reading it it’s boring I’d stop reading the book. Or like you know, I will like close the article halfway.
Researcher: So it's like if it's academic reading, it's, it seems like it's not your choice.

Nick: No

My question in the first turn of talk reflected my assumption that when an individual found academic reading interesting or even enjoyable, boundaries would dissolve. Nick then clarified that while he may find his work interesting, it was not related to why he was doing it. The interest was merely coincidental. As such, this coincidental interest did not underpin his reading choice. He then inverted the situation and contrasted it with other situations where his reading choice was driven by interest. In those situations, he had the choice to stop reading. Nick's clarification provided another way of understanding interest and choice. Academic reading, although enjoyable, was not entirely Nick's choice.

5.2.2 Findings: crossing the boundaries

When actual readers were tracked for a period of time, it became clear that their reading experiences were empirically very complex and often, even seemingly random. Rosenblatt's (1978) theoretical explanation of how the efferent and aesthetic stances are situated along a continuum provided a useful way to map the complexities. In the context of this study, these undergraduates were exposed to and were experiencing forms of pressure with regard to their reading experience. In line with the acknowledgement that the reading experience is an organic intertwine of complex reader-text transactions, I chose to further understand the role of pressure by examining the various ways in which it associated with the reader's reading choices and how their aesthetic-efferent reading stances played a role.

Significant also to my study is Rosenblatt's call to be mindful of "pressures" and "tensions" that may surround the reader.

Recognizing that each reading is an event in time, we cannot limit ourselves to study of reader and text. We must take into account the context, the pressures to which the reader may be subjected and the social tensions that may affect the character of the transaction (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 45, emphasis my own).

Indeed, it is important to recognise how the character of the transaction changes when pressure and tension are present. While the element of pressure is not new to us, attempts at understanding how it plays a role in shaping reading choices and reading experiences are not
often explored (Walczyk, Kelly, Meche, & Braud, 1999). At the same time, the way in which pressure is managed may have important associations with how motivation for reading continues to fluctuate.

The findings thus far were built on the code-category and later, conception development. The findings drawn from data of the participants’ reading experience as undergraduates seemed to cleave along two lines. As seen in the preceding sections through the discourse analysis of both clusters 1 and 2, two conceptions emerged. These two conceptions were differentiated based on the boundaries of the academic and non-academic reading domains and how these domains were crossed as traced across the eight participants. Refer to Figure 5.2 for an illustration of the code-category-conception development of RQ1.

**Figure 5.2: Code-category-conception development of RQ1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CONCEPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The reading domains</td>
<td>Academic reading</td>
<td>Primary/Secondary School</td>
<td>Domain-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-academic reading</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Domain-contingent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first conception represented those who often found the academic and non-academic reading domains to be indistinguishable. I named this conception ‘domain-free’. For the participants that clustered in the domain-free conception, academic and non-academic boundaries that seemed blurred at many points ceased to become significant. When lines blurred, ‘crossing’ from one domain and into another also appeared less significant. This had important implications for the way these participants understood reading choice. This was because when the domains did not appear significantly separated, the readers did not need to feel that they were choosing one over another. Ironically then, the reading choice also ceased to feel like a choice. This had further implications on the way we understand reading for pleasure and reading for function. As boundaries blur, the reading transaction could be seen as being less entrenched in externally-imposed boundaries (genres, domains) and more as
being embodied (reader-text-context). The undergraduates clustered in the domain-free conception have shown how pleasure from reading can be experienced in myriad of shapes and forms and to underrepresent these forms will be to negate a potential source of positive choices.

At the opposing end, the second area represented the conception that stood for those who saw little or no crossovers between their academic and non-academic reading. This conception was named ‘domain-contingent’ conception. The participants who clustered in this conception demonstrated what appeared to be conventional and distinct markers of efferent and aesthetic reading. When the atomistic portions of their reading choices were broken down, the simple economic model emerged. This meant that a decision to engage in a text in one domain engendered a clear classification of deficit/sacrifice or even of advantage/returns in another domain. This economic model revolved around gains and losses, around how choice in one domain was made contingent upon how the other domain presented itself. As such, the reading choice appeared to be highly-complex and unstable.

The clear presence of the interest factor detected in some of the participants’ undergraduate reading experience brought to bear a fresh perspective on the question of reading choice. Although it was unsurprising that the reading domains were largely oriented by the participants’ sense of how interested they were in the course they were pursuing, this finding flagged up the point that course interest that is intrinsically-bound can be powerful enough to propel the undergraduate’s reading experience. On the other hand, course interest that is extrinsically-imposed can differently, and sometimes negatively, shape the reading experience. What this demonstrated was that all considerations that are made about undergraduates’ motivation for reading must account for something as fundamental as their freedom and agency in their choice of university course. If undergraduates appear to choose not to read despite being highly literate, their negotiations of reading across domains must be examined. This is because it has a critical impact on the character of their reading experience. These findings compel us to better understand the continuum of academic and non-academic reading because pleasure and pressure in one domain (academic/ professional) may critically shape satiation and hunger in another (non-academic/ personal) (Wigfield, 1997; Wigfield, et al., 2004). Because curricular reading appeals differently to different individuals; “students need to learn to develop a guiding principle for choice at a point on the (aesthetic-efferent)
continuum appropriate to the situation and their purpose" (Rosenblatt, 2005). Perhaps then, research in motivation for reading would benefit from an understanding that the motivation is in essence, a situational one.

5.3 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my analysis and findings with regard to my first research question. I have tried to show that situational motivation serves to remind us that motivation to read is in flux and that the complexities within the reader’s context are powerful threads which can stretch, strain and shape the reading choice. In the following chapter, I will discuss my analysis and findings with regard to my second research question.
CHAPTER 6: MULTILINGUAL READERS IN CONTEXT

6.1 Multilingual readers: a background

The multilingual context is not a modern phenomenon. Thus, the challenge of a multiliterate reader making a decision to engage in texts of various languages is one that has been ongoing from the time writing became an integral part of human history. As I have pointed out at the start of my thesis, Dante was known to have defended the community’s vernacular language as opposed to “learned” or “artificial” language as the ideal language for the community to engage with reading (Manguel, 1996). Dante’s defence does less to highlight the rightful place of a vernacular language than it does to point out the on-going decision-making that an individual multiliterate reader has to make.

In a multilingual context like Malaysia’s, the discussion of reading motivation levels has to be carefully negotiated and understood. This is because for individuals who are literate in more than one language, their motivation for reading would arguably vary across the different languages. The issue of reading motivation amongst those who are functionally literate in two or more languages is a complex one because how reading is experienced via one language may impact, alter and even co-construct the reading experience in another. This chapter revolves around this complexity that is the multilingual reading experience. As such, an analysis of a multilingual reader’s past language learning experience together with how they make reading choices across the languages may illuminate possible connections. Specifically, I will try to answer the second research question which is: “How does the multilingual undergraduate experience reading in a largely monolingual context?”

Because the analysis in this chapter will necessarily revolve around the participants’ past academic and non-academic reading as school students and more currently as undergraduates, I must, at least, ground the findings from the previous chapter into this chapter. In the previous chapter, the analysis of and discussion surrounding the participants’ reading experience was carried out with the aim to understand the participants’ negotiations within the academic and non-academic reading domains. Although language necessarily played both overt and covert roles in shaping their experience, I deliberately separated that element out from the analysis and discussion in the previous chapter. This was done because it was in keeping with the way the research questions were formed so that the rationale for the analysis
would continue to be guided by the overall guiding frame (OGF). However, this was not to say that language was unacknowledged. It was acknowledged to the extent that it was assumed to be a medium through which the participants’ academic and non-academic reading occurred. As a result, this may have created the impression that these participants functioned only in one language. In effect however, the participants were multilingual and multilingually literate. This chapter sets out to address this triadic aspect of reading, reading choice and language.

In relation to this topic of reading and language, the first interview was dedicated to talk surrounding the participants’ recollections of their language learning experience through primary and secondary school in Malaysia. Intertwined with the recollections of their general language learning experience across the four language skills (viz. reading, writing, speaking and listening) were the participants’ specific recollections of their reading experience across the languages. Because the participants were asked about their language learning experiences through school, their recollections would have necessarily reflected the academic and non-academic linguistic backdrop in the Malaysian context. In the second and third interviews, the talk became more about their current reading experience as undergraduates in a British university and the reading choices they made against a different linguistic backdrop in England. In essence, it was assumed that they had experienced the crossing of language boundaries.

In the following sections, data for the analysis were drawn exclusively from the interviews with the participants. This meant that data from the participants’ diary writing were not included here. This was because the scope of the analysis was limited to the participants’ talk about their reading choice with regard to their language learning experience in the past. As the transcripts were read and re-read, three general themes emerged. These themes were initially coded into three free codes. First to take shape was a code that captured the participants’ accounts of their general language learning experience across the languages. This code was named ‘language learning experience’. Because language learning was an experience that would have occurred more significantly in the earlier years of education, most of the talk surrounding this theme was situated in the participants’ recollections of their primary school years. Second to take shape was the participants’ talk about their literary learning experience. This refers to the literature component that is embedded within the
language subjects. Within the scope of this thesis, the element of literary learning was considered to be significant because to an extent, it stood for the intertwining notion of reading for pleasure and from pressure. This second code was named ‘English/Malay/Chinese literature’. A third code captured the participants’ accounts of reading specifically through the different languages they were literate in, both in the past and more currently. This code was called ‘reading in different languages’.

Data that was drawn from the participants’ first interviews were useful in providing a language profile of national and vernacular school-going Malaysians between the years of 1996 – 2003. Particularly, this set of school-going Malaysians was unique in how they experienced academic learning through at least two languages in their secondary education when they were taught Mathematics and Science in English whilst every other subject was taught in Malay. Apart from the languages they used in school, the participants also talked about the languages they used at home with their family. This inevitably meant that they also referred to their main language of literacy at home. For many of them, that main language was not necessarily their mother tongue. In this thesis, I adopt the term ‘first language’ to denote the participants’ main language of literacy or the language they were most comfortable in reading. It must be noted that this ‘first language’ may or may not be the same as their mother tongues. As such, all eight participants represented bi-and multilingual literacy. Refer to Table 6.1 for an overview of the participants’ language profile.

In putting together this language profile, I had to raise the question of what it meant for these participants to be able to function in multiple languages. The initial impression that I drew from the participants bore what appeared to be the participants’ sense of nonchalance. This nonchalance showed up when the participants say that they are “embarrassingly” biliterate, “only” trilingual or that they are able to read and write in “just” three languages whilst able to speak in three formal languages and several dialects. This was possibly because by the time they are young adults, many who are multilingual possess the ability to seamlessly shift from being literate and functional in one language to another.
Table 6.1: Overview of participants’ language profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION</th>
<th>FIRST LANGUAGE</th>
<th>LANGUAGE ABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay &amp; English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, this ease belied their initial effort in learning to read and write in two or three languages because becoming bi-or triliterate would have meant that differing languages had to be introduced to them, often simultaneously but in parallel. It was likely that while they were beginning to grasp the mechanics behind being literate in English, they also had to grapple with learning to be literate in Malay and/or Mandarin. In a philological sense, these three languages share little. Dehaene for example considers Malay as a transparent language, while English is translucent and Mandarin is opaque (2009). Seen through ‘western’ eyes, Purcell (1936) was known to have described the Chinese language and its literature to be altogether a different beast.

If the western reader expects to find anything in Chinese corresponding to the western imagination, he will be disappointed. Chinese literature is of an entirely different inspiration, of a different tempo of existence, and he who would live in it in the real sense must be willing to die and be born anew (p. 14).

Thus, learning to read and write in these languages would have required very different skills and language awareness. It was on the back of this juxtaposition between what appeared to be
the participants’ seeming ease with being bi-or multilingual and the acknowledgment of how differently the languages presented themselves that I took the analysis further. Seen as an on-going process, an individual’s current reading experience is not entirely separate from effects of past reading experience. They are connected. Such connections are arguably important when they are framed within conceptions of language learning and reading choices. As suggested by Rosenblatt, “(p)ast experience with language and with texts provides expectations” to an individual (2005, p. 8). Indeed if Rosenblatt’s assumption is tenable, then these research participants who have experienced a variety of learning and text negotiations within their multilingual learning contexts may embody these connections. As such, I went on to piece together the participants’ talk about their language learning experience whilst in primary and secondary school as well as their more current reading choices across languages and as undergraduates.

6.1.1 Analytic process: multilingual readers

The data within the three codes were analysed using my “off-stage work grid". Again, this meant that an iterative process involving an analysis of the raw data as guided by my analytic guiding frame (AFG) together with how the data corresponded with the concerns in my overall guiding frame (OGF) was carried out. Because one of the main concerns of my study was how the multilingual undergraduate read in a largely monolingual context, I found it important to first explore the undergraduates’ recollections of the period when they were learning to be multilingually literate. As I have pointed out in Chapter 2, it is possible that, nuanced though it may be, a multilingual’s literate experience would be different from a monolingual’s literate experience. One way of getting a sense of the participants’ experience is through an examination of the words they used in their talk. Employing the query function in the QSR Nvivo software, I ran a word frequency count on the codes of ‘language learning experience’, ‘English/Malay/Chinese literature’ and ‘reading in different languages’. To be sure, this first word frequency count was carried out only on the three afore-mentioned codes. This meant that at this point, the word frequency count was not carried out on all the interview transcripts. The query function in the software identifies the occurrence of words from the highest to the lowest frequencies. I set the query to call up words that were the length of two or more letter characters. This meant that words like “I” and “a” were not included in the search. I set the query on its default number to search for the top 1000 words.
Refer to Table 6.2 for a list of the top ten (minimally two-lettered) words that occurred with the highest frequency and in descending order.

Table 6.2: Top ten words that occurred with highest frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of frequency</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>1013</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>like</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>because</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>don't</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>yeah (yes)</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noteworthy here was how in among the top ten most frequently said words, “English”, “Chinese” and “Malay” were found to have appeared. “English” was the fourth most frequently said word while “Chinese” came in sixth and “Malay”, ninth. A run-through the context (via the transcriptions) surrounding these three words showed that they were largely used in reference to notions of language (vis-à-vis reading, writing, speaking, understanding and schooling). This meant that the words were not used out of context. As a method of cross-checking, the same frequency query was also carried out across all 23 full interviews. Here, the same descending order was also detected with “English” at 57th, “Chinese” at 73rd and Malay at 98th. On the face of it, the emergence of these three words within the topic area
of language learning experience is hardly surprising. This is because in their talk, the participants would have been discussing their language learning experience in the past. Curiously however, although the words “English”, “Chinese” and “Malay” were obviously in reference to their meaning as languages and not for example as citizenship, nationality or culture, the frequencies of the words “language” or “languages” were not as high. Across the three codes, the word “language” was 31st in the word order while the word “languages” was 67th. Another cross-check search was done across all 23 full interviews and again, the same pattern was detected. The words “language” and “languages” appeared significantly lower in the order at 170th and 349th respectively. Refer to Table 6.3 for a comparison of the frequency position of the five words across the three codes as well as across the total interviews.

Table 6.3: Comparison of frequency positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY POSITION (In three codes)</th>
<th>FREQUENCY POSITION (In total interviews)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>57th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>73rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>98th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>31st</td>
<td>170th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>67th</td>
<td>349th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analysed from a discourse analytic sense, the fact that the specific proper nouns of the three languages occurred in high frequencies while its common noun referents occurred in significantly lower frequencies could provide an insight into how the participants experienced multilingual reading. For these participants, the experiencing of language was not rooted in the generic sense of any or all languages. Instead, it could have been rooted in the sense of the specificity of language(s). It is possible that learning to read was firstly about learning to read in the various specificities of languages. If learning that language was challenging, then reading in that language would have been challenging in a specific way. Even if unsaid or unrealised, reading in one out of many languages necessarily presupposes making a language
choice. Therefore for the multilingual, the sense of, what I call, language-ness could bear more heavily than it may otherwise for the monolingual. To be sure however, this analysis was not made in direct contrast to a monolingual's talk about language learning as that was not part of the research design. While that research question could be investigated at another time, this current finding raises questions about what implications language-ness could have on a multilingual's reading choice. Pursuing this, I returned to the data and saw how the data began to cleave along two lines. Those two lines were associated with bilingual reading and trilingual reading. As such, the three codes were streamlined along the voices of those who were bi-and trilingually literate respectively. This dichotomy formed overarching categories. Refer to Figure 6.1 for an illustration of the overall code and category connection of my second research question (RQ2).

Figure 6.1: Multilititerate reader code and category connection

![Diagram of code and category connection](image)

There appeared to be a distinction in the language learning experience between those who were bilingually literate and those who were trilingually literate. Seeing as how the data cleaved along these lines, I went further to apply phenomenographic analysis on the data.

6.1.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: multilingual readers

Out of the eight participants, two were bilingually literate and the remaining six were trilingually literate. This meant that the division between the bilingually and trilingually literate was to an extent pre-determined based on the participants' respective educational
backgrounds. As phenomenographic analysis was applied to account for the similarities and differences recounted by the participants, the “off-stage work grid” was referred to. Specifically, the participants’ talk about their language(s) and literary learning experience was examined in the frame of bi-and multilingual reading. This frame took into account the participants’ language proficiency as recognised across national examinations as well as their recollections of how challenging their language learning experience had appeared to them. Based on the accounts of their academic results across at least three major national examinations, it was clear that all the eight participants were highly proficient in the languages they were schooled. As such, they could be considered to have advanced proficiency in the languages. However, having advanced proficiency in the languages did not necessarily nor equally engender favourable notions from these multilingual readers about the languages they were literate in. If anything, languages became more profoundly distinctive. Although my sample was small, there appeared to be a perceptible difference between how the bilingual and trilingually literate talked about the distinctions. While not effortless, the two bilingual readers did not appear to remember insurmountable challenges in learning English and Malay. On the other hand, the other six who were trilingual readers talked about significant difficulties. Refer to Table 6.4 for an illustration of the application of phenomenographic analysis in terms of the bi-and trilingual readers.

Table 6.4: Application of phenomenographic analysis (bi-and trilingual readers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bilingual reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>Highly proficient in reading and writing in English and Malay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>Being literate in both languages required effort. Participants did not remember insurmountable challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>It appeared that while wider linguistic access affords wider access to literacy, the negotiations that accompany the language learning experience may bear heavily on the learner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the whole, it appeared that unsurprisingly, wider linguistic access will afford wider access to being literate and experiencing literacy. More importantly however, this raises the question of how the negotiations of multiple languages may bear on the multilingual reader’s reading choice. At this point, it was important to examine the complexities underpinning the bilingual and trilingually literate participants’ references about how they made sense of the language distinctions.

6.1.1.2 Discourse analysis: becoming bilingual

Jen, the Engineering undergraduate and Nick the Law undergraduate were the only two bilingually literate participants. While Nick was able to speak in two languages, Jen was also able to speak in and understand a third language. For both of them, English appeared to be their first language in the sense that they were most comfortable in it. Refer to Table 6.5 for examples of Jen’s and Nick’s opinions about being bilingually literate.

Table 6.5: Jen’s and Nick’s opinions about being bilingually literate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Perspective on language learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>English is the language I’m most comfortable in. … language to me it’s more of, if I don’t use it to communicate, then I want to be able to appreciate its aesthetics. And that was my case with Malay last time. I liked the traditional proses and stuff like that. I found that that was quite pretty, pretty language (Interview 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>…the thing is that she will teach, she would write in Malay for instance and we would talk about about things, but then she would explain it in English because she could explain it better that way. Sometimes she would interchange. Like most of us I guess were very comfortable with English. And it wasn’t problematic for me (Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To an extent, the glimpses in the table above reflect a certain ease about the bilinguals’ grasp and negotiation of both English and Malay. Both Jen and Nick scored distinctions in their language subjects across all the national examinations. Such ease is not uncommon among those who are bilingually literate. Although Jen and Nick did not refer to major challenges in their language learning experience, they did refer to how they negotiated some aspects of language learning. At this point, I will examine Jen’s selected talk about what she remembered about composition writing in the Malay language subject while in secondary school.
Jen: I read the *karangan* and I took a look at all three then I know that oh, this is one is stuff that even I can write. Then I won’t bother. This one like oh, got words I don’t understand. Buy! Yeah, so I really like I really liked it.

Researcher: Did you enjoy those times when let’s say you were preparing for the *karangan*?

Jen: Actually coming to think about it, I did because there was always a form of expressing what I thought. Despite, you know, your generic answers, like *remaja* or *punca*, why *remaja lari dari rumah*, self-pressure, family pressure, boyfriend, influence of the media, can still remember, all the [Researcher: *faktor-faktor*?], yeah, *faktor-faktor, punca langkah*, your standard and then throw in at least like two *peribahasa* every, every paragraph and you most likely score high. So then after a while, I got bored using the same old *peribahasa* so then you, you just hungry, just look for more, look for more, and each time I can I can find an opportunity to use it or to write about an or about a new topic and you use new words and because you, inherently you use, surely you would have an opinion about something also. So it’s just really nice that you get to write your opinion and let other people, just let the teacher mark what you think.

Despite English being her first language and speaking almost entirely in English across the interviews, Jen used the Malay term *karangan* to refer to Malay compositional reading and writing. Jen used this Malay referent at several points across the interviews. Picking up from Jen, I continued the conversation thread and similarly used the term *karangan*. Jen carried on talking about the compositional topics for the Malay language subject. Again, she switched to Malay and used words like *remaja* (adolescents), *punca* (causation), *remaja lari dari rumah* (adolescents who run away from home), *punca langkah* (causation steps) and *peribahasa* (proverbs) to talk about the topics and composition points. From predictable essay topics to stock proverbs, these terms stand for the overt content matter that made up much of Jen’s language learning experience. Jen’s specific language shift pointed not to any limitation in her English language vocabulary but rather, to how she remembered her Malay language learning experience especially in terms of compositional topics and writing strategies. Interestingly in the midst of her description, I interjected and used the word *faktor-faktor* (factors). Jen followed on and also used the same term. Being a borrowed word, this Malay term differed only minimally from its English term by a single orthographic shift (with the ‘k’ replacing the ‘c’) as well as word repetition which, in Malay grammar, functions to denote plurality. Despite their close orthographic appearance, our use of the English word ‘factor’ would not have been the same as the Malay word *faktor-faktor*. This is because in this context, the Malay term *faktor-faktor* was tied to the compositional reading and writing.
strategies through which students learnt to be literate in Malay. As such, both my and Jen’s choice of using the Malay word faktor-faktor over the English word ‘factor’ was important in suggesting that language is fundamentally experienced and possibly even remembered in its specificity.

The above excerpt was also useful in providing a glimpse into how Jen handled the language subjects. The word “standard” meant “classic” while the figurative “throw in” was indicative of a casual yet necessary manoeuvre in compositional writing. From her account, there seemed to be a formulaic and functional way in which she would write her composition. For Jen, the aim appeared to be to do well and “score high”. As can be seen in the following excerpt, this preoccupation with grades and “scoring high” was noticed to have continued in Jen’s talk. At this point, from her recollection about Malay composition writing, Jen went on to talk about composition writing in her English language subject.

Jen: …when I was in Form 5, we got a different teacher. He hates all the first class students because he thinks we’re very arrogant. So, he marked us very very strictly for our essays and I’ve never scored so bad in an essay before and I realised that then he, I approached him. I asked him why am I scoring so badly. He said because you’re just giving me facts. You’re not showing me what, what you can write. Or how good your English is. So then, so then I started reading English essays, like not for SPM because SPM, English SPM is crap! I think he recommended some of those higher level English essays, I think for STPM something like that or A-levels, something like that…. So that was when I started reading like, if every two days I read Malay karangan, then one day English karangan, two days, one day…. I loved the English one because my teacher told me if you describe the factual essay you will never score higher than 40. I realised that the more of my emotions I put into my writing, the better I used to score. … oh I never scored so high in my entire life. I got a 49 out of 50! Waah! So happy!

If the previous excerpt showed how Jen associated Malay compositional writing with Malay terminology, the above excerpt demonstrated the contrast in how Jen talked about compositional reading and writing in the English language subject. In large part, Jen used the word “essay” to refer to English composition. Except for one occasion where she used the Malay word karangan to refer to the English composition, it seemed clear that “essay”-writing was reserved for the English language subject whilst “karangan” was for the Malay

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3 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (“Malaysian Certificate of Education” – national examination equivalent to O-Levels)
4 Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (“Malaysian Higher School Certificate” – national examination equivalent to A-Levels)
language subject. The Malay karangan was distinct from the English essay. The languages which were learnt simultaneously in school were not only experienced differently, but distinctively. However for Jen, both the language subjects were valued for how they could become a platform for her to demonstrate her language ability and “show how good (her) English is”. Whilst Malay and English language were both mediums through which Jen learnt other subjects in school, these two languages were also subjects in and of themselves. Thus, Jen read Malay and English and in the Malay language and English language.

Another feature of language learning in Malaysian schools is the inclusion of the literature component. Literature components in Malaysian schools are designed as language learning tools. Hence, these components are embedded within the various language subjects. This means that allocation of time and attention on the literary side of the subject has to be shared out with the larger aims of language learning. Even if reading for pleasure was originally thought to be one of its aims, the literature components have been known to be highly prescriptive and rigid. It is not uncommon to hear students expressing disinterest in the components. Both these characteristics of language-ness and functionality of language were also identified in Nick’s talk. The following excerpt was from Nick’s first interview.

Researcher: With regards to your non-academic reading, did you read books in different languages apart from English?

Nick: No.

Researcher: Not at all?

Nick: No. Malay, the only Malay reading I did was yeah, if I read any Malay literature it would be for like, exams. Like the, within the syllabus, maybe like ok, read this novel [for the Sastera Melayu?] Yeah, Sastera Melayu. Even then I think it at Form 3 I didn’t read the novel (laughs).

Researcher: So how did you...

Nick: I read I read the book, you know the study guide like ok, this is [Cliff Notes?] The Cliff Notes! Yes, I read the Cliff Notes! What a joke, man! (laughter). I read the Cliff Notes! So this is the tema, this is the issues, [characters?] persoalan, don’t know if you remember it [What was that?] Persoalan. There’ll be like, the issues, persoalan. Yeah the character, watak, ok, the favourite watak, they have like...

Unlike Jen, Nick’s talk did not seem to reflect much recollection of pleasure in his language learning. However like Jen, Nick also switched into Malay terminology when he recalled
some aspects of having to learn the literary elements of Malay literature (*Sastera Melayu*). For him, the domain of reading in Malay was significantly associated with the academic imposition of ‘doing’ Malay literature component in the Malay language subject. To be sure, I initiated the use of the Malay term *Sastera Melayu* to denote Malay literature. Following that however, Nick used the words *tema* (theme), *persoalan* (issue) and *watak* (character) to describe the functional and even strategic aspects of language learning. Interestingly, in Nick’s last turn of talk, I interjected in mid-point and used the word “characters” to refer to literary characters found typically in literary texts. Nick picked up on that and two sentences later, acknowledged the word “characters” only to promptly use the Malay terminology “*watak*”. Again like Jen, Nick’s code-switching was not because he did not know the English terms but possibly because the Malay literary learning experience was distinct from English literary learning. Nick also remembered the paradoxical situation of ‘doing’ literature without actually reading the literary text. This was not particular to Nick. Across the eight participants, at least two others also talked about not having read the prescribed literary texts. Another two did not seem to be able to remember if they did. Only three of the participants distinctly talked about reading most if not all of the texts. This situation tends to escape detection because as shared by Nick, students not only got by but actually scored well when guide books and Cliff Notes not only supplemented but completely replaced the literary texts. Nick’s incredulity was noted through his laughter and repetition of the words “Cliff Notes” three times, almost in succession. As someone who drew pleasure from wider reading, Nick’s sense of incredulity could have come from his realisation of the irony within that situation. It then appeared that in school, the appreciation of literature was replaced by the assessment of ‘right answers’ often independent of the text. This is an example of an inverted context where the literary texts that are meant to encourage reading and provide pleasure became burdensome and even entirely circumvented. Nick’s talk highlighted the contrast in what literary reading can stand for and how differently it could be experienced when embodied within the reader and his or her context.

### 6.1.1.3 Discourse analysis: becoming trilingual

It is worth repeating here, that the six trilingually literate participants were considered to be highly proficient in Malay, English and Chinese language. In contrast with the bilingually literate, the six participants who were trilingually literate seemed to remember language
learning in more challenging terms. Refer to Table 6.6 for their opinions of being trilingually literate.

Table 6.6: Participants’ opinions about being trilingually literate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Perspective on language learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>I was never drawn to read Chinese. And because of my family, it’s English speaking as well. So Chinese was mostly just homework to me. It wasn’t something fun. I had difficulty learning Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>I just found languages, I found (Malay) challenging. And I, I just didn’t really enjoy learning language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>...my Malay was quite bad at that time and obviously I was suffering quite a lot in Malay school. ...I find it hard to find words that properly describes what I want to say in most languages, in all languages. So I have a tendency to mix all languages to express myself more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td>I don’t really pay much attention to Malay and English because I don’t really use them and I don’t really like them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>...it was quite a hassle cause I hear it from many people from Chinese schools that everyone has the same experience. We had all sorts of things to memorize. We had sentences to memorise for certain vocabulary....for articles we would memorise like about two, three paragraphs per day...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>Reading I think English would be easier than Chinese because Chinese if you don’t understand or you can’t read the words, it’s troublesome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The snippets in the table above captured not just the participants’ opinions of how they found the language learning to be challenging but also in how they may have done so within the distinctive languages. This distinction can be seen when the participants refer to the language learning experience in the way it was situated within the specific language domains. Across the six, the challenges in language learning did not seem to be located in only one specific language. The English, Chinese and Malay languages were found to be differently challenging for different learners. More importantly, this notion of having to learn or even study the languages was captured across the research participants.

One aspect of such challenge was in how language learning and reading choice intersected. This was seen in Jon’s talk. In more than one instance, Jon referred to his mother as being
someone who ensured that he had a firm footing in the three languages he had had to learn. The following excerpt was drawn from his first interview.

Researcher: What about the Harry Potter thing? Did you get drawn into that?

Jon: Oh! I got forced by my mum to read the first two in Malay.

Researcher: Tell me about that. Why were you forced by your mum to read in Malay?

Jon: Cause my Malay was quite bad at that time and obviously I was suffering quite a lot in Malay school... she basically just bought it and say “I bought it, you read it.”

While on the topic of non-academic reading, I asked if Jon had read the Harry Potter series. Assuming that he too may have been a fan, I continued and asked if he had been “drawn into” the phenomenon. In stark contrast, Jon responded that not only was he not a fan, he had been “forced” by his mother to read the books in Malay language. When asked why, Jon explained how his mother had thought it would help him improve his proficiency in the Malay language. Very tellingly, when imitating his mother, Jon shifted his tone and changed his pitch to a significantly lower one so as to denote authority. From Jon’s word choice (i.e. “forced”) to his deliberate tonal shift, it seemed to indicate that the decision to read the Harry Potter books was not his. It would be difficult to immediately attribute any direct consequence to the way Rowling’s novel was introduced to Jon but it is important to note that he did not sustain the reading of later novels of this series beyond the first two translated versions. Where for many the world over Rowling’s books were much anticipated, anxiously awaited and a source of pleasure, it became for Jon a means to improve a language he was deemed to be struggling with. Therefore to Jon, those novels came across firstly as a functional and possibly less pleasurable language exercise and, secondly, through a language that Jon was weakest in. In this sense, the novels stood twice removed. This is an account of what could have been a pleasurable experience of reading that had been recast into reading from pressure on the back of what was deemed to be language deficiencies. The conflict which arose from what the material was assumed to provide and the unexpected response of the multilingual reader pointed towards the various combinations of outcome(s) that can emerge from the transactions of those who experience reading via multiple linguistic domains. The challenges of language learning have crossed over and lent shape to the reading choice.
As I have pointed out earlier, the challenges of language learning were not located in just one language. If Malay language had been a challenge to Jon, the English language was one of Fong's challenges. Fong was trilingually literate and was most comfortable being literate in Mandarin. Because Mandarin was her first language, speaking in English and Malay was often a task that seemed to be beyond her. Even in secondary school, Fong regarded Malay and especially English as "foreign" languages. Before the following excerpt, Fong had been in the midst of recounting her transition from a Chinese vernacular primary school to a national secondary school. The implication of such a transition meant that the medium of instruction and communication shifted from being in Chinese to being in Malay and English. The following is an excerpt from Fong's first interview.

Researcher: ...so when it came to reading your texts in English, were you alright with that?

Fong: If it's exam-based stuff it's alright because a lot of them, they are factual. They are factual texts. So when you're doing comprehension stuff it'll be, a lot of them will be factual and it'll just like, what is this, so you can actually find the exact sentence from the text. So a lot for me is mix-matching. So it's like...

Researcher: So you memorise them you mean?

Fong: No, it's like when you're reading the text like when you're doing comprehension...

Researcher: This is Science?

Fong: No, English. Like comprehension, they give you a passage and then they ask questions about it. So they, the way they ask the question, are the words from the passage as well. And the answer are the words from the passage. You just have to go back to the passage and find the phrase and put it back.

Researcher: So it's strategy again?

Fong: It's strategy again, so it's not really that I understand the language. It's that I know where to find the answer.

In the first turn of talk, I had asked how she experienced reading "texts in English". My reference to the word "English" was used in the context of a medium. Fong took the word "English" to mean the language subject. In the following turn of talk, Fong went on to describe the subject in terms of how she experienced it. For example, the subject was "exam-based", made up of "factual texts" and required "mix-matching". Despite using the word
"comprehension", her descriptions which bore the sense of mechanics compelled me to assume that she had been referring to the Science subject. In the next turn of talk, Fong clarified that she had been describing the English language subject. She continued to talk about how she managed the subject in very strategic terms by identifying "the way they ask the question" and by "go(ing) back to the passage and find(ing) the phrase and put(ting) it back". Significant here was the way she differentiated between "understand(ing) the language" and "know(ing) where to find the answer". Elsewhere in the interview, Fong also referred to how she "know(s)" Malay language but rarely used it beyond its written form within academic domains. Noteworthy here is how in Malaysia, written Malay within academic domains is well-known for its high standards and demanding examination requirements. Fong's impressive academic achievement across secondary school would have meant that she would have had to be highly proficient in Malay. For Fong, being multilingually literate could have been made up of her ability to work out the mechanics of the languages and to learn the art behind test-taking. The range of languages that Fong possessed and her high-level linguistic skills may have done more to show-case her language abilities and less to engender wide accessibility or more reading.

6.1.2 Findings: multilingual readers

In a comprehensive analysis of what he calls language management, Bernard Spolsky highlights the choices a bilingual, plurilingual or indeed any speaker has to make when using a language (Spolsky, 2009). Across his comparisons of language management in domains as diverse as the family unit to the armed forces, Spolsky observes that "the language policy adopted by an educational system is without doubt one of the most powerful forces in language management" (2009, p. 90). This is because the educational system stands for so much of what is considered to be standardised, acceptable, mainstream and often monolithic. When considered through the lens of language and education policy however, the reference to the language ability is often made with regard to speaking and writing skills. This is perhaps because both speaking and writing are in themselves productive endeavours. Thus, they necessarily gain attention. Reading, on the other hand, is less visible and not conventionally productive. This raises the question of what forms of elements could be present in the reader's sense of language-ness.
The findings thus far suggest that for the multilingually literate person, reading was very often firstly and necessarily subsumed under language learning. In this context, reading materials which are conventionally read for pleasure were also found to be used for language learning and improvement. And because there is evidence elsewhere and in this study to suggest that learning the various languages means simultaneously negotiating language as content (performance and assessment) as well as medium through which that content is transported, the learner can be considered to encounter different states of language-ness. Therefore while function could be one of the states of language-ness, it is not the only one. Findings from the above analysis point to the following characteristics:

1) ability/inability
2) performance and assessment
3) language separateness (subject/medium)
4) language preference.

Refer to Figure 6.2 for a graphic representation of language-ness.

Figure 6.2: Graphic representation of language-ness

The notion of language-ness foregrounded the phenomenon of choice for the multilingual reader because to use a language was to choose that language. These findings are important in widening the attempt to better understand the multilingual reader. These multilingual readers would have relegated specific values as well as pre- and post-conceived notions which together act upon their reading choice. As with the domains of academic and non-academic reading, my scrutiny of the notion of languages through their different linguistic domains
would raise the same question of boundaries and boundary-crossing. This is because the individual's identification with reading in each language would have come from their experiences in learning that language. How one language is learnt and experienced in one domain may impact the way another language is learnt. By the same reasoning, how the individual identifies with reading in one language may construct and co-construct the way they identify with reading in another. It is possible that the more linguistically capable is the individual, the more challenging will be the reading choice.

As laid out in my overall guiding frame (OGF), the thematic categorisation of the data was carried out based on the progressive development of free codes, categories and conceptions. In this and the preceding sections, I have shown how the three codes 'language learning experience', 'English/Malay/Chinese literature' and 'reading in different languages' were developed into the categories of 'bilingual reading' and 'trilingual reading'. As such, central to the data grouping in the preceding sections was the focus on the participants' language learning experience in the past. From here, the conception of 'becoming multiliterate' emerged. As the analysis of the codes and categories built up and moved on to focus on the participants' reading experience in their more current contexts, another conception also began to form. The second conception revolved around how the multilingually literate undergraduates continue to make their choices of practising multiliteracy (or not) in their more current contexts. I called this conception 'choosing to practise multiliteracy'. Refer to Figure 6.3 for a graphic representation of the multiliterate reader code-category-conception connection.

Figure 6.3: Multiliterate reader code-category-conception connection
The following sections will address the second conception of the undergraduates choosing to practise multiliteracy in their more current contexts.

6.2 Multilingual reader in a monolingual context

The second research question of my research reflected the assumption that the undergraduates had crossed language domains when they left a multilingual context like Malaysia to study abroad in a less multilingual context like England’s. This assumption was made based on the notion that the participants would be negotiating largely in the English language because that would be the main and only medium of instruction in the university. In that sense, the English university stood for the monolingual context.

6.2.1 Analytic process: multilingual readers in a monolingual context

The conception of ‘choosing to practise multiliteracy’ was built on a two-pronged rationalisation. The first is the acknowledgement that these participants have learnt and developed multilingual abilities. The second is the question of what the multilingually literate undergraduates do with the abilities they possess. In order to form a picture of the participants’ reading choice with regard to their language context and backgrounds, data from both their interviews as well as their diaries were used. Because data from the diaries would be included, I considered it important to first draw an initial impression based on the participants’ diary entries. Specifically, built into the diary-writing grid was the question of which language(s) the participants found themselves reading in across the academic and non-academic domains as well as across the eight weeks. A constant comparison analysis across the participants’ diary entries was made. Refer to Table 6.7 for the language(s) in which the participants read. Overwhelmingly, the participants reported that they read materials in the English language. This cut across both academic and non-academic domains. Seeing as how the medium of instruction was English, the participants’ report of reading only in English with regard to their academic domains was predictable. In contrast, some of them also reported reading in Chinese when it came to their non-academic domains.
Table 6.7: Language(s) in which the participants read

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>LITERATE ABILITY</th>
<th>TERM TIME DIARY</th>
<th>VACATION TIME DIARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Non-academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>Bilingually literate</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English &amp; Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Trilingually literate</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English &amp; Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English &amp; Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be sure however, this comparison was made on the back of the diary-writing grid whose design played a part in the way the participants thought about and recorded their reading experience. As such, this initial finding was made with the awareness that the academic/non-academic domains and different language domains were not in themselves as mutually exclusive as it appeared. As explained in the previous chapter, the academic and non-academic domains were marked more by the boundary-crossing than by the separation of boundaries. The language domains were also interpreted in this light. This meant that despite reading largely in English, some of them also talked about reading in Chinese or Malay. For some of the participants, their reading in Chinese or Malay had been peripheral and very incidental to their main reading in English. If the participants had not recorded those episodes in their diaries, it was because they had considered them to be insignificant. What this observation brought up was not just the boundaries of language-ness but the crossing of those boundaries in terms of how the undergraduates chose to practise multiliteracy.
6.2.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: multilingual readers in a monolingual context

In order to better understand how the undergraduates chose to practise multiliteracy in their current context, phenomenographic analysis was applied. In trying to sub-divide the way the group chose to practise multiliteracy, I saw a shift from the way the data was categorised in the previous section. Specifically, I found that there appeared not to be a predictable pattern in the way bilingually literates chose multiliteracy from the way trilingually literates did. This meant that there were those who had more languages at their disposal but chose almost exclusive monoliteracy while others who had fewer languages but practised some form of biliteracy. Refer to Table 6.8 for an illustration of the application of phenomenographic analysis in terms of the two ways in which the participants chose multiliteracy.

Table 6.8: Participants’ multiliteracy choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monolingual reading</td>
<td>Bilingual reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>The bi-or trilingual reader practices monolingual reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>The bi-or trilingual reader has little or no consideration to read in more than one language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>The way the reader chose to practise multiliteracy had less to do with the multiple language accesses and more to do with how he or she identified with the languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The similarities and differences in the way the eight participants described and represented their multiliteracy suggested that the way they chose to practise multiliteracy had less to do with multiple language accesses and more to do with how they identified with the languages. This tied back to how they had experienced their language learning and their overall transactions with reading across the different languages.
6.2.1.2 Discourse analysis: choosing to practise monoliteracy

Among the eight participants, Jack appeared to be the most monoliterate. Despite being able to access reading through three languages, his consistent choice of reading almost entirely in English across both academic and non-academic domains marked him out to be a multilingually able individual who seemed to choose monoliteracy. However, his case was a compelling one because, firstly, Jack was the only participant who experienced schooling in the mediums of Chinese and Malay language as opposed to the other seven who also learnt Mathematics and Science in English whilst in secondary school. Thus despite not having English as a medium of instruction for any of his subjects whilst being academically highly proficient in Malay and Chinese, his preference for English language as his language of choice seemed counter-intuitive. Secondly because of his own interest in this study, Jack was the one participant who kept an almost daily audio diary instead of a written one. On occasions, he made up to three entries in a day. In comparison with the other participants, Jack’s diary was the most comprehensively kept. A detailed search through his comprehensive diary showed no trace of his reading in any other language except English. In the first interview, Jack talked about his choice of reading in English.

Researcher: Right. So when it was books by choice, it was still in English in secondary (school)?

Jack: Yes, yes.

Researcher: Why?

Jack: It’s the language I’m most comfortable with. Especially in reading form. Yeah. Why? It’s such a (laughs) how do I answer that? It’s just that I’ve read English books all my life. Why would I suddenly switch to a different language?

In this excerpt, my questions were directed at how Jack came to making the choice to read in English within a context that appeared to forefront Malay and Chinese language. Although Jack’s overt answer was his comfort level with English language, it was his laugh and self-questioning that was important in illustrating how his choice seemed to have been made at an almost unconscious level. To “suddenly switch to a different language” was somewhat unfathomable to him. Paradoxically, his ‘choice’ to read in English appeared not to have come across as a ‘choice’. Yet Jack’s choice to access his literate world via English, made precisely against the context of his multiple languages raised the question of what such
choosing may mean. This is because choosing necessitates leaving out. Upon exploring further in the second interview, I asked Jack why his extended diary had not reflected any reading in Malay or Chinese. Once again, he explained that English was the language he was most comfortable in. The following excerpt was drawn from the second interview.

**Researcher:** Why do you think then, you have more than five years of primary education in Mandarin, at least quite exclusively Malay-oriented in secondary school and just two years in college (in English). So, why are you inclined in English?

**Jack:** It’s my first language in a way. That’s the first language my parents taught me. And we speak English at home. My parents are both educated in English school when there was English school back then. So they taught me English, we speak in English. I, most of the media I see is in English. Movies, television, radio. So I think in English, essentially.

In the first turn of talk, my question pulled together the inherent relationship between medium of instruction and assumed linguistic inclination. My question focused on the quantification of years in which Jack had learnt and negotiated in Malay and Chinese within academic domains but highlighted how such a seemingly wide exposure through his mediums of instruction did not bring about his inclination towards those two languages. Citing how both his parents were “educated in English school”, Jack seemed to attribute his inclination towards English as being through his parents’ medium of instruction instead of his. At many points across the interviews, Jack talked about how he identified strongly with the English language and considered it to be the main vehicle through which information and knowledge was transmitted in academic and non-academic domains. In contrast, he also talked about how Malay and Chinese were learnt mostly for functional purposes. Exemplifying this, Jack admitted that learning and being literate in Chinese had been a laborious process. According to him, his academic achievement in the Chinese language subject had once again been down to the mechanics of the language and test-taking strategies. In contrast, the fact that English was the medium of instruction in his current context as an undergraduate meant that he had almost no reason to read in anything but English.

**6.2.2 Findings: choosing to practise monoliteracy**

For a trilingually literate reader like Jack, learning to be highly proficient in three languages could arguably have been attributable to language commodification. The functional role and
commodification of language can be very powerful tools to drive and even sustain learning. However against a backdrop of individuals who have to learn and master multiple languages, the difference between commodification and identification of language can emerge. Jack's choice of language for accessing his literate world is a very clear reflection of how his own personal history did more to shape his identification with that language than externally-imposed reasons could. It appeared that the ontological identification with language provided a firmer basis for language preference and by that reading choice. This may mean that the transactional experience of the reader can be seen to boil down to what is most strongly ontologically identified. For Jack, the language of commodification matched his own language of identification. The choice did not feel like a choice.

6.2.2.1 Discourse analysis: choosing to practise biliteracy

Clearly, not all of the participants experienced functioning and identifying with English language in the same way that Jack did. Based on their diary entries, there were also those who read materials in more than one language. Specifically, three participants referred to spending significant amounts of time reading in Mandarin across term and vacation weeks. Among the three, Fong's case will be referred to. This decision was made for two reasons. Firstly, Fong's reading experience has been discussed in detail in the preceding sections. It would be useful to follow-up and track her current reading experience. Secondly, Fong’s identification with the languages contrasted with Jack’s. Such contrast may provide insight into how reading can be differently embodied.

Like Jack, Fong was also trilingually literate. However for Fong, the language she found herself most comfortable in with regard to being literate was Mandarin. In the first interview, I asked Fong about her experience of having to learn Mathematics and Science in English whilst in secondary school. The following excerpt is from the first interview. Due to space limitation, the excerpt has been compressed.

Researcher: What happened then when you went to do Chemistry, Biology, Physics in English?

Fong: That time I'm fine with using English as a medium of study for science. So I'm, I'm already ok with using that as academic purpose because written English for science are different from written English for literature and they are, they are more,
like for academic purposes, they are more technical. They’re not very flowery, normally...(***)

Fong: That was what happened to me. So I just like, I couldn’t be bothered so I never actually do something about it although they always tell you, like, English is very important. Yeah, I’m fine using English like to learn science and I’m not going to do anything. I know that I don’t, I’m not good in languages, at least in the sense of choosing a course for study and stuff like that. So I know I’m not going to do anything that deviates from science. So as long as English is enough for me to learn science then I stop there. So I never actually like learn how to learn the language.

In the above excerpt, the functionality of Fong’s language learning bore itself out through the different domains of mathematics, science and English literature. Although this excerpt referred to her experience in the past, it was important in explaining how Fong had accepted English as the language of Mathematics and Science and in part, how she eventually negotiated her university course in English. Noteworthy is her use of the similar phrases “I’m fine with using English” and “I’m fine using English” at two points of the interview. Her conscious acceptance of English could suggest not just the ‘language-ness’ of English as an ‘other’ language but also her identification of it with her academic domain. This meant that the specificities of the different languages respectively had cleaved into different domains. In this excerpt also, Fong’s words illustrated one facet of the language learner’s response to the commodification of language as being externally imposed. Her use of the third person pronoun “they” suggested a separation between her as a language learner and “them” as simply, not her. Despite acknowledging that imposition, Fong’s words “I couldn’t be bothered” seemed to project defiance. However, further into her talk, Fong’s explanation suggested that she had “bothered” and had been able to effectively learn Mathematics and Science through the English language. In the third interview, I asked Fong about the way in which she identified with the different languages. The following excerpt was drawn from the third interview.

R: Right. So when you think of English for reading material, what do you think of? And when you think of Chinese, what reading material do you think of?

P: Chinese is mostly like for leisure like, novels and, yeah, novels and like news.

R: News as in national news, papers...

P: Yeah stuff like in my house we used to subscribe to Chinese newspaper. We still do, to Chinese newspapers. so actually I only read Chinese newspaper. I don’t read English newspaper cause like the all the formal English, all quite proper and a lot of
time, I don’t understand. So it’s easier for me to read the Chinese newspaper. Anyway, they are the same news most of the time. Like essentially they’re the same, just phrased in different ways.

R: So Chinese is story books, newspapers. English? English materials is what?

P: A lot of time it’s academic related or anything you get from the internet, like most of them are in English.

In this excerpt, Fong’s explanation illustrated how clear the language boundaries were to her. Mandarin language was the vehicle through which she accessed “leisure” and general information like news. English was the vehicle through which academic- and internet (often also academic)-related material were accessed. For Fong the undergraduate, the language of commodification (i.e. English) was not the same as her language of personal identification (i.e. Mandarin). When embodied, Fong used her own preferences, interest and abilities to make the languages work for her. Because Fong accessed reading materials in more than one language, it indicated that accessibility was not a primary issue. This meant that from analysing Fong’s talk and diary entries, I found that Fong and other participants like her had more, not less access to materials in multiple languages. Their access was largely brought about by their wide internet access. This finding was important because it shifted the focus from seeing the context as being monolingual to understanding that the current context depended largely on the individual’s choice. Situated at their fingertips was the agency to shape their language context.

6.2.3 Findings: choosing to practise multiliteracy

In Chapter 2, I discussed Rosenblatt’s transactional theory and pointed out how the fluidity of the reading transaction had significant implications for language use. This is because “language is always internalized by a human being transacting with a particular environment” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 4). In the same vein, the fluidity of the reading transaction would arguably be more complex for the multilingually literate. For research on those who are multilingual, language-ness must be considered for understanding reading choice. For those who are multilingually literate and whose language domains are clearly divided and differently but necessarily required, there appeared to be some threading together of languages without them getting knotted up. Specifically, the designation of the roles of each language was useful for the reader to make balanced reading choices. These findings may be
specific to how they were drawn from a select group of readers’ perspectives with regard to reading across languages. However, some facets of their perspectives seem to speak to and, albeit cautiously, challenge long-standing philosophical questions about whether or not the elements of language are fundamentally embedded and embodied not in but as the individual such that there can be no ontological divide between language and self. One of the assumptions underpinning such philosophical questions is that the individual appears to not need to choose a language. Yet for those who do exercise some form of choice, the question of language-ness, as much as it may ontologically be as the individual, may also be in the individual.

The data and findings discussed in this chapter are significant for how they were drawn from individuals who embodied the experience of having learnt to be multilingually literate. More than that, the data revealed how they may have practised and chosen to be multilingually literate. When language learning comes across as largely functional and ultimately evaluative to learners, it stands to reason that such an experience may go some way in shaping the readers’ future reading choices. This raised the question of what kinds of implications such a systematic division would have on the experience of actual learners and readers. Considering the circumstance of these multilingual readers, it is perhaps not inaccurate to argue that not only are they not aliterate, they have been more inundated with the formal and informal scaffold of reading than is often acknowledged. While they may have more alternatives in terms of accessing literacy, it would also have meant that they would have taken longer to arrive at having these alternatives. Yet paradoxically, in the act of being literate, they often would have had to equally leave out almost as many of these alternatives. The kind of experience they have had brings about a brand of reading that at one and the same time narrows and expands the nature of their on-going experiences. Such was their language context and this was their reading transaction.

6.3 Chapter conclusion

Thus far, I have discussed my analysis and findings from my data in relation to my second research question about the multiliterate reader’s reading experience and reading choices. In the next chapter, I will address the final research question and discuss my analysis and findings.
CHAPTER 7: READING PRINT AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED TEXTS

7.1 Materiality in reading

The acknowledgement of materiality bound to the act of reading is at the present time of much interest to reading and literacy researchers. Amongst other reasons, perhaps the most compelling is the unprecedented speed with which materials of meaning-making capacities have been produced and re-produced for on-going consumption. With a burgeoning of reading and literacy sources, questions about how physical and virtual materiality shapes the reading experience have gained attention and examination. In the introduction to my thesis, I referred to three images. Of the three, one was that of a woman, presumably reading aloud from apprehending a scroll (Manguel, 1996). That image is significant here for three reasons. Firstly, the woman’s physical voice and physical act of unrolling the scroll in her hand highlight the element of physical materiality bound inextricably into the act of reading. Secondly, the fact that the woman was portrayed to be holding not a book but a scroll alerts our modern gaze to how the material form of reading has changed across time. Thirdly and paradoxically while thousands of years separate us from the reader in the described image, the affordance (Kress, 2010) of the ancient scroll which “expos(es) section after section” (Manguel, 1996, p. 48) to the reader is unexpectedly very familiar to the modern reader who also apprehends on-screen material that is exposed “section after section” when the reader ‘scrolls’ across the screen. Such a connection across the ages is made possible because reading, even from time immemorial, has been transactional. This means that the act of reading or making sense of any unit of message necessitates an exchange between the human reader and the material apparently external to the reader. However, worthy of reiteration is Rosenblatt’s reminder that reading is “transacting through a text” (2005, p. 6, emphasis my own). A focus on the prepositional function of the word “through” is important in foregrounding the existence of a physical and conceptual space within which some form of materiality is situated and which is at one and the same time, external to but created and incorporated within the reader.

In this chapter, I will address my third research question. As much as I began my research with the aim of understanding the undergraduates’ reading experience, I had very early on encountered the amorphousness of the notion of reading. Not least, these encounters showed
up in the participants’ tendencies to constantly clarify with me as to what ‘counted’ as reading. One recurring question which the participants posed was whether apprehending pictures or watching videos counted as reading. Underpinning those questions were possibly the participants’ realisations that understanding information in graphic form and catching up with news through the audio-visual format are also activities that engender new knowledge. Essentially, their questions revolved around the notion of mode. In reference to my overall guiding frame (OGF), my research aim and corresponding research questions necessitated that the focus of my research revolved around the undergraduates’ academic and non-academic reading ‘diets’. By that, I assumed that the participants necessarily and largely engaged with apprehending texts through the mode of writing. To be sure, this did not mean that the participants were not also experiencing sense-making via modes like sound (live lectures, audio books, supervisions) and images (video lectures, drawings) amongst others. However, the focus of my analysis began with an examination of meaning-maker and the mode of writing.

7.1.1 Analytic process: reading through the mode of writing

Important to my analysis here was how I understood what ‘mode’ meant. Although I discussed this in Chapter 2, I will recapitulate it here. I borrowed Kress’ (2010) social-semiotically-based definition and understood ‘mode’ to mean the resource through which the meaning-maker creates meaning and out of which associative functions of the meaning-maker’s context, position and orientation are thought about and accounted for. This line of thinking not only accounts for the meaning-maker’s context but also for how her motivations and choices play a part in her continuous meaning-making. To begin with, the eight participants in my study can be said to belong to a shared community. They were all undergraduates from the same university and were pursuing undergraduate degrees. They were also largely apprehending texts through writing. Broadly speaking, they would therefore represent “that group of people who use the resources” of a particular mode in a regular, shared and consistent way (Kress, 2010, pp. 87-88). Thus, for this group of participants, the shared mode or “resource” was writing. Yet, despite appearing to negotiate within a singular mode (i.e. writing), there seemed to be a difference between how those in the Sciences considered reading as opposed to those in the Arts. Refer to Table 7.1 for the undergraduates’
perspectives on their reading experience within their respective university courses. The quotations were drawn from the participants’ interviews.

Table 7.1: Undergraduates’ perspectives on reading within their courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATES</th>
<th>ARTS UNDERGRADUATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineers don’t read a lot....you compare it to lawyers, medics, it’s a very sort of like, wordy kind of course. Whereas Engineering, well the traditional Engineering, it’s ‘Math-sy’. (Jack, Engineering)</td>
<td>...we’re engaging with like some of the big names and they’ve written books and we’re reading like whole chunks of the books. So yeah, there’s a lot more book reading. (Nick, Law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I just fill in equations and derivations and stuff like that. I don’t even consider those reading. It’s just working through. (Jen, Engineering)</td>
<td>I think it could be lighter if the lecturer had given more direction. But because he didn’t so you had to read everything. (Yen, Economics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t do references, all those big books? No. We’re engineers. We’re not lawyers or doctors. Engineering it’s all equations. It’s not like reading words and understanding whole paragraphs. It’s all equations. (Jon, Engineering)</td>
<td>...to not have a reading list for law students is equivalent to not having... any work at all because ...that is the work we do...Yeah, it’s essential, essential reading hence. (Zee, Law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve never really done the library thing. It might be different for like someone doing Classics or English or even Economics. But like for me, I think it’s, it’s quite unique to some courses like Engineering or Math. (Khong, Engineering)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because maths is just logic and then numbers. You don’t really need a language. (Fong, Mathematics)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quotations in the table above broadly reflected the ways in which science and arts undergraduates perceived and talked about their reading experience via the mode of writing. At least two features can be said to have emerged from the cross-analysis of the participants’ perspectives. First, as a mode, the position of writing did not seem to be perceived through a singularly nor equitably-measured manner. This was because although engineering and mathematics texts were apprehended through the mode of writing, as far as the engineering and mathematics undergraduates’ experience of apprehending “equations”, “derivations”, “logic” and “numbers” were concerned, it did not count as ‘real’ reading. It seemed that for them, what counted as reading necessarily came across in the narrowly-defined and highly-privileged conventions of words, sentences and paragraphs. In other words, writing was
privileged. Secondly that which seemed to be significantly less often encountered by the engineering and mathematics undergraduates was assumed to be encountered more by law and economics undergraduates. It is worth noting that despite their interviews being carried out separately, the way in which the science undergraduates’ responses consistently cleaved along this line of what stood for reading as opposed to what did not, demonstrated their shared notions. As it turned out, the law and economics undergraduates in my study seemed to confirm those shared notions. This was because directly or indirectly, the arts undergraduates acknowledged that what they had to do with their academic texts was regarded as reading, if not heavy reading. This initial finding indicated that even as a singular mode, the ways in which writing and language were positioned within the reading experience can potentially be very different. It appeared that the difference was associated with the mode through which the texts were presented.

7.1.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: reading through the mode of writing

As the data cleaved along the lines of science-and arts-based reading experiences, I pursued the analysis by applying phenomenographic analytic steps to the data. I read and re-read the excerpts of the participant interviews which pertained to their talk surrounding their reading experience from the perspectives of the science ‘versus’ the arts undergraduates. I used my “off-stage work grid” to capture how the two groups of participants referred to their reading experience via the mode of writing. From the phenomenographic analytical perspective, this meant that I looked for how similarly or differently the eight participants may have referred to their experience of reading their academically-based texts. When talking about their experience with reading their academic texts, the science undergraduates indicated that while they spent significant amounts of time on their texts, they often did not consider their act of apprehending their course texts as reading. For them, their course texts were not considered to be language-rich because numbers, symbols, equations and non-paragraphic presentations of texts did not seem to conform to traditional notions of reading. On the other hand, the arts undergraduates appeared to consider their apprehension of their course texts as reading because they encountered texts which were language-rich. Refer to Table 7.2 for the application of phenomenographic analysis on science and arts-based undergraduates.
Table 7.2: Science and arts-based reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>The science-based undergraduates did not consider apprehending some texts in their course as reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>The science-based undergraduates seemed to separate their texts into language and non-language-rich texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>The undergraduates seemed to privilege writing as the legitimate mode of and for reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergence of this distinction between the two groups of undergraduates served to flag up two ideas. Firstly, the way in which the undergraduates accorded writing as being the legitimate form through which reading ought to be experienced suggested that they privileged writing over other possible modes (for example graphic) when it came to reading. Secondly even within the mode of writing, the Roman alphabetic form was further privileged. This was because the science undergraduates did not seem to consider symbolic notations that are the basis of equations and formula as writing. By association then, the apprehending of forms that were not considered writing could not be counted as reading.

In order to understand the difference in these perspectives, I drew on the actual materiality which the undergraduates had engaged with. I selected samples of the participants’ authentic texts. While it is not within the scope of my study that in-depth textual analysis is carried out on the different texts, I considered a basic juxtaposition of the texts to be useful. This was because the comparison and contrast of the different texts could visually provide a contrasting glimpse of some of the materials the undergraduates encountered. All the participants had provided either electronic copies or internet links of some of the materials they accessed during the time of the research. This meant that at some point between when they became my research participant until the time their participation ended, they would have read those materials. For the purpose of juxtaposition, I selected one sample text from the
fields of engineering and law respectively. Two double-paged spreads of texts drawn from both fields were juxtaposed. Both spreads are the first two pages of longer texts. These samples were selected for two reasons. Firstly, both texts were directly linked with and immediately drawn from their academic domains respectively. As such, they stood for the kinds of texts that undergraduates from either of the disciplines would very likely and even typically encounter. Secondly, out of the eight participants, the fields of engineering and law were the two most represented. This was because four out of five science undergraduates were from the engineering faculty whilst two out of three arts undergraduates were from the law faculty. The electronic copy of the engineering text was electronically mailed to me by Jon after one of our interviews. Refer to Figure 7.1 for the science-based text (for reasons of maintaining anonymity, the science-based text will not be presented in its full image). On the other hand, the electronic copy of the legal text was accessed online by Nick during one of his interviews with me. Specifically, Nick’s text was drawn from a legal case. Refer to Figure 7.2 for the arts-based text.

Visually, the juxtaposition of the engineering and legal texts revealed a stark difference in terms of the volume of writing. An overall word count inclusive of numbers and symbols was carried out on both texts and it appeared that the engineering text with approximately 662 words is only a little more than half of the legal text which contains approximately 1248 words. To an extent, this difference in word volume could account for why the science-based undergraduates might assume that they were reading less than the arts-based undergraduates. However, two unexpected features emerged from the visual juxtaposition. Firstly, while one may expect to see mathematical symbols and numerals in the engineering text, the presence of symbols and numerals was also noted in the legal text. Therefore in both the engineering and legal texts, the symbolic and numeric notations were part of their respective genres’ versions of equations and formula which were only decipherable to readers with specialised knowledge.
MOISTURE AND HUMIDITY

There are (at least) four reasons why you need to understand moisture and humidity in building physics:

1. occupant comfort - basically the thermodynamics of sweat;
2. mould growth on inside walls, window frames, etc;
3. dust mites;
4. transfer (evaporative cooling, latent heat, etc).

Moisture content in Air

The water vapour content or humidity by volume, \( v \), of air is defined as the mass of water vapour per unit volume (kg/m\(^3\)). At any temperature, there is a maximum amount, \( v_s \), of water vapour that the air can carry. When carrying this full amount, the air is said to be at saturation. Saturation point is dependent on temperature and we can use the following data from the DIN standards to calculate \( v_s \) at various temperatures.

\[
v_s = \frac{a \cdot (b + \frac{T}{273.15})^n}{461.4 \cdot (T + 273.15)}
\]

\[\begin{align*}
0 \leq T \leq 30, \quad a &= 288.65 \text{Pa}, b = 1.098, n = 8.62 \\
-20 \leq T \leq 0, \quad a &= 4.689 \text{Pa}, b = 1.486, n = 12.3
\end{align*}\]

\(T\) in degrees Celsius

At some given temperature, the air is carrying less than the maximum amount of water vapour it can hold, the percentage of vapour can be given by the percentage saturation, \( PS \):

\[
PS = \frac{v}{v_s} \times 100
\]

5.3 Dust mites

Dust mites are tiny arachnids - they have 8 legs. Their droppings are allergenic and respiratory illnesses. Dust mites cannot drink water, but it via special salt-secreting glands on their front legs. If the relative humidity is low (< 50%), dust mites cannot obtain water by this route. Although some species of dust mites can live through extended periods of dryness by forming a protective sheath.
In 1988 a number of purchasers entrusted a total of £4m to M and an associate for a property development scheme in Portugal on terms that within two years the developed plots would be conveyed to the purchasers or their money repaid with interest. The scheme was never carried out. M, in breach of trust, used some £2m of the purchasers’ money to pay two annual premiums for 1988 and 1990 on a whole life insurance policy effected in 1986. There was a dispute in the court to which the policy was to be paid for the premium for 1988. The policy provided that, in consideration of the premium and of the further premiums payable under the policy, a specified death benefit was to be paid on M’s death, namely whichever was greater of £1m and the aggregate value of the uncancelled units from time to time. In 1990 M committed suicide, whereupon the insurers paid to the trustees of the policy, the first and second defendants, £1m, as the death benefit due under it. In 1994 the purchasers obtained a declaration that the land in Portugal and the shares in the company which was to develop it were to be held in trust for the purchasers. They also obtained £3m under a compromise with the bank from whose accounts the money had been misappropriated. The purchasers then brought an action claiming the proceeds of the policy. The judge held that they could recover 42.5% of the proceeds as representing the extent to which their money had contributed to the investment value of the policy at the date of M’s death. The Court of Appeal held, allowing an appeal by the third to fifth defendants, that the use of the purchasers’ money to pay the premiums could not give them an equitable interest in the death benefit nor could it give them a share in the proceeds of the policy proportionate to the premiums paid with their money and that they were limited to a restitution of £3m, pp 197–204. The proceeds of the policy to the extent not already recovered could be traced into the premiums with interest thereon.

Held, (1) dismissing the cross-appeal, that the remedy claimed by the purchasers was a proprietary remedy, and the compensation obtained by them in earlier proceedings could not deprive them of their proprietary interest in their own money; that, since the policy proceeds were paid to consideration of the receipt of the whole life insurance policy under the policy, the purchasers were able to follow their money into the policy when the premiums were paid and from there into the hands of the trustees when the death benefit was paid to them, was to obtain some claim from the policy proceeds of the amount of the premiums paid with their money with interest until 1990, pp 205–212, 1150–1154.

(2) Allowing the appeal (Lord Steyn and Lord Hope of Craighead dissenting), that, where a trustee wrongfully used trust money to provide part of the cost of acquiring an asset, the beneficiary was entitled, at his option, either to claim a proportionate share of the asset or to enforce a lien upon it to secure his personal claim against the trustee for the amount of the misspent money, that it was immaterial whether the trustee mixed the trust money with his own in a single fund before using it to acquire the asset, or made separate payments, either simultaneously or sequentially, out of the differently owned funds to acquire a single asset; that the legislature does not generally make any provision for trust assets which he holds in position to destroy a more beneficial trust, or to use the benefit to another with whom the trust has no connection, or to use in his own interest himself or another to which the trust has no relation.

In 1993 the Court of Appeal ([1993] 1 AC 159) dismissed an appeal from the Court of Appeal. 

APPEAL from the Court of Appeal
Secondly, while it may have been unsurprising that the legal text appeared to be conventionally made up of paragraphs, the engineering text also contained a length of paragraphed-text that ran for an entire page. To be sure, such seemingly rudimentary analysis did not take into consideration how many pages both the texts went on for or even if both texts were directly comparable to begin with. However, these two features could suggest that more often than may be expected, cross-overs in the varied forms of writing do occur in the different genres. Therefore, not only is it important for us to re-assess the notion that engineers and mathematicians read less, the cross-overs serve to de-stabilise the conventional understanding of the mode of writing and raise questions about the reader’s impression surrounding what ought or ought not to count as reading. Still, because the notions of what ought not to count as reading seemed to have come from the perspectives of the science-based participants, I considered it important to further examine how this disparity played out in the transactions of these readers.

7.1.1.2 Discourse analysis: reading through the mode of writing

Across all five science-based undergraduates, the privileging of Roman alphabetic writing as being the legitimate mode through which reading took place was clearly present. Among them, Jon’s case was most compelling for how he talked about his reading experience in terms of the mode of writing as they intersected with image and layout. In his first interview, Jon talked about how he read Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time* as a 15-year-old. Below is an excerpt from that interview.

Researcher: Right. So you bought that book. Tell me about the experience of reading *A Brief History of Time*.

Jon: Mmm it takes quite a lot of time to digest cause it’s quite a good science book in a way that there’s only one equation in that whole book. And he did a really good job in explaining particle physics, quantum mechanics and all these stuff in just language form in sentences instead of giving you tons of equation.

Researcher: So how did you go through those sentences, you know, precisely it’s in paragraph form?

Jon: It’s in, it’s in paragraph form. It has, I bought the graphic version so it has like accompanied by some graphics and even when I read stuff I convert it into graphic form in my head.
In Jon’s first turn of talk, his use of the phrase “language form” implied his awareness of language as bearing alphabetic shapes and conventions that are possibly distinct from other “forms” that bear symbolic and pictorial shapes which make up “equations”. In his commendation of Hawking for his ability to write about particle physics and quantum mechanics largely through the mode of written language and less through equations, Jon was alluding to the cross-over of forms within a particular mode. He then pointed out that although the book bore paragraphed-texts, it also included graphic forms. In this short excerpt, two important observations can be made. Firstly, Jon’s talk about his reading experience was useful in illustrating the multiple physical aspects of how a text situated within the field of mathematics/cosmology was very likely presented as children’s or young adult’s literature via the written and graphic mode. Thus in this one event, Jon’s memory of his reading experience showcased not only the presence but the fluidity of modality across and within the physical facets of the modes and genres. Yet writing, in terms of being a mode is physical only insofar as it remains outside the reader. As an affordance, the way in which a mode can be actualised is in how it plays itself out within the reader such that he or she draws meaning out of textually-rooted exchanges. Complicating the context was Jon’s own propensity to “convert” writing into “graphic form” in his head. Jon’s habit in converting text that he is confronted with into graphic form suggested further that physical representations of modes become unbounded when they are played out within the reader.

In stark contrast, Jon’s talk in reference to his experience of reading texts in full-paragraphed form pointed to how the affordance of that mode induced specific and in his case, negative responses. Preceding to the following excerpt from the first interview, Jon had been talking about his experience of reading the (translated) Malay language version of the Harry Potter series that his mother had somewhat imposed upon him (refer to Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion).

Researcher: So presumably those two books [Jon: the first two] in Malay were the only ones you read?

Jon: Ya. Like you see so thick like (eeeyer), like, like read a dictionary like that...

Researcher: How does that make you feel, when you see something like that?

Jon: (Eeeyerr), like that loh!

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Researcher: So when you see something thick, you go (eeeyer), because why?

Jon: How do you finish that (laughs)?

In the excerpt above, my question in my first turn of talk explicitly referred to the first two Harry Potter books as being the only ones out of the whole series that Jon had read. Although not directly solicited, in the next turn of talk Jon volunteered his perspective which served to explain why he had not gone on to read the other books from the series. Although I had in Chapter 6, alluded to how Jon’s experience of reading the Harry Potter series could have possibly been twice removed, here I offer yet another possible facet to Jon’s reading experience. Jon’s use of the phrase “so thick” followed twice successively by the expression “eeeyer” denoting aversion, served to make clear that his disinclination to continue reading the other Harry Potter books was also in large part due to the modality and form of the text.

At various points across the three interviews, Jon referred to this sense of feeling daunted when confronted with what appeared to be long-paragraphed texts. This could mean that on top of fiction not being his favourite genre, Malay not being his strongest language and his aversion to reading such “dictionary”-like texts which seemed to be associated with the expectation of requiring completion, Jon could have actually been thrice removed.

Based on the excerpts thus far, Jon could have easily come across as an undergraduate who may not choose to read when not formally or academically required. However, such a rationalisation may be acceptable if the notion of what counted as reading was limited to the privileging of one form of the mode of writing. As I have shown in the preceding paragraphs, the transactions of the reader often involved more than one singular version of representation even within one mode. As it turned out, Jon talked about his keen interest in reading articles on websites specifically, Wikipedia. To illustrate this, I have put together a selection of three different days of Jon’s Wikipedia reading in terms of titles automatically captured from his online browsing history. Incidentally, this formed the basis of Jon’s reading diary. Refer to Table 7.3 for Jon’s Wikipedia reading.
Due to limitation of space, I was not able to show the rest of Jon’s reading. However, suffice it to say that the three days’ entries were useful in showing the breadth of the topics Jon read about and the time which he would have spent engaging with those articles and websites. The selected three days were by no means representative of the longest lists. The titles also showed that Jon’s reading was almost exclusively done in English. The following is an excerpt of Jon’s interview in which he talked about his Wikipedia reading.

Jon: Oh, I spend a lot of time in Wikipedia.

Researcher: Tell me about that.

Jon: Just clicking links, just reading articles that I want to know more about it. You know when you go on Wikipedia, then you get lots of blue words that oh I want to know more about this, then I click, click, click, click. I always end up with a lot of tabs that I can’t finish and I just close it.

Researcher: On an average, how much time do you spend doing something like that?

Jon: Average, maybe, two, three times a week and every time I can spend like two, three hours on it until my eyes get really tired. Have to rest.

The excerpt above is illuminating mostly because it contained expressions that describe an individual who is a keen reader. In the first turn of talk, Jon quite unreservedly declared that he spent “a lot of time in Wikipedia”. Jon referred to what would presumably be a reader’s sense of curiosity when he stated twice, his intent on “want(ing) to know more”. Contrary to
his earlier aversion to "thick books", here Jon seemed to have no difficulty in "end(ing) up with a lot of tabs that (he) can’t finish reading". His expression of the phrase "How do you finish that?" drawn from the previous excerpt which indicated incredulity stood in sharp contrast with the phrase "I always end up with a lot of tabs that I can't finish" which indicated normalcy, even expectancy. At least five repetitions of the word "click" and its derivative form "clicking" indicated Jon’s enthusiasm which further illustrated his positive reception to his reading experience. The word "click" and phrase "blue words" were also the unmistakable icons for hypertextuality. Like any ardent reader, Jon also talked about how he would go on reading until his eyes were tired. Elsewhere he recounted how he stopped reading when he felt "dizzy" or had a "headache". Later in the same interview, Jon described how the tabs of the internet pages were seldom closed by him. Often it would be a loss in power supply that would bring on the closure. He explained that the act of closing an unread tab was akin to what he termed as "lost knowledge". All these characteristics do not describe an aliterate undergraduate. This portion of analysis served to highlight the complex ways in which past and current experiences of fast-changing contexts may influence the individual’s reading choice.

7.1.2 Findings: reading through the mode of writing

Thus far, the analysis surrounding the undergraduates’ reading experience through the mode of writing has pointed out two main findings. Firstly for the eight undergraduates, it was clear that they considered writing to be the main mode on which their reading experience ought to be rooted in for it to count. Even within the mode of writing, the undergraduates tended to privilege alphabetic form over character-based form. Thus, despite engaging with both forms of writing within what was considered to be one mode through which texts were apprehended, some of these undergraduates did not consider all of their experience to be ‘legitimate’ reading. Such difference in the way they interpreted their reading experience pointed not just to the privileging of writing but to a specific form within the mode of writing. This suggested that the participants’ interpretive frames (Kress, 2010) were narrower than they appeared. This supports what socio-culturally informed reading researchers have long argued for – far from being neutral, reading is socially and politically constructed such that socially-shared and agreed upon notions can be deeply influential in shaping reading experience. If this were the case, such narrowing of interpretive frames for those who are
multilingually literate raises the question of why Roman alphabetic writing that is constitutive of English or Malay language should have appeared superior to character/pictorial/symbolic writing that is constitutive of Mandarin language. This imbalanced perception could undermine reading experiences that should be equally counted regardless of forms.

Secondly, the physical appearance and physical tangibility of text were also important in giving shape to the reader’s interpretive frame in the way that they imposed specific boundaries upon the reading experience. Such an imposition of boundaries was crucial in implying notions of beginning, end, linearity and completion. Thus, a reader is compelled to read a book from cover to cover. However, a closer look at the undergraduate’s reading experience revealed that previous boundaries that may have defined reading in the past can no longer be tenable in the present time. It must be reiterated that up until this point, the data that had been analysed had largely been limited to the undergraduates’ references to their past reading experience which meant that the texts were in print-based form. In the reality of current contexts, the proliferation of web-and computer-based material production has thrown open the door to less charted areas where reader, ‘new’ text and ‘new’ context intertwine in the continued quest of sense-making. In the following sections, I will attempt to draw from the data and situate these undergraduates’ frames within computer-and internet-based contexts so as to better understand their transactions with these modern texts.

7.2 Locating the materiality in reading

In many parts of the developed and developing world, new cohorts of school-going children are forming a part of a growing generation who bear no living memory of life without the influence of technology in general and the internet in particular. For this generation, the sensations of negotiating the outside world through the haptic use of their fingertips on lighted screens have become as natural as pressing down a pencil on paper had been for the generations before. It appears that a significant threshold has been crossed. However, distinct to the eight participants in my study is the way in which they, like many in their generation have borne witness to a time both before and after the advent of the internet and its affordances. Significantly, those of this ‘hybrid’ Malaysian generation experienced their education through both print-and computer-based materiality. This was because when the 4th prime minister of Malaysia launched the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor project in 1996, basic education in Malaysia would thereafter be altered. Although high on the priority
list of the project was the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) into areas that directly impacted the economic standing of the country, the education sector was also to become co-heir to the project. As a result, ICT began to be introduced into schools and was gradually made available to households.

Across the interviews with the participants, talk about their experience with accessing the internet in terms of their reading experience began with my question about the participants’ early and emergent experience with multi-media. A code called ‘emergent experience’ was developed for this. Based on their memories, all the participants remembered encountering the presence of ICT whilst they were in primary school. However, the participants seemed to generally differentiate their experiences along the lines of how significant their encounters with ICT had or had not been. Refer to Table 7.4 for the timeline of the emergent and most significant points of their experience with ICT and reading.

Table 7.4: Emergent and significant points of experience with ICT and reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>TIMELINE OF ICT EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergent point (age in years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khong</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zee</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Across the eight undergraduates, ICT was introduced when they were between the ages of 9 and 13. This meant that they were in middle primary to lower secondary school. According to the participants, the introduction of ICT into their lives had been the result of the availability of computers and the internet in their homes and school. However, the presence of the computer was not always simultaneously accompanied by the presence of broadband and the internet. In the inception years, the presence of the computer was more significant than that of the internet. For many of the participants, broadband only came much later. When it did arrive, broadband provided internet connections. The participants remembered using the internet connections to access social media in particular. Yet, despite being introduced to computer-and internet-based text representations from middle primary school, it was not until or after they had completed high school that they found themselves engaging more deeply with internet-based texts than they had previously done. At that point, the participants were between the ages of 17 and 19. What they identified as being the start of significant computer and internet use had not only to do with better broadband width but also with their entrances into higher education. This suggested that for those in that generation, computer- and internet-based reading had possibly become indispensable not only in the domains of school education but increasingly in higher education.

7.2.1 Analytic process: situating the frames

As I explained through my overall guiding frame (OGF), the research questions of my study were closely related to a number of concerns I had had as a university lecturer and researcher in higher education. Among them was my question of how undergraduates negotiated reading in multimodal contexts. Specifically, I wanted to understand their negotiations of on-screen texts presented via new media. As such, both the interview protocol and the reading diary grid were designed to capture the participants' talk and documentation surrounding their experience with computer- and internet-based reading. The initial coding of interview data where the participants talked about their engagement with computer- and internet-based texts engendered four codes. They were 'emergent experience', 'technological functions', 'internet influence' and 'language and internet'. Because data from the code of 'emergent experience' was discussed in the preceding section, the data representing the other three codes will be discussed in the following sections. Refer to Figure 7.3 for a graphic representation of the development of codes for my third research question (RQ3).
The four codes generally captured the participants’ talk surrounding two ‘phases’ of their experience of engaging with computer- and internet-based texts. The first phase revolved around recollections of their emergent experience with technology and internet while the second phase revolved around their current experiences as undergraduates engaging with texts in and through new media. Underpinning the participants’ talk about engaging with technological and web-based texts was the understanding that they were continually making sense of text. In a broad sense then, they were transacting with texts. In reference to their reading experience, the participants talked about the presence of electronic devices and the internet in their day-to-day lives as undergraduates. What began to emerge was my impression of the participants’ ‘love-hate’ relationship with new media. By this, I am referring to the way in which the participants considered new media to be virtually indispensable and yet paradoxically, highly distracting. In terms of new media being indispensable, the participants referred to the physical affordances of mobile devices. As such, laptops, mobile phones and the tablet were among some of the main hardware devices which the participants heavily used in their day-to-day access to knowledge and information. In part, the code ‘technological functions’ captured the participants’ references to the indispensability that new media offered through its physical affordances.

In terms of new media being a distraction, the participants spoke at length about how the easy access to new media opened doors to non-academic reading that were considered highly distracting. Amongst others, this form of meaning-making occurred in and through social media like Facebook and blog sites as well as through video-based mediums like Youtube.
Some of the participants considered these sites to be distracting especially when they spent significant portions of time browsing the sites instead of doing 'real' work. In part, the code 'internet influence' captured the participants' references of the internet being distracting. In the final code 'language and internet', the participants' report on texts, language and the internet was captured. Although some of the participants did refer to instances where Malay and Mandarin-based texts were accessed through the internet, those instances were few and far between. Malay texts were online news and Facebook posts while Mandarin-based texts were Facebook posts, fictional novels and historical texts. Despite their multilingual abilities, the way that the English language was the medium for which most of the texts were accessible seemed crucial to the outcome that the participants engaged largely or exclusively in English via new media. It is perhaps also important to note that almost all of the social media used by the participants were represented in English. That the participants were generally very comfortable with the language contributed to their willingness to engage with these sites.

The participants' perceived 'love-hate' relationship with new media flagged up the complexities that accompanied this new way of accessing knowledge. The significance of examining how the participants experienced accessing knowledge through new media was in the way the data cleaved along two lines. Before going further to explain this division, I must point to the Hallidayan argument which suggests that language functions to construe human experience. Specifically here, Halliday's analysis of "how...the language of science reconstrue(s) human experience" is useful for the way in which he (Halliday) extends the question of 'how' to mean "in what respects" and "by what means" (1998, p. 185, emphasis my own). Although my study was not about examining the language of science, it nevertheless chimed with the broader thinking that literacy in general and reading in particular are socially-situated and dependent on semiotic systems. This thinking lies at the heart of discussions surrounding how modality and materiality bring much to bear on the way reading is experienced. Essentially then, how the undergraduate experienced reading through the mode and materiality of texts afforded by computer and web-based resource became the next question to be examined. Therefore, echoing Halliday in some measure, I considered it important to understand in what respects and by what means the undergraduates experienced reading through new media. As I have pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, four codes were initially formed under this theme of reading via mode and materiality. Along this
thinking of means and respect, the code ‘technological functions’ fitted with the notion of ‘means’ or ‘forms’ of use while the other three codes fitted with the notion of ‘respect’ of use. Because the means and respect through which the participants experienced reading were overarching notions to the four codes, I considered ‘means’ and ‘respect’ to be categories. Refer to Figure 7.4 for the code-category development of the theme of reading via mode and materiality.

Figure 7.4: Code-category development of reading via mode and materiality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading via</td>
<td>Technological functions</td>
<td>Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mode &amp;</td>
<td>Emergent experience</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materiality</td>
<td>Internet influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the Hallidayan perspective in mind, I began to see an overarching pattern where the participants referred to what they did in a physical sense in contrast with what they thought about that which they did. As such, the category ‘means’ overarched the code which was associated with the physical handling of the material while the category ‘respect’ overarched the codes which were associated with the notional aspects of what the participants thought about how they handled the material. In this way, the categories ‘means’ and ‘respect’ were useful because they offered a conceptual understanding for how the participants could be theorised to have transacted with texts through a mode and its corresponding materiality. At this point, I must acknowledge that the way in which the four codes cleaved along those two lines was not mutually exclusive. This meant that in some measure, elements from one category were traceable in the other. This served to show once again that cross-overs occurred.
7.2.1.1 Phenomenographic analysis: situating the frames

In order to better understand this dichotomy and its cross-overs, a phenomenographic analysis was applied to the categories of ‘means’ and ‘respect’. As with other analyses, my “off-stage work grid” was used in order to compare and contrast the participants’ talk surrounding their reading experience specifically through computer- and internet-based texts. From the phenomenographic analytical perspective, this meant that I looked for how similar or differently the participants may have engaged with the texts. As I have argued for in the preceding section, the ‘means’ through which the participants negotiated reading referred to portions of data that pertained to what they did in the physical sense. By ‘physical sense’, I am referring to the sections where the undergraduates talked about physically-bound ways in which they negotiated their virtual contexts situated especially within technologically-assisted domains. An example of such a negotiation could be associated with the device the participant used (for example, the laptop) and the affordances (for example, speed of access) which the device offered. In much of their talk, the participants talked about the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of accessing technological affordances in the context of their reading experience.

In contrast, the ‘respect’ through which the participants negotiated reading referred to sections of the data that related to the ways in which they thought about what they did. Here, I trod cautiously because I was aware of the amorphousness of the notion of thought and therefore the fragility of any analysis of thought. In my study, the notion of thought was understood in terms of the participant’s reasoning behind why he or she may have chosen to access a particular text in a particular way and what that made him or her feel. In this context, the undergraduates talked about matters beyond the physical and technological access of text representation in order to ask the questions ‘why’ or ‘why not’. Significantly, their talk suggested that their considerations were broadly linked with questions surrounding the nature of being and the constitution of knowledge. Refer to Table 7.5 for the application of phenomenographic analytic steps on the means and respect of the participants’ engagement with computer and internet-based texts.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step no.</th>
<th>Phenomenographic analysis steps</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Separate out (into sub-groups) the broadly different ways in which the eight participants experienced reading</td>
<td>The undergraduates talked about the physical and technological access of text representation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map the structural relationships among members within the sub-groups in terms of how they experienced reading</td>
<td>The undergraduates referred to the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of accessing technological affordances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpret the structural relationship to provide a referential explanation for why the participants experience reading in a particular way</td>
<td>There was a connection among the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘why not’ of accessing technological affordances. This will be useful in shedding light on the undergraduate’s reading choices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When this dichotomy between ‘means’ and ‘respect’ was further scrutinised, I found that the dichotomy was not clear-cut. There was a connection among the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘why not’ of accessing technological affordances which would be useful in shedding light on the undergraduate’s reading choices. In order to further understand the connection, I referred to the thinking behind transactional theory and applied the notion of reading as being embodied in the ‘reader + text + context’ (refer to Chapter 2, section 2.5.1 for detailed discussion). In order to analyse this facet of how the connection was embodied, I couched it by using Kress’ (2010) notion of framing. Specifically, I referred to Kress’ take on the meaning-maker’s interpretive frame.

Using the interpretive frame, I began to see that the undergraduates interpreted their meaning-making or reading experience through at least two frames. The first interpretive frame was related to the undergraduates’ physical accesses to reading materials and how they interpreted their reading experience when carried out through physical means. The second interpretive frame was related to the ontological/epistemological elements of how the undergraduates interpreted their reading experience in terms of their self-awareness and their underlying notions of what reading and knowledge were. These interpretive frames represent the conceptions of the development of the data analysis process. Refer to Figure 7.5 for the code-category-conception development.
The way in which I understood the interpretive frame to be embodied within the reader provided a useful conceptual space in which to see how the transaction could have played out. Through that space, I better understood the connections among the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘why not’ of accessing technological affordances in the context of reading. Because the physical and ontological/epistemological interpretive frames were important overarching conceptions, I further examined how they were situated within individual cases.

7.2.1.2 Discourse analysis: situating the physical frame

The embodiment of reading necessarily requires the response of the reader. If thus far the reading frame has been traced, then it is important to situate the frame in reference to the reader’s accounts. This may engender a better understanding of the connections between the means (physical) and respect (beyond-physical) of the participants’ reading experience through mode and materiality. To begin with, the physical means through which the participants experienced reading will be examined. As ‘hybrid’ undergraduates, these students may be assumed to negotiate with both print-based and computer-based texts. However, I found that this simple dichotomy of print versus computer-based texts formed only one part of the kinds of materiality the undergraduates came in contact with. This finding was drawn from the reading diaries kept by all eight participants across eight weeks and in some cases more than eight weeks. Through a cross-analysis of the participants’ diary entries, I found that there appeared to have been two main types of text representations which the participants engaged with via the new media. Across their academic and non-academic
reading domains, the participants demonstrated how they spent significant portions of time reading through what I called computer-based ‘traditional’ texts and internet-based ‘new’ texts. Computer-based ‘traditional’ texts were texts that existed in more than one representation. An example of computer-based ‘traditional’ texts was chapters or articles which were in the first (chronological) instance, materially present in printed-paper form and then scanned so as to be materially present in electronic form. This meant that these texts, when apprehended through the computer screen bore many familiar features with their ‘traditional’ versions on printed paper. Yet at the same time, they also embodied many fundamental differences. In a sense, these computer-based ‘traditional’ texts potentially carried more affordances than print-based form or web-based form. This was because the multiplicity of these texts’ affordances made the texts accessible to the reader through more than one form. Thus, some participants preferred to engage with printed paper forms while others chose screen-based forms. There were also those who engaged with the materiality of both forms simultaneously.

Internet-based ‘new’ texts were texts that had no prior existence in printed-paper form that were immediately traceable. This meant that although some of the information in these texts could have originally come from printed-paper texts, the internet-based ‘new’ texts in and of themselves did not typically exist in printed-paper form. Examples of internet-based ‘new’ texts that were captured in the participants’ diaries were websites like Wikipedia, Investopedia, Facebook, Google News and blogsites like “loyarburu” for lawyers and “studentbeans” for undergraduates. When the participants talked about reading through either forms during their interviews, six of them clearly preferred to read off physically printed pages while the other two preferred reading off their screens. Yet, the preference for physically printed pages did not clearly show up in their diaries. This suggested that for some of them, their preferences were not aligned with their actual choices of modality and materiality through which they accessed reading. This misalignment flagged up two interrelated points. Firstly more often than not, the specificity of a particular preference did not guarantee its corresponding choice. This therefore meant that, secondly, the actual transaction was often experienced on the back of the less preferred choice. These two simple but important points raised the question of how or even if the reader reconciled the misalignment.
Nick was one of the six undergraduates who spoke distinctly about preferring the affordances of print-based texts over screen-based texts whilst ironically appearing to negotiate more significantly through the latter. Nick's description of contrasting reading off the physical page and reading on screen emerged in the second interview when I asked about his academic reading experience across both forms of representation. Because this part of Nick’s description went on for at least eight minutes, I was not able to re-produce all of the transcribed talk here. Suffice it to say that what emerged from his talk were the ‘what’ and ‘how’ surrounding his engagement with the two forms of texts. In order to further analyse Nick’s talk, I extracted all the verbs which Nick used in his talk about his negotiation of printed texts as opposed to screen-based texts. Because Nick’s reading preference was for print-based materials, most of his descriptions necessarily revolved around his recollection of reading through that form. From the first list of verbs, I went on to select only those verbs whose sense was clearly related to the topic of reading off print-based texts. From the second selection then, 19 verbs were identified. Refer to Table 7.6 for the list of verbs and their corresponding transitive or intransitive statuses.

Table 7.6: Verbs and their corresponding transitive or intransitive statuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
<th>TRANSITIVE / INTRANSITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>annotate the right bit</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>bend the page</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>crease the pages</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>can’t differentiate that</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>engaging with the thing physically</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>feel the page</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>fold pages</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>follow the paragraphs</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>go up</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>highlight the right bit</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>know where</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>make notes</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>open it (the page)</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>position it (the page)</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>print it (the page)</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>put it (the book)</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>read the bible</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>remember where</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>see the whole page</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the 19 verbs, three were found to be intransitive because they did not refer to an object directly while the remaining 16 were transitive in how they referred directly to an object. It was useful to consider the verbs in this light because it offered a detailed look into how the reading transaction was carried out specifically in terms of materiality. Thus, the presence of the object (in the grammar sense) after most of the verbs indicated that for the most part, reading through print-based material required actions that were done upon the material. The verbs have been highlighted in bold so as to differentiate them from their surrounding phrasal unit. These phrasal units were extracted verbatim from the interview transcript.

This analysis on the specific discourse used by Nick was useful in emphasising not just how indispensable physical negotiation was for the reading of print-based material but how unique and specific it was to the act of reading print-based material itself. For example, a fair amount of Nick’s description revolved around his preference for the tactile sensations of bending, creasing, feeling and folding the physical pages of the texts he engaged with. It was important for Nick to feel a sense of physical familiarity towards to the text he was engaging with. Particularly, this meant that he appreciated how the book could be easily ‘opened’ to favourite pages or even how worn the favourite pages felt to his touch. This sense of physical familiarity in the form of leaving an imprint on the physical texts was found to be related to Nick’s intent of having possession of the text. Nick would use phrases like ‘my own bible’ and ‘my statutes book’ to refer to the texts he read. In sum, Nick’s description of how he preferred to engage with print-based texts was useful for highlighting the fact that specific tactile functions with reading print-based texts can find no equivalent form with the reading of computer- or screen-based texts. This is because the physical contexts between both forms of texts are markedly different. Therefore to the extent that Nick attempted to reconcile the misalignment between his preference and actual choice of mode and materiality, he seemed to have thought about computer-based texts in terms of physical print-based texts. This meant that he saw computer-based texts for what they lacked. The contrast between the differing materiality is important in illustrating the complexity of the ‘hybrid reader’ who may have a clear preference for using print-based materials but who may not be able to place an imprint in the same way when reading through screen-based texts.
7.2.1.3 Discourse analysis: situating the ontological/epistemological frame

If the physical frame includes the way the reader placed his or her imprint on physical texts, what happens when the source of being literate in the 21st century no longer privileges physically printed material? This raises the question of how internet-based ‘new’ texts that had no precedent physical shape would differently influence the way a reader considered the reading choice. In the following paragraphs, Fong’s and Jack’s talk will be referred to consecutively.

Out of the eight undergraduates, Fong talked at some length about her preference for accessing computer-based ‘traditional’ texts and internet-based ‘new’ texts as opposed to print-based texts. In Fong’s case, her preference for these texts had much to do with the sense of ease and convenience. Specifically, Fong referred to this preference in terms of her academic reading domain. The following is an excerpt from her second interview with me. In the excerpt, I was referring to a specific portion of her reading diary regarding her preference for which form of text she had engaged with during the first four weeks of the time she had kept her diary.

Researcher: Ok. You talked about your reading, I asked you if you used text or e-form more often. You said, e-form, computer. And it’s more convenient, you said? Can you explain more?

Fong: **Easier to find things.**

Researcher: For example the ‘control find’?

Fong: Yes. **But if I want to read like longer, longer text, then I’ll print them out.**

Researcher: So how do you know when to decide to read from a printed version and how do you know when you want to use a, e-form?

Fong: **When I’m very specific at like finding certain information, then I’ll use e-form. Then it’s a lot easier. Then you can just straight away find the keyword.**

Researcher: Do you do that a lot?

Fong: I do that a lot.

Researcher: So how does that affect your study, does it help, how does it help you?
Fong: You get information faster, like very specific information faster. But if everything is in paper then you have to find from a stack of paper. It’s like, oh this set of notes, then you have to like, hmm, where is it? Then you have to go through. That will take a lot of time.

At various points in this excerpt, Fong cited reasons which were related to ease, speed and accuracy for why she preferred reading through electronic texts. Her use of words and phrases like “easier”, “finding certain information”, “straight away”, “keyword”, “faster” and “specific information” highlighted the highly-functional notion of sense-making that seemed to be required within her academic reading domain. The fact that Fong did “a lot” of that form of reading could indicate that that form of information-seeking featured significantly in academic reading. Fong made it clear that when contrasted, the ease with which specific information can be found was preferred over having “to go through” stacks of notes. Within this short excerpt, Fong’s talk about her appreciation of the technological affordances which come with computer-based texts may be interpreted to be the easy, ‘short-cut’ and even inferior manner of reading in modern contexts. Yet, whether this ease which served to improve information-seeking processes and by that, impoverish the reading of long texts is arguable. This was because at another point in the interview, Fong talked about reading long texts and her preference for reading them in print-based form. As much as her decision to access the various texts seemed to be influenced by the different affordances, her decision to read did not seem to be deterred by the affordances.

Another outcome of the participants’ negotiation of reading through new media which I considered to be significant was the multiple-sourced and multimodal experience of sense-making. The affordances of new media allowed for convenient and almost instantaneous access to multiple web-based sources simultaneously. This meant that at any one time, the reader could have direct access to various forms of information sources which can potentially come together to enhance or some may argue, dilute the reading experience. In the following excerpt, Fong talked about ‘slower’ days when she engaged with seemingly less demanding academic work. This excerpt was drawn from Fong’s second interview.

Researcher: So let’s say you feel particularly lazy today. What would the typically lazy day be like?

Fong: I just sit in front of my computer, start doing work, but I will (put) on Youtube at the same time listening to music or just listening to some random things.
Researcher: So you’re doing work.

Fong: Yeah, at the same time watching Youtube. Or at the same time watching a movie or at the same time calling a friend.

Researcher: How do you function that way?

Fong: It’s ok. I’m used to it.

In Fong’s description, a “lazy day” would consist of facing what appeared to be a singular technological device and accessing some form of mathematical assignment. This singular technological device however was the doorway to multiple information sources. The essence of multimodal functionality was apparent in Fong’s engagement with apprehending language and symbols of her mathematics text, auditory text when “listening to music”, visual text when “watching Youtube” and speech text when “calling a friend”. The phrase “I’m used to it” could suggest that Fong had come to learn how to juggle such multiple-sourced information input. This also meant that the affordances of new media that had not been present in the past would not have previously required such abilities. Therefore in current contexts, these affordances offered a highly comprehensive form of multimodal sense-making experience when an individual requires the skill to coordinate his or her cognitive, auditory, visual and tactile abilities. The advent of new media has effectively elevated the requirements of sense-making among which reading is classified as one. Yet despite what appeared to be the elevation of requirements, Fong had considered a day of such multimodal functionality to be a “lazy day”. Perhaps then, the demands of multimodal sense-making are also less privileged and not ‘counted’ as legitimate sense-making. Usefully however, Fong did acknowledge the complexities that emerged from such multimodal sense-making. Fong qualified that there were differences in circumstances which depended on the combination of modalities and how engaging the content of the texts were to her. The following excerpt is a continuation from the one above.

Researcher: And then at the same time you can watch Youtube and follow what’s going on there (on Youtube).

Fong: Yeah.

Researcher: Even watching a movie yeah?
Fong: Depends. If the movie is very interesting, then I’ll stop working. If the movie is not very interesting then I’ll just continue working while watching a bit, then continue working.

Researcher: So a few things are functioning at the same time.

Fong: It takes a lot harder to work and the same time watch because your eyes have to be at both places. It’s a lot easier to just talk and work.

In the first turn of talk, my line of questioning reflected my sense of surprise regarding how Fong had been able to function across so many modalities at the same time. I clarified that her “watching” of Youtube was taken to mean that she also “followed” or was cognitively engaged with what was in her line of vision. At my question of how she could even read her work whilst watching a movie, Fong qualified that that would “depend”. The quality of what would be vying for her attention (viz. how “interesting” the movie was) could be a factor that steered her to ‘hover’ over one modality rather than the other modality. Fong also qualified that if the modalities shared similar sense-bases like having “your eyes to be at both places”, then the multimodal experience may be less effective. In situations like those, Fong would also have to choose to engage with one modality over another. In an analogous but graphic sense, the incompatibility and compatibility of the sense-bases could be illustrated in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Analogous illustration of incompatible and compatible sense-bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Incompatible sense-base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Compatible sense-base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above illustration, the scribed word ‘Reading’ analogously represents one ‘sense-base’ while the double strikethrough and the yellow highlight analogously represent two others respectively. Because the scribed word shares significant features with the double strikethrough in terms of its colour and use of bold lines, both ‘sense-bases’ come across as incompatible when superimposed. This is evident when the scribed word ‘Reading’ appears
to be obstructed by the double strikethrough. Ironically, they have too much in common. In contrast, the scribed word ‘Reading’ has little in common with the yellow highlight. Despite the superimposition, both the scribed word and the highlight effect can hold their own. In the same way that the engagement of multimodality can be seen as a form of superimposition of various different modes or facets of a singular mode, the way the superimposition actually plays itself out within the reading or sense-making transaction is an important point to consider. In an age where the presence of multimodality across and within modes has become a permanent characteristic in general sense-making, the more pertinent question to ask is not which mode should be privileged but how sense-bases across and within modes can best be made compatible and by that, optimised (Böck & Pachler, 2013; Gogolin, 2013; Rowsell & Pahl, 2013).

More than just the physical, technological and virtual functions of computer- and internet-based texts however, the participants also revealed how they construed (viz. feelings and thoughts) their reading experience when engaging with computer- and web-based texts. Amongst the participants, Jack spoke at length about what he felt and thought of his reading experience when he had to contrast between reading online and printed texts. The following excerpt was taken from his second interview.

Researcher: Tell me about, you were doing different kinds of reading both online as well as in print. How do you, is there a contrast between the two? How do you feel when you’re reading one type or the other type?

Jack: Actually it’s quite different. Because online you actually don’t feel the volume of material you’re reading. So I think in a way, it kind of tricks you to go on and on. Because you only ever see the, like your screen. Actually the article is like really long. If you printed it out it would be probably be like five pages. But you just keep reading and you just keep scrolling. And then you don’t really feel like you’re reading a lot.

In the first turn of talk, I had already used the word “feel” to refer to Jack’s possible reaction to reading in both forms. Jack’s initial response revolved around the physical manoeuvring of using the ‘mouse’ and “scrolling” on the computer screen which involved much less hand movement than the turning of physical page. It was clear that the manoeuvring of computer-mediated texts was not subjected to the same physical rules as manoeuvring conventional print-based texts. However, it was the way in which the reduced physical requirements of reading off the computer screen could not give Jack the “feel of the volume of material” that bore significance. Ensuing from this reduced sense of physical “feel” for the volume of
material seemed to be Jack’s emotive “feel”. Specifically, Jack referred to what he felt about how such a seemingly disguised form of engagement could “trick” him into “go(ing) on and on” which contrasts directly with the more often heard claim that the internet hinders reading. One means in which this disguised form of engagement can “trick” an individual into reading more is by the way that the modality appeals less to an individual’s calculated knowledge of the (physical) quantity read than the individual’s impressions and notions of reading. The individual’s sense of impressions and notions of reading is very much associated with the ontologically-bound sense of self-awareness. I pursued that line of thinking. The following is the continuation of the interview from the preceding section.

Researcher: And is it a good thing that you don’t feel it?

Jack: I mean, I don’t know. In the context of getting distracted you know, I should be reading my textbook, then here I am reading some random article, then it’s like oh, I read the whole article. And there’s a link at the bottom to something related and I click on it, then the time passes by so quickly because you don’t realise how long the article is. I mean even though now I’m aware of it, I used to be like really shocked but after I realised that, how come I’m spending so much time even though I just like, read three pages, so-called pages. But actually one page is like really long, you just can’t see it. And in a way it kinda tricks you to read a lot as well. I don’t know if this is a good thing or not. In a book form, you can very clearly see one page at a time and if the article is like five pages long, you’d think it’s a long article. Whereas online, unless you, there’s no really, no way to gauge how long, unless you really scroll to the end before you scroll back up and you realise how long it is.

In Jack’s turn of talk, his use of the phrase “I don’t know” implied his struggle with trying to make sense of the impressions and notions brought about by his reading experience in the intersections across the different materiality. Without having to comply with traditional physical-text-reading rules, the ‘new’ experience of reading through affordances in internet-based forms bore a few similarities with traditional affordances. The result of such a difference could be a need on Jack’s part to draw up new rules for the new kind of reading. It seemed as if a new ‘measure’ was needed for Jack to “gauge” how much he had read. Still, Jack had begun to talk about “gauging” less in physical than in ontological terms. He even decoupled the traditional notion of “page” from its counterpart of text when he qualified that on-screen texts were presented not in pages but “so-called pages”. Within this excerpt, Jack used the word “realise(d)” up to three times and the word “aware” once. The word “realise” is linked with the word “aware” in the way that ‘to realise’ means ‘to be brought to awareness’. The sense of awareness is of course, tied to the sense of self and by that the
nature of being. This is because the reference to the state of awareness would require as a preceding step, an acknowledgement of the self and the way the self ‘is’. Questions of ontology are often accompanied by those of epistemology. In the following excerpt drawn from Jack’s third interview, I asked about his thoughts on spending time reading online and in printed form.

Researcher: And do you think it’s to do with the internet that it’s, some people have called it a time swallower. But do you think that if you were to be engaging in a, one of the books that you were talking about, you said you spent, *One Up on Wall Street*, does that feel like time disappears?

Jack: No, no. because you know what you’ve read. *It’s like after I have finished reading the book, all 300 pages of it, I can say I’ve read this book*. Whereas let’s say if all the information in that book had been in one way or another written in some articles that are all over the place, you could have gleaned all the information that you could have from that book like over a course of maybe one, two months, just idle surfing. I mean obviously related maybe finance blogs or something like that, but you wouldn’t know you know it.

Researcher: And so that feels to you like swallowed time for nothing.

Jack: Yeah.

Researcher: Like you’ve got nothing back?

Jack: *You wouldn’t know you have.*

In this excerpt, Jack contrasted the experience of reading a “book” as opposed to what he referred to as “idle surfing” in terms of how knowledge is presented in both forms of materiality. In particular, Jack drew on the assumption that reading a volume of “300 pages” in book form allowed him to say “I’ve read the book”. On the other hand, “gleaning” the same knowledge or information from “articles that are all over the place” would possibly not ‘count’ as reading because “you wouldn’t know you have”. The example that Jack offered flagged up two points. Firstly, information or knowledge seemed to be for Jack, ‘situated’ objectively and separately outside the individual who apprehends it. Secondly, information or knowledge seemed to be better valued when it took on culturally-acceptable forms. The culturally-acceptable form of book-reading traditionally represented linearity and order, and by that, structure and authority. The far less linear (dis)organisation and often anonymously-authored texts on the internet, on the other hand, were, in principle, antithetical to book-reading. These two points can be seen to be situated in the domain of epistemology. This is
because they revolve around questions of how assumptions about knowledge, knowledge creation and even knowledge consumption are made. Also, questions about whose perspectives were considered as legitimate were raised as were issues surrounding the idea of author and authority. The clash between the self and the (imagined) authority could, in some way, contribute to the reader’s struggle with making what Kress called an “epistemological commitment”\(^5\) (Kress, 2010, p. 16). Hence, in Jack’s words, “you wouldn’t know you have (read)".

One possible effect of not having an epistemological commitment is the possible misplacing of sole responsibility on the role of mode and materiality as a factor when an individual considers his or her reading choice. This was illustrated in Jack’s case. The following is an excerpt drawn from Jack’s audio diary. All of the entries in Jack’s audio diary were transcribed verbatim.

I managed about six and a half hours of **textbook reading** today which basically started only after 4 pm. The time before that, since morning was wasted on mostly either **surfing of the internet**, mostly on youtube. **So I have made a resolution not to use the internet in my room for the next two months.** Basically I’ve **disconnected** the cable for now. Any use of the internet will be from the library or at the department or my phone, so I hope I will try to keep the cable **disconnected**, the internet cable **disconnected** in my room. **Disconnecting** of the internet cable seems to greatly improve the amount of time I spent reading my textbook as a percentage of overall time available to me. Will continue to monitor to see if this is the case.

In Jack’s reading diary entry, the sense of struggle between “textbook reading” and what appeared to be non-essential reading carried out through “surfing of the internet” was clearly present. Because Jack kept a consistent and almost-daily diary, I was able to trace the constant sense of this struggle across the length of time that Jack kept his diary. A cross-analysis of Jack’s diary entries offered up the likelihood that Jack was in effect, **procrastinating**. He himself used the word at many points in his diary entries. However, despite realising at some level that he had been procrastinating, it was the way in which he had *not* fundamentally treated the matter as procrastination that stood out. I drew this from Jack’s “resolution to not use the internet” for the next few months. Jack’s apparent resolve

\(^5\) Kress borrowed the term “epistemological commitment from Jon Ogborne.
could be seen through the repeated use of the derivations of the word “disconnect”. As it turned out, Jack’s decision to disconnect the cable was not sustained. From the point of the above diary entry, Jack carried on in the following weeks with what appeared to be full access to the internet and its affordances. From my observation of the turn of events, one important point emerged. If Jack was able to acknowledge that the internet and its affordances were potentially a legitimate mode for sense-making, he may be less likely to ‘misplace’ the sole responsibility of his ‘poor’ reading choice on to the less privileged mode. This then could mean that the internet would not become the reason for why he spent insufficient time on his textbook reading. Thus instead of blaming the mode and making a resolution to disconnect the internet, Jack could remove the modality from the picture and replace that with the issue of procrastination. This meant that larger than the issue of mode and materiality lay the question of choice and agency. Further, he could also learn to be more discriminating about the varied quality of what he reads online. In the context of reading, modality and materiality are often understood to be situated outside the reader. Modality and materiality only become important when they form part of the transaction of reading with the transaction being played out within the reader’s experience. It is in the very playing out and by that, embodiment of the reading experience that modality and materiality become a far more complex matter. They no longer retain their physical modality or materiality but instead, fuse with the sense-maker. Arguably, they now exist in a ‘new’ form. If this is assumed to be the case, then Jack’s thinking that disassociated mode and materiality from the reading transaction will not be useful.

7.2.2 Findings: situating the frames

Through an understanding of how the participants situated their reading frames, a possible theorisation of how the reader, text and context were connected could be suggested.

Do different media invite or demand specific kinds of movement across the different kinds of textual arrangements; and do these lead to different forms of imagination? And if so, what are these? (Kress, 2010, p. 170)

On the whole, the analyses in the preceding sections were carried out to scrutinise the means (physical framing) and respect (beyond-physical framing) through which the undergraduates experienced reading. Through the scrutiny, three findings were arrived at. Firstly, as ‘hybrid’
readers, these participants’ reading transactions with texts had broadened from negotiating through physical print-based texts in their past, to include their experience of reading texts through different modes and new materiality in current contexts. While many of the modes (for example writing, graphics, sound) may be familiar to the reader, the materiality of these modes has taken on new forms, namely technologically-mediated texts and new media. The physical frame seemed to place the new technical medium in a positive light. This was because the new materiality offered radically new ways of performing reading through the elements of speed, tactility, connectivity and hypertextuality. A juxtaposition of the two forms of materiality could cast a backward glance on how print-based reading was performed in the past, exclusive from computer-based reading. Reading performed through print-based text could appear slow and even inadequate. However, this was not to say that the undergraduates necessarily found print-based reading to be tiresome. On the contrary and surprisingly, it was still highly favoured. Despite the ease and convenience of reading through computer and internet-based reading, some habituated ways of negotiating through texts seemed to persevere. The juxtaposition of the various modes and materiality past and current, allowed not only for new materiality to be explored but for traditional ones to be re-examined. In effect, the consideration of new media brought requirements made on traditional texts under scrutiny.

Secondly, the largely physical materiality of print-based reading was previously assumed and even expected to be situated outside of and separate from the reader. However in terms of seeing the reading experience through the concept of frames, my analysis suggested that the physical frame was situated not just physically outside and therefore separate from the reader, but increasingly located in the interface between physical and virtual. Although it is arguable that the virtual space is also located outside the reader, its inherent fluidity, infinite and non-linear manner seemed to reduce its physical state. More than that, the ways in which the readers could fashion or customise their own reading paths and decide what they wanted to ‘click on’ made this ‘reduced-physical’ state seem like it was unique to and by that, situated within the readers. This could explain why the participants often struggled when equating ‘browsing’ or ‘scrolling’ with reading.

My analysis led me to the third finding which suggested how the in-between space could impact the way the readers made their choices especially when both print-based texts and
computer-mediated texts were simultaneously available. This was observed through how the same texts when differently represented were differently experienced. For example, the ability to physically "see" whole pages at a time was as much a physical matter as it was an epistemological one because the visual input of text representation and layout provided impressions of coherence and by that, credibility. The layout and physical affordances of the texts reveal that the physical facet could be crucial in paving the way for the metaphysical elements of ontological and epistemological spaces to be significant. When that particular feature of a form of materiality was removed, the reading transaction seemed to be laid bare. This could have meant that for the hybrid reader, the reading transaction when embodied may still require the presence of direct tactility with the actual materiality of the text. It seemed that physical negotiations of representations of knowledge were intimately intertwined with ontological notions of self and epistemological notions of knowledge. Refer to Table 7.7 for a summary of the different facets of materiality and the ways in which they were possibly framed by the undergraduates.

Table 7.7: Materiality and frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print-based texts</th>
<th>Screen-and web-based texts</th>
<th>Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turning and touching the page</td>
<td>Clicking and scrolling a 'mouse'</td>
<td>Phy*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No direct 'find' function</td>
<td>Direct 'find' function</td>
<td>Phy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited simultaneous sources available</td>
<td>Multiple simultaneous sources available</td>
<td>Phy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited means of storage</td>
<td>Multiple means of storage</td>
<td>Phy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical immobility</td>
<td>Ease of mobility</td>
<td>Phy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing whole pages at a time</td>
<td>Seeing sections of one page at a time</td>
<td>Phy/Epist**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to differentiate one page from another</td>
<td>Hard to differentiate one page from another</td>
<td>Phy/Epist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehending a beginning and end</td>
<td>Fusing the text as being continuous with no beginning and end</td>
<td>Phy/Epist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehending physical positioning</td>
<td>Losing sight of positioning of symbols in text</td>
<td>Phy/Epist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear notion of possession</td>
<td>Less obvious notion of possession</td>
<td>Epist/Ont***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear author and authority</td>
<td>Flattened-out hierarchy</td>
<td>Epist/Ont</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Physical  
**: Epistemological  
***: Ontological

In line with Kress’ theoretical argument that “(c)ommunication is multimodal”, the way that a reader “frames” aspects of their reading experience so as to “interpret” the messages that they are apprehending could reveal how mode and modality may function to shape a reader’s reading choice (Kress, 2010, p. 32). In their close examination of two readers apprehending
digital texts, Rowsell and Burke (2009) suggest that “(d)igital reading not only demands a different set of skills than printed texts do, but also it carries a different set of assumptions and epistemological framings based on how a text is designed and produced” (2009, p. 115). Slatin (1990, 1992) addresses this when he examines how a group of undergraduates negotiate writing with print-based text as well as hypertext within an electronic classroom. He points out that the shift to hypertextuality and how it affects classroom talk “changes relationships among people by changing their relationship to knowledge” (Slatin, 1992, p. 32). Inasmuch as this affects classroom communication and writing, the shift in text representations also affects the reading experience. Lang (2009) shows this when she explores the potential advantages of mediated reading as she examines how a group of undergraduates in a British university experience a literary text reading through online discussions and how they learn to model their reading through their online encounters with others. Elsewhere, Jewitt (2002) explores how the shift from print-novel to screen-based CD-ROM-novel changes the reading experience. This means that apart from only considering printed texts as legitimate texts, a consideration of how computer-based forms of texts are used within the undergraduates’ community may show how the reading experience could have changed and taken on a new shape.

The way that these epistemological framings are associated with other ‘forms’ of framing should also be explored because it will account for the reader’s past and current experiences.

The task is to establish, with as much precision as we might, what these differences are, in specific cases and circumstances. What new kinds of questions emerge and are made possible; how do persistent, older questions get recast, in ways possibly that lead to more plausible answers; and who might benefit in what ways from the different answers. (Kress, 2010, p. 15)

One of the “differences” that Kress is concerned about can possibly be seen in the cross-over between forms of materiality. This cross-over creates an in-between space where rules that applied to one form do not seem to be applicable to another. The difference in materiality together with parallel access and availability of different representations of the same text made visible the various requirements that were present but which very often went unnoticed in ‘traditional’ forms of reading. It was as if the readers’ conventions and habit to cling on to the physical world were tested when it crossed over into the ontological sense of being and
epistemological notions of knowledge. This was important for showing how some of the affordances offered by the different materiality were either critical and irreplaceable or unprecedented but replaceable. The way in which the undergraduates situated their reading frames was associated with how they perceived the affordances of the modality and materiality based on past experiences. This meant that these ‘hybrid’ undergraduate readers possibly considered their reading experience of new media in terms of their past experience of apprehending traditional texts. These findings serve to raise yet another question. How differently would a generation of readers who have no memory of life before the technological revolution, experience their transactions of reading? Researchers have already begun to look into the reading paths of this generation (Simpson, Walsh, & Rowsell, 2013). While they could be assumed to have lacked the experience of exclusively reading print-based texts they could also be considered revolutionary for being the frontrunners for a new generation of readers.

7.3 Chapter conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I pointed out that in some sense the image of the reader reading the scroll in hand may have borne little in common with the modern reader. However when seen as a transaction and therefore, embodied in and by the reader, the reading experience is situated within a conceptual space. Through the research participants' accounts of their reading experience across the modes and materiality of texts, we have been given a glimpse of that space thus, allowing the textures of that space to emerge. Text representation through modality and materiality played out in complexly intertwined ways. Indeed, the notion of the reading experience as being related to, but was beyond, mode and materiality drove home the point that the reader was complexly intertwined with the mode and materiality of his text and context. Decisions to simply introduce or alter physical modes and materiality must not be made naively. This means that care must be exercised in such decisions because readers bring their whole selves (past, present and future) to the reading experience. As such, we must recreate the vocabulary of the past so as to understand and manage the transactions of the present and in the future.
CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING READING CHOICE

Alberto Manguel chose very befittingly, the image of Gustav Adolph Hennig’s painting entitled *Reading Girl* as the main and only illustration on the front jacket of his book, *A History of Reading* (Manguel, 1996). Hennig’s painting is a compelling one. The *Reading Girl* with her eyes downcast almost to appear shut, demands that we look at what she seems to be looking so absorbedly at. The symmetry in the painting conveyed through the girl’s own symmetrical face, hairline, collar and sleeve lining seems also to draw the audience’s gaze towards what is at the centre of that symmetry. At the centre of that symmetry, in her right hand which is supported cross-over style, by her left hand, is an opened book. The book is also symmetrical in how it appears to open at the very centre. The *Reading Girl*’s posture denotes that she is not only seated (or standing) upright but is doing so with a very straight back. This further denotes complete concentration. The aptly named *Reading Girl* cuts a familiar figure to portray the quintessential lone, almost motionless reader. However, this image of the lone, motionless individual absorbed in a book actually belies the complexity of the dynamic and fluctuating transaction that takes place within.

8.1 My contribution to knowledge: proposing a model

My research set out to investigate how multilingual Malaysian undergraduates in a British university negotiated academic and non-academic reading through print and computer-based texts. As discussed in the three preceding chapters, phenomenographic analysis and discourse analysis were applied to the data set. From my research, my contribution to knowledge is two-fold. Firstly, I found that the unpredictable and complex ways through which the participants experienced reading and reading motivation were merely signposts. These signposts pointed to another complex phenomenon. That phenomenon was choice-making. The participants’ very act of making an informed decision to choose whether and what to read appeared to be the driver behind either the sustenance or suspension of the reading experience. Secondly, my analysis of the data produced four nuanced and inter-related facets of the contextual circumstances that seemed to act on the participants’ reading choices. In the following paragraphs, I will present a distillation of the four facets and suggest how the facets were connected.
Firstly, as literate beings, these undergraduates were also co-constructions of their socio-cultural and historical make-up. This meant that fundamental aspects of how they had been and continued to be influenced by what they considered to be values placed on being literate served to broadly underpin their notions about reading. Such values drawn from their past and present experiences intertwined to colour their lenses through which they considered matters like reading and writing to be duty-bound and obligatory. The ways in which the undergraduates committed their effort and invested their time into becoming literate across languages were reflections of the nation’s language policies and even historical legacy. This is because “(t)he reader’s evocation, like the author’s text, is seen as “the organic expression, not only of a particular individual, but also of a particular cultural setting” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 139). To this, I will add that the context’s historical connections must also be explored in order that the nature of some of these practices may find plausible explanations. Although this is not to say that the national literacy policies have been successful, it is nonetheless a comment on the importance of acknowledging a shared history.

Secondly, the notion of aliteracy is often taken to refer to individuals who are assumed to ‘choose’ not to read. This assumption tempts the (empowered) educator to conclude that the (disempowered) student is poorly motivated to read. Yet, such thinking presumes too quickly that reading motivation is predictable, measureable and linearly progressive or for that matter, regressive. The undergraduates in my study showed that they consistently experienced what I call situational motivation. This form of motivation encompassed the unpredictable, immeasurable, fluctuating and intertwining notions of pressure, pleasure and function of reading, situated within contexts that were also not constant. Very often, it was the context or situation that ultimately drove the reading choice. This meant that despite being highly interested in a particular text, a reader could make a clear choice to avoid that text because the situation dictated it. Perhaps aliteracy is less about motivation than it is about shifting landscapes and changing contexts.

Thirdly, the multilingually literate undergraduate apprehended texts through the specificity of languages. My particular reference to the phrase “specificity of languages” is used not without the consideration of current debates surrounding translingualism and the collapsing of world languages. However, to the extent that each language carried with it its distinctive set of associated history, culture and value, the languages were deemed to possess specificity.
This was because the undergraduates’ choices were intimately intertwined with values tied to capital, commodity and personal identity. However, for these undergraduates, notions of capital, commodity and personal identity were also often incompatible, one with the other. In a situation like this, the undergraduate’s ultimate decision to read a particular text could be in line with externally-imposed values of capital and commodity but less so with personal identity. The impressions that are invariably tied to such externally-imposed but no less important criteria will be tainted with a hierarchical conception. Thus, the selection of texts represented through one language would necessarily mean a de-selection of texts represented through other equally accessible languages. Crucially, this meant that even within the phenomenon of choice, the undergraduate could not be completely empowered. As much as the phenomenon of language can be discussed and thought of in terms of its fluidity, transferability and translingual nature, the very act of choosing to read seemed to be fraught with divisions, dichotomy, power and separation.

Fourthly, the notion of transaction as being embodied paved the way for extending current views which attempt to understand readers’ meaning-making when apprehending new forms of texts especially through new media and varying modalities. The physical orientation of the text’s materiality seen especially through the undergraduates’ experience with new media showed that the reading transaction was both located within and beyond the physical sphere. When the materiality of texts shifted, the ways in which a reader continued to apprehend the same texts across materiality shone a light on the facets of the reading transaction that persisted. The features of that which persist could point to the fundamental building block of the reading experience. This raised the question of how far materiality could go in shaping reading choices which bore implications on how the ontological and epistemological facets of choice could often override the physical material aspects of the transaction. This could mean that even as new means and modes emerge, the fundamental questions of why and wherefore of reading choice must still be addressed. Refer to Figure 8.1 for a proposed model of the embodied reading choice.
My theorisation of the embodied reading choice provides a useful way for expanding what could otherwise be a taken-for-granted notion of reading. This theorisation ties back to my argument that reading when conceptualised is significantly different from reading when experienced. Conceptualised reading may engender a reductionist view which could neglect the covert but critical complexities of the transactional nature of reading in particular and meaning-making in general. This is because the process of conceptualisation requires the phenomenon in question to be essentialised in some measure. However, this is also not to mean that the theorisation of the experience of reading is not essentialised. Inasmuch as any theorisation requires essentialising, here it is important that the notion of reading as a transactional experience is amenable to the complexities of its unpredictable and fluid nature. When reading is considered to be an embodied experience and as such, a convergence of sociocultural/historical, motivational, language and material factors, it stands to reason that the on-going co-creative transactional process of the reader-text-context lies at the heart of
the embodied reading choice. Readers are essentially choosing and then continuously experiencing transactions with all manner of texts within significant contexts as "...the process of making meaning out of verbal signs requires a continuing stream of choices on the reader's part" (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 388).

In sum, by thinking about the phenomenon of reading as being about the phenomenon of choice-making, I started to shift my thinking about anything to do with the periphery of reading as being about choice. The agentive element made manifest by and through the apparent finality of choice suggests that even a reader's interests and preferences will have to be placed aside during the transaction of reading. Therefore, instead of a focus on reading motivation, I suggest for a shift to scrutinise more closely the reading choice. I argue such scrutiny is important for how it allows us to see the reading choice anew. This is because a straight-forward notion of the reading choice could belie the deep complexity of what has brought on and in fact, is at the centre of the decision-making. The child who stands in front of a book shelf, ready to grasp the spine of an identified book is really a fragile coming together of the child's past and present experiences with her immediate as well as less immediate context. Placed together, this intertwining thread of factors forms the reader's notions of self and how those notions relate to the experience of knowing. This will not only place at its centre the agentive role of the reader but will also highlight the reader's ontological and epistemologically-bound decision which is made complete through the physical, observable act of the materiality of reading.

Perhaps, we have it backwards. Perhaps reading is not about measuring our students' motivation levels because in the complexity of how reading choices can be made, this measure is simply insufficient. Therefore along this line of argument, it stands to reason that paradoxically, reading motivation is not actually about setting out to motivate a reader. It is about recognising at which point, regardless of the material, genre or language reading dissolves as a choice and becomes a necessity. The less the choice feels like a choice, the more natural and organic is the transaction. When the act of choosing feels natural and organic to the reader, it is arguable that the reader becomes less conscious of having to make that choice. This is because when the dichotomies of domains dissolve, the often externally-imposed boundaries that may serve to distract and divert the reader cease to take centre stage. Paradoxically, scaffolds that could come in the form of learning goals and educational targets
may begin to ebb away so that the reader is left to simply, make sense of text in context. If there should be an essence to my study of the reader, text and context, the essence lies at the heart of meaningful meaning-making. Perhaps, the goal of those of us teaching and encouraging literacy is to arrive at making choice not feel like choice. It is about recognising where, as Jack said in his final interview, reading becomes “like breathing”.

8.2 Making reading choices: some implications

I now go on to discuss the implications of my research. Specifically, I see my findings as having implications on three levels. Firstly, governmental policies which are often rooted in a nation’s socioeconomic needs, although necessary, must be implemented with caution. This is especially crucial when the policy is related to matters of education. For example, university seats are not just numbered seats to be filled so that a nation’s economic and industrial policies or aims can be achieved. Such an association, although rife and often unquestioned is at best tenuous if not, damaging. Perhaps because it can be inconspicuous, a match between a prospective undergraduate and the chosen degree is side-lined. Yet in real terms, only the undergraduate will face the challenges that come with a mismatch in intrinsically-bound interest and externally-imposed expectations. Perhaps then, in a developing country like Malaysia, it is little wonder that young able and literate adults arrive at what should be the height of literacy, only to be calculative about their reading choices. This way of understanding the problem of aliterate Malaysians will allow for a critical view which will hopefully engender more thoughtful actions.

The second implication of my research is located in the theoretical and empirical aspects of a research endeavour. Specifically, my attempt at applying some fundamental tenets of transactional theory in my empirical research of undergraduates who mostly read non-literary texts showed that the theory was useful. This is important because the act of reading is not limited to literary texts alone. The crossing-over of a literary theory into the empirical realm of non-literary reading encouraged a sense of openness about the way reading is differently experienced. This further supported the concept of the transactional nature of reading as being fluid and less predictable than it often appears. Any trajectory that a person’s reading path could take is arguably, unpredictable. This explains why an individual who had previously been an avid reader may not necessarily continue to be so later in life. On the other hand, someone who may not have always enjoyed reading may at a later stage, discover
an area of interest in which new information is pursued and in that time, the process is found to be deeply enjoyable.

Thirdly, my in-depth research will be important in providing new ways of understanding what reading is and how it is actually experienced by undergraduates in current contexts. I hope that such insights will fill the gap made by the lack of systematic focus on the actual response of undergraduates as they grapple with and gain from their individual reading experiences as those experiences are lived. Thus, it becomes critical for educators to not only stop providing prescriptive measures for addressing the apparent decline in reading but to understand what it takes for young people today to engage in the process of making sense of materials and how they go about engaging in that process on a daily basis. It is time for educators and reading researchers to depart from checking the boxes and instead tap into this wealth of knowledge by listening to their students’ literacy stories.
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

If the painting of the *Reading Girl* by Gustav Adolph Hennig on the cover of Manguel's book *A History of Reading* captured our imaginations for the way in which it depicted the quintessentially lone reader, it could have foretold yet another story (Manguel, 1996). As the symmetry in the painting draws our attention to the book at its centre, it could also metaphorically stand for the symmetry between transactions of reading in past and present times, across domains, languages and materiality and across cultures and continents. That there are correspondences and recognisable traits across contexts tells of the indomitable elements of the reading transaction. Specifically, the complex exchanges that take place across the reader, text and his or her context made possible through the presence of the reader’s response are testament to the survival and evolution of reading.

9.1 Future research

My thesis captured a sliver of the complexities that underpinned the on-going reading experience of eight Malaysian undergraduates in a British university. My aim to examine the phenomenon in an in-depth approach necessarily meant that the sample group remained limited. It also meant that the group’s homogeneity could not accommodate a wide range of variance in terms of backgrounds, ethnicities or age groups. Because the group was small and the study in-depth, broad generalisations could not be claimed. It must be noted however, that my study does not claim to provide causal reasons for particular outcomes because it was not methodologically designed to do so. More importantly, to do so would be to relegate reading as a predictable event instead of a fluid, transactional and fundamentally unpredictable experience. However, this area of research will benefit if, in future research, participants from a broader range of backgrounds were included. While this kind of research will require more researchers, the benefits of a study that could show both breadth and depth will be valuable.

It must be acknowledged that within the scope of this study, the reference to language learning experience was drawn exclusively from the participants’ recollection across the interviews. This meant that it was not possible for me to have tracked their language learning experience in real time or in real classroom context because that would have been situated in the past. Understandably, the immediacy of such observations and dialogues will yield findings that can inform pedagogic practices. However, this was not the aim of my study.
Instead, I wanted to understand how an ‘established’ multiliterate reader made reading choices. What I was able to do was tap into their impressions of their language experience in retrospect, even if somewhat ‘condensed’. This is important for how the participants were indirectly associating their current multiliterate selves with the recollection of their previous emerging and growing language learning and reading experience. This is also important because the findings provide a glimpse of what could occur after an individual arrived at becoming multiliterate. My thesis only presented the story of the literate lives of those who have made it, of those for whom language barriers were crossed and conquered and for whom the reading choice was and is still theirs to make in whatever form it takes. Much more must be done to hear the voices of those for whom language barriers remain sturdy and for whom the landscape of their motivation is more treacherous. Perhaps we may find that their reading choices are negotiated in spite of their terrain. The problem of reading motivation is really also the problem of choice.

9.2 Concluding remarks

When I began this study, I set out to understand how eight Malaysian undergraduates maintained and managed their motivations to read. My attempt of an in-depth examination of these undergraduates’ reading experience has shown that the way they maintained and managed their motivations to read was in how they strove to balance out their reading choice. It may be a bold statement but I hope I have shown that the key to understanding a facet of the way reading choices are made by multiliterate readers lay in the quality of their sense of discrimination. The quality of their sense of discrimination depends on the intertwining factors of where they are in the larger scheme of things. I hope this study has been able to show that a reader’s reading choice is less about the reader being singularly or categorically motivated or unmotivated than it is about negotiating a complicated context which has been brought to bear by one’s past and present experiences. These undergraduates mediate their own social histories and position themselves within current waves. It is these waves that must capture our imaginations if we are to even begin to understand the experience of being literate in the 21st century.
REFERENCES


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### Appendix A: Interview protocol for semi-structured interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>BG/ HIS</th>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>RQ2</th>
<th>RQ3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FIRST INTERVIEW</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tell me about yourself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tell me about your family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tell me about your education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tell me about your friends and social circle.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>What are some of your earliest memories of reading?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What was the reading experience to you when you were growing up?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>What are the titles of things you read when you were growing up?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Can you recount some of the things you read when you were growing up?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Was there anyone who influenced or dissuaded you?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>What was your home environment like in terms of reading? Can you describe a picture of that environment?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>What were your family members’ attitudes in terms of reading?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Are you currently reading anything?</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>What are the titles?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Can you tell me about what you are currently or have most recently read?</td>
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<td><strong>SECOND INTERVIEW</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tell me about your academic reading experience when you were in school and now in the university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tell me about your non-academic reading experience when you were in school and now in the university.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>When did you read or truncate academic reading? Non-academic reading?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Why did you read or truncate academic reading? Non-academic reading?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>How did you read or truncate reading?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>What were your preparations before you started academic reading? Non-academic reading?</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Did you discuss your reading with anyone? If so, with whom?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>With whom did you read academic texts? Non-academic texts?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tell me about the text you have chosen.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>What was your response to this reading?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Why did you respond this way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Where did you read this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>When did you read this?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>How do you associate this text with yourself?</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>What kinds of modes did you read through?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Is there a preference? Why?</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Was there a change in the forms of reading from the time you were a child until the present time?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>How if at all, has the change affected you?</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>How much time do you spend on reading in modes other than paper print?</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Tell me about the modes you read in for academic purposes.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Tell me about the modes you read in for non-academic purposes.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Tell me about your reading experience if you engage in social networking.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>What languages can you read in?</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>What has been your experience with regard to reading in these languages?</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>What language did you read in the most before you came to the university?</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>What language do you read in the most now that you are in the university?</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Is there a difference between academic and non-academic reading in terms of the language you use?</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>How has your multilingual ability affected your reading experience?</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>What is your experience of reading in a largely monolingual context?</td>
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(BG/HIS – Background/History; RQ1 – Research question 1; RQ2 – Research question 2; RQ3 – Research question 3)
Appendix B: Themes and questions/prompts for interview protocol (condensed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN THEMES</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS / PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Interview 1**  
Background/history | 1) Tell me about yourself in terms of your interests, schooling, family and friends.  
2) What did reading mean to you when you were growing up (feelings, influences, and titles)? |
| **Interview 2**  
Reading in academic and non-academic domains (RQ1) | Tell me about your experience when reading:  
a) academic texts (feelings, influences and titles)  
b) non-academic texts (feelings, influences and titles). |
| Reading in multimodal contexts (RQ2) | Tell me about your experiences when reading through different modes (preference for print-based or electronic, social networking, duration and challenges). |
| Reading in monolingual context (RQ3) | Tell me about your experiences as a multilingual reader reading in a largely monolingual context (languages, preferences and challenges). |
## Appendix C: Reading diary grid and sample entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC READING</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description of reading experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title: The pragmatist reader: reading as a meaning making transaction in the English classroom&lt;br&gt;Author: Stephen Taylor</td>
<td>Hardcopy</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2-3 hours</td>
<td>Reading this article was carried out as a means to further make changes and expand my literature review for the registration report. It was not an easy read but it did help me learn more about the philosophy and theoretical underpinnings that underlie the application of reader response theory. At some points, I had to stop and re-read portions as the language register that was used was rather heavy and verbose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: Goal theory and self determination theory&lt;br&gt;Author: Richard Remedios and Ros McLellan</td>
<td>Hardcopy</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2-3 hours</td>
<td>This reading was also done as a means to further expand on my literature review for the registration report. Compared to the above, this was an easier read. This is possibly because I had read a number of articles like this one and found myself more familiar with the tenets and notions of the theory being discussed. Significantly, I experienced a kind of realisation (after reading this article) that helped me ‘place’ the main notions of goal theory and SDT within the context of motivation theory. This reinforced the idea that articles that are meta-analyses or that provide overviews of a particular body of research are critical in helping tie the strands of research that a researcher has been reading about for some time. This means that a researcher must be ever-aware of the “reading zone” that she is presently in so as to match the reading experience with the nature of the zone.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-ACADEMIC READING</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description of reading experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title: The lost girl&lt;br&gt;Author: Kitty Neals</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Through 1 week</td>
<td>In contrast to the heavy academic reading that I was doing, I also read this novel. To be honest, the plot was highly predictable, characters overly believable and insufficiently developed. I read on and finished it anyway, possibly to see whether my plot-prediction was accurate. I made it a point not to read any more of Neals’ books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: Woman at point zero&lt;br&gt;Author: Nawal El Saadawi</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
<td>This is a rather short book that tells of the life of Firdaus who was then, on death row. It’s intriguing in many ways, most of all that the story was re-counted by Firdaus just days before she was to be put to death. The writer is a psychiatrist. Largely however, this book represents the plight of women in Saudi Arabia as told by one woman to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: The Star Online&lt;br&gt;Author:</td>
<td>E-news</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
<td>I’ve not been keeping up very much with Malaysian news but the buzz surrounding Bersih 3.0 has compelled me to stay updated with our national news so as to follow the developments of the event. While the e-newspaper is useful in helping me stay very, very updated, the various links that refer me to other equally credible and interesting websites and e-articles can sometimes be overwhelming. I sometimes have to consciously decide to stop reading the websites so as to return to the academic reading that demands most of my time and focus. Recently, I’ve taken to only scanning the titles of news pieces without reading them in great detail.</td>
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GUIDE TO READING EXPERIENCE
DIARY ENTRY
INTRODUCTION

A diary is a document where daily experiences and events are recorded. Perhaps the most famous diary to have been kept by a young person is Anne Frank’s diary. You may yourself be already keeping a daily record of your life and time in the university. In fact in modern times, the kinds of internet-based activities like blogging, tweeting and engaging in Facebook are essentially extensions of diary-keeping. So, if you are familiar with any or all of these activities, you are well on your way to diary-keeping!

Some diaries are general in that random but important events or experiences are considered worthy of entry. Others are specific to previously-identified themes. For this project, the diary is considered to be a combination of both. This means that your diary entry will capture important events or experiences as they relate and associate with your experience of reading. For example, an up-coming exam or essay deadline and how it is experienced when you sit to read your notes and textbooks can be seen as a combination of both a general event (the exam) in terms of a specific experience (reading or revising). This means that the constant theme running through all of the events is the experience of reading.

Do bear in mind that if you haven’t been reading, you could also reflect on why that has been the case. Your diary entries about these instances will also be valuable to me.

OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

I set out to understand how you experience academic and non-academic reading as you live and work as an undergraduate in your university.
SOME DEFINITIONS

How is reading defined, you may ask? For this project, reading is defined through two domains. They are through the domains of academic and non-academic pursuits that require you to make sense of forms of texts. Depending on your academic discipline as well as personal interest, the text would be important information, data, images, symbols, models, figures and whatever types of meaning representation that you regard as being significant to your growth as an undergraduate and as a person.

You could also be reading through a few types of mediums or modes. This refers to print texts or electronic texts. Again, these texts could be for academic and non-academic purposes. The texts could also be in any language.

SOME THEMES TO KEEP TO:

1) Academic-related reading (textbooks, lecture notes, academic journals, newspaper articles, subject-related websites, etc.)
2) Non-academic-related reading (leisure, religious, self-help, general knowledge, etc.)
3) Any other important kinds of reading
4) Reading on main kinds of medium (paper print, electronic – yes, spending time reading on Facebook can be considered to be reading!) or registers (symbols, graphics, numerals, etc.)
5) Anything else that strikes you as important, interesting or simply worthy of being shared

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS:

The following guiding questions are meant to help you write about your reading experience. If you’re unsure about how to begin writing about the day’s experience, these guiding questions may be useful to get you thinking. It is not meant to be systematically answered at every point (although you could do that if you wished). Certainly, don’t limit yourself to these questions: remember they’re only prompts!

1) What did you read today? Was it for academic or non-academic purposes?
2) Which medium did you read through? Print? Electronic?
3) What thoughts or emotions were triggered before, during and after reading?
4) Why did you choose to read that?
5) How did you respond to what you read? Can you refer to a specific page or paragraph?
6) How did what you read relate to your context?
7) Why did you stop reading?
8) How long did you read for?
9) When and where did you read?
10) Did you share your reading with anyone else?
11) Did you read on social network sites?

MODE OF DIARY-WRITING:

Depending on your personal preference, you can choose to either handwrite your diary entries or type them into an electronic document (preferably, Word document). However, it would be useful to me if you kept consistent to one type of diary entry throughout the project. Also, if you choose to handwrite, I do ask that the writing be legible.

I also ask that you try to write at least once every two days. The consistency of this will help create a sense of habit for the diary writing. There is no need to use a complicated format for the diary entries. Simply note the date and time of the entry and begin writing away!

A FINAL NOTE:

Remember that there is no one right way of writing the diary. What is most important is that you write most honestly and vividly about your daily account with regard to reading. And don’t be too overly concerned about accurate grammar and language use as long as your meaning comes across.

(If you should have any queries, please email me at slc75@cam.ac.uk)

THANK YOU!
Appendix E: Letter to research participants

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Date: _________

Dear _________,

Thank you for your interest in my PhD research on the experience of reading as an undergraduate. I deeply value your contribution regarding the experience of reading and look forward to learning about it from your perspective. This letter is to outline some of the main features of your role and to secure your signature on the informed consent form that is appended.

The research design that I have engaged for this study is a qualitative one wherein your continued constructions of how you perceive your experience will form the central core of my data. It is through your detailed sharing that I hope to illuminate my question that asks “What is the nature of reading to a Malaysian undergraduate within current contexts and situated within academic and non-academic domains?”

Through your participation, I hope to draw out the essence of what it means to you to experience reading and navigate your way around expectations on a daily basis. You will be asked to recall specific episodes, situations and events that you experience in your reading within the previously mentioned domains. I would be most grateful for your vivid, reflective and comprehensive portrayals of what the reading experiences were for you.

I value your time and participation in my research and thank you again for your commitment. If you should have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me at slc75@cam.ac.uk

Sincerely,

Su Li Chong

PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.
Appendix F: Informed consent form for research participants

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research project entitled "Texts and contexts: Malaysian undergraduates’ experiences of reading" that is conducted by Su Li Chong of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. The aim of this study is to understand undergraduates’ academic and non-academic reading within current contexts through an exploration of their reading experience.

I understand that my participation in this project will involve at least two audiorecorded interviews and documentation. The documentation will be in the form of diary-writing and will be kept by me for eight weeks. If I am not comfortable with the discussion or the writing at any point and wish to discontinue participation in the study, I will be free to exit and withdraw from the project without any prejudice and without having to give any reason.

The potential benefits of my participation include self-knowledge and reflection.

I understand that my participation in this project is strictly voluntary and that all information will be treated confidentially. I also understand that outcomes of this study may be shared in academic or educational contexts in the form of conferences and journal articles. I agree to allow the use of the information offered during my participation on the condition that my name and personal details are changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

I am aware that if I have any questions about my participation in the project, I may contact the researcher at slc75@cam.ac.uk

Participant name: __________________________
Signature / date: __________________________
Researcher name: _________________________
Signature / date: __________________________
Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research project entitled “Texts and contexts: Malaysian undergraduates’ experiences of reading” that is conducted by Su Li Chong of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. The aim of this study is to understand undergraduates’ academic and non-academic reading within current contexts though an exploration of their reading experience.

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I am aware that if I have any questions about my participation in the project, I may contact the researcher at slc75@cam.ac.uk

Participant name:__________________________________________
Signature / date:__________________________________________
Researcher name:__________________________________________
Signature / date:__________________________________________
**Appendix G: Off-stage work grid**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE</th>
<th>GENRE</th>
<th>MIAM</th>
<th>ENG/ MALAY LIT</th>
<th>PPSMI</th>
<th>LANG LEARNING EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC-ACADEMIC READING</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF READING HISTORY</th>
<th>MULTI-MODAL</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED READING</th>
<th>ACADEMIC MATERIALS</th>
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**Table Note:**

- **Interview 1 (History):**
  - **Interview 2 & 3 (Current):**
  - **Summary of Computer-Mediated Reading:**
  - **Academic Materials:**
    - **Hours of Reading:**
    - **Reading Material:**
    - **Reasons for Reading:**
    - **Supervision:**

**Summary of Off-stage Work Grid:**

- **Primary Degree:** Engineering, Law
- **Secondary Degree:** Engineering, Law
- **Interview 1 (History):**
  - **Interview 2 & 3 (Current):**
  - **Summary of Computer-Mediated Reading:**
  - **Academic Materials:**
    - **Hours of Reading:**
    - **Reading Material:**
    - **Reasons for Reading:**
    - **Supervision:**
Appendix H: Transcription symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under</td>
<td>Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis</td>
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<td>Bold</td>
<td>Bold segments indicate the specific transcribed talk that will be analysed</td>
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<td>(</td>
<td>Action within parenthesis describes non-linguistic expressions</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Words in square brackets are transcribed speech of the other speaker overlapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italic</td>
<td>Words in italics are not in the English language</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>Three consecutive asterisks denote omitted transcription</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Title&quot;</td>
<td>Title of text</td>
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</table>

Some of the symbols and their meanings were adapted from Wooffitt’s use of transcription symbols (2005, pp. 212-213)
Appendix I: Larger context of Zee’s interview excerpts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>And why does that give you pleasure? Why is that interesting to you?</td>
<td>(It) probably reminds me why I am doing what I am doing now. Yeah, like “Why am I studying law? Why am I working so hard now?” (laughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>So, in your mind it has a, would I be right to say that it has a very...the federal constitution, when you do read, you feel a sense of what? Satisfaction? Security?</td>
<td>(laughs) sentimental value. That’s a really, really odd way to put it, to describe the Federal Constitution but I guess yeah, for lack of a better word. ...it feels like...some sense of purpose is being hammered home, like I’m being anchored back somewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>But again...you enjoy doing that?</td>
<td>Yeah (laughs). I’m such a nerd!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Do you still read the Federal Constitution?</td>
<td>It still strikes me like, when something troubles me a lot...I think I should go and read the Federal Constitution (laughs)... it’s like an anchor, maybe. Just brings me back to where I think I’m supposed to be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>