CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Reading Comprehension

1. Definition of Reading

Reading is one of the language skills that have various definitions such as: reading is one of general language skills, and component of written communication (Tampubolon, 1987: 5). Reading is an active skill, and it constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions (Grellet, 1988: 7).

Clark and Silberstain in Simanjuntak (1988: 15) define reading as an active cognitive process of interacting with print and monitoring comprehension to establish meaning. Reading is instantaneous recognition of various written symbols, simultaneous association of these symbols with existing knowledge, and comprehension of the information and ideas communicated. It means that when a reader interacts with print, his prior knowledge combine with and the visual (written) information result in his comprehending the massages. Therefore, reading actually a conversation of sorts between a writer and a reader. Reading is a dynamic process in which the elements interact with other factors outside the text: in this case, most particularly with reader’s knowledge the experiential content of the text (Nunan, 1991: 70).

Reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the
reader interacts dynamically with the text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (through top-down processing) (Herham Solaeman, accessed from http://www.readingmatrix.com/articles/alyousef/article.pdf).

From the definitions above, the writer comes to the summary that reading is process to understand the massages available in the text. In other words, reading is a process of getting meaning intended by the author from printed or written information. During this process, the readers combine his language skills and knowledge of the real world to grasp the meaning.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading is an active and interactive activity to reproduce the word mentally and vocally and try to understand the content of reading text. It is important to bear in mind that reading is not an invariant skill, that there are different types of reading skills, which correspond to the many different purposes we have for reading.

According to Olson and Diller (1982: 42), reading comprehension is a term used to indentify those skills needed to understand and apply information contained in a written material. Clark and Sandra (in Simanjuntak, 1988: 15) define reading as an active cognitive process of increasing with print and monitor comprehension to establish. Kennedy (1982: 5) has argument that reading can be defined as the ability of an individual to recognize a visual form: associate the form with a sound and or meaning
acquired in the cover and on the part of experience, understands, and interprets its meaning.

It is sure that reading has many purposes, and among others are to graduate from their school and to provide them with the knowledge to continue their studies whatever their purposes are. In order to achieve the goal, the comprehension ability in reading is needed.

The concept of reading comprehension could be bottom-up and top-down approaches. Nunan (1989: 33) mentions that with the bottom-up, the written symbols, reading is viewed as a process of decoding written symbols, working from smaller units (individual letter) to larger ones (words, clauses, and sentences).

Villanueva (2000: 8), says that two main approaches explain the nature of learning to read: (1) bottom-up processing, so called because it focuses on developing the basic skill of matching sounds with the letters, syllables, and words written on a page; and (2) top-down processing, which focuses on the background knowledge a reader uses to comprehend a written text. The bottom-up approach is associated with a teaching methodology called phonics, while the top-down approach is associated with schema theory.

According to Olson and Diller (1982: 42), what is meant by reading comprehension is a term used to identify those skills needed to understand and apply information contained in a written material. This statement it is supported by Harris and Sipay (1980: 179), who say that reading comprehension ability is taught to be a set of generalized knowledge
acquisition skills that permits people to acquire and exhibit information gained as a consequence of reading printed language.

The writer orders to comprehend reading selection thoroughly a person must be able to use the information to make inferences and read critically to understand the figurative, determine the author’s purpose, evaluate the ideas presented, and apply the ideas to actual situations. All of these involve thinking process (Burn, 1984: 10-11).

Goodman in Carrel et al. (1988: 12) viewed reading from another point. He defines reading from the psycholinguistic perspective, and describes reading as a “psycholinguistic guessing game”. He writes “Reading is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it stars with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs”.

According to Kennedy (1991: 12):

“Comprehension is facilitated reading appropriate materials, intellectual curiously, and desire to learn. The definition of comprehension can be stated as follows: the ability of pupils’ it finds, interprets, and uses ideas comprehensions”.

So is the comprehension is the ability of students to discover, interpret and apply the knowledge gained from experience in this reading experience.

Heilman (1981: 242) says that reading comprehension is a process of thinking sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction as a multifaceted process affected by several thinking and language abilities.
Kennedy (1981: 191-192) says that:
“Reading comprehension is a thinking process by which a pupil selects fact information, or ideas from printed materials, decides how relate to previous knowledge he has acquired, and judges their appropriateness and worth for meeting his own needs and objectives”.

From the statements, the writer concluded that, in order to comprehend a reading selection fast, a person must be able to use the information to make conclusion and to read critically, to understand the figurative, to determine the author’s purpose, to evaluate the ideas presented, and to apply the ideas to actual situations.

3. The Components of Reading Comprehension

Before going on to further explanation about reading comprehension, the most important thing that needs to be considered is the components of reading itself. According to Donald et al. (1987: 31-38), there are six major components of reading comprehension, and they are: decoding knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, syntactic knowledge, readiness aspect and effective aspect. So, the writer will explain them as the following:

a. Decoding Knowledge

Knowledge is used to determine the oral equivalent of a written word. Decoding knowledge is important for comprehension when determining the oral equivalent of a word to help a reader. Identifying meaning is frequently true and relatively unfamiliar with printed of many word in spoken but are relatively unfamiliar with printed word.

b. Vocabulary Knowledge

The knowledge is what one has about word meaning used to determine the appropriate meaning for a word in a particular context. Vocabulary
knowledge is important at all grade levels, but is particularly important aspect of reading instruction as develop and explore less familiar subject offers with somewhat specialized vocabularies.

c. Syntactic Knowledge

Knowledge of the order rules that determine grammatical function and sometimes the meaning and pronunciation of word. Syntactical knowledge includes understanding word order rules that exist within sentence and permit.

d. Discourse Knowledge

Knowledge of language organization at units beyond the single sentence level includes knowledge of the structure organization of different type of writing.

e. Readiness Aspect

Referring to the different concept, traditionally, reading readiness is the ability of the student to benefit from initial reading instruction. Reading readiness, therefore, may describe instruction designed to assist both preferred and children who have already know how to read, traditional readiness skill are important instruction during kindergarten and beginning of the first: recently, reading readiness has wider definition, it includes reading to read and understand a particular selection.

f. Effectiveness Aspect

Reading comprehension includes both interest and attitude; and these increase motivation and facilitate reading comprehension. Thus, to facilitate comprehension, always make reading and reading instruction as
interesting and enjoyable as possible. Affective aspect is important to consider at age and grade level (Donald, et.al, 1987:54).

Based on the descriptions above, there are six components of reading comprehension that must be achieved by the students, So that the students can be categorized as a comprehensive student in reading.

4. Type of Reading

Depending on the purposes of reading, reading can be classified into two types of activities, intensive and extensive reading.

a. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading means reading shorter text to extract specific information. This activity is likely more to emphasize the accuracy activity involving reading for detail. The process of scanning takes a more prominent role than skimming. Reader is trying to absorb all the information, example: reading dosage instruction for medicine. In intensive reading, students usually read a page to explore the meaning and to be acquainted with writing mechanisms. Hedge argues that is “only through more extensive reading that learners can gain substantial practice in operating these strategies more independently on a range of materials.”

These strategies can be either text-related or learner-related: the former includes an awareness of text organization, while the latter includes strategies like linguistic, schematic, and meta cognitive strategies.

b. Extensive Reading

Reader deals with a longer text as a whole, which requires the ability to understand the component part and their contribution the overall meaning,
usually for one’s pleasure. There have been conflicting definitions of the term “extensive reading”. According to Hedge (2003: 202), some use it to describe “skimming and scanning activities,” others associate it to quantity of material. Hafiz and Tutor state that: “the pedagogical value attribute to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce a beneficial on the learner’s command of the L2.

There are seven types of reading text which is learned by students in secondary school. They are Descriptive, Narrative, Spoof, Recount, Procedure, Report and Anecdote (Depdiknas, 2003: 17). Students are expected to understand and master all of the text after they learnt English. In line with the limitation, formulation and objective of the research in the previous chapter, the writer would like only to explain about Descriptive text.

5. Reading Process

In the process of reading, there are some factors which influence reading comprehension. Harris (1976: 207), proposes a diagram drawn below is used to show how these factors influence reading comprehension.
From the diagram, we notice that the factors which influence reading comprehension are:

a. Attention

Attention is an activity whereas the reader tries to pay attention on what the reader is reading.

b. Background Experience

In the writer opinions, reading is actually the activity of relating something we do not know to something we have already known. Therefore, the previous experience of the reader is very important in anticipating the author’s message. Heilman says that previous language experience is probably most important as it relates to the specific task called reading (1981: 50).

This idea is confirmed by Harris who says that the ability to reconstruct meaning from printed page, including various kinds of skills and style the writer has, is based on the reader’s previous experience with
a topic, his familiarity with key concepts and his knowledge of how language works (1976: 32). So, good readers must have the ability to relate the text to their own background knowledge efficiently.

c. Language Abilities

Reading and language are two things that cannot be separated because reading is one of the skills in learning a language. When a child learns to read, at the same time, he learns a language. If his knowledge about the language is good, it is assumed that his in reading will be good too. The language abilities of student in using a language are includes the ability to understand the structure underlying the passage and vocabulary of the language he learns.

d. Thinking Abilities

Thinking ability refers to the students’ ability to link their new experience with their previous experience. Burn says, reading is a thinking process (1984: 10).

Reader should think in the act of recognizing word. Teachers in class can develop the students’ ability in thinking by them appropriate questions to comprehend. The question should be good enough so that the students are not asked to quote parts of the passage only but they must be concerned with the main ideas and understand the purpose of the author.

e. Reading Purposes

Francoise Grellet (1981) states that reading comprehension means extracting the required information from a written text as efficiently as possible, rejecting irrelevant information and finding what we are looking
for, quickly. She establishes that there are two main reasons for us to read:

For pleasure and for information.

6. Reading Techniques

There are four types of reading skills. They are skimming, scanning, extensive reading, and intensive reading (Hedge, 2003: 202).

a. Skimming

Skimming is a technique which is used to look for the gist of what the author is saying without a lot of details. The aims of skimming, are to:

1) get the preview of the materials,
2) get the overview of the materials,
3) decide whether to read the material thoroughly and rapidly or not.

b. Scanning

When student needs to locate specific information, he/she might be able to scan, to finds out the information he/she needs. Scanning is a searching that requires a reader find what he needs, and then he stops and reads as much as necessary in order to answer his question.

c. Reading with Comprehension

Reading comprehension means to understand what has been read. The student’s experiences and their prior knowledge have influence in their success in comprehending. Comprehension process involves the understanding of vocabulary, seeing the relationship among the words and concept, organizing idea, recognizing the author’s purpose, making judgments, and evaluating the level of comprehension have generally
been identified as literal comprehension, interference of interpretative reading and crucial and creative reading.

1) Literal Comprehension

Literal comprehension is the basic of all higher level comprehension skill. Literal idea and fact are usually so clearly stated that one could go back in the passage and underline the information desired.

2) Interference Reading

Interference reading process of idea after goes beneath the surface to sense relations, fact and idea making interference requires more thinking on personal insight.

3) Critical Reading

Critical reading requires a reading with an inquiring mind and with active, creative looking for false statement (Cuctard, 1998: 2).

Those levels of comprehension are interconnected one another. The students will comprehend a reading text through those three stages of comprehension. Therefore, the reading learning process must be sequenced orderly.

So, the research activities focus on:

1) Intensive reading. Intensive reading means reading shorter text to extract specific information.

2) Micro skill of reading

Here are some of the micro-skills involved in reading.

a) Decipher the script. In an alphabetic system or a syllabary, this means establishing a relationship between sounds and symbols. In a
pictograph system, it means associating the meaning of the words with written symbols.

b) Recognize vocabulary.

c) Pick out key words, such as those identifying topics and main ideas and figure out the meaning of the words, such as those identifying topics and main ideas.

d) Figure out the meaning of the words, including unfamiliar vocabulary, from the (written) context.

e) Recognize grammatical words classes; noun, adjective, etc.

f) Detect sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, prepositions, etc.

g) Recognize basic syntactic patterns.

h) Reconstruct and infer situations, goals and participants.

i) Use both knowledge of the world and lexical and grammatical cohesive devices to make the foregoing inferences, predict outcomes, and infer links and connections among the parts of the text.

j) Get the main point or the most important information.

k) Distinguish the main idea from supporting details.

l) Adjust reading strategies to different reading purposes, such as skimming for main ideas or studying in depth.

3) Evaluation

According to Harris (1969: 71), there are two basic kinds of test used to measure the four language skills of the students, the objective test
and the essay test. In this research, the writer will use objective test in her investigation.

a) Test Type

In this type, the writer will use objectives test for the reading comprehension.

b) Micro Skill Categories

The aspects of reading ability assessed include:

(1) Choose keyword, such as those identifying topics and main ideas.
(2) Know the meaning of word, including foreign vocabulary, from the context (written).
(3) Reconstruct and infer situations, goals and participants
(4) Get main point or most important information.

B. Small Group Interaction

1. Small Group Interaction

It is important to initially define a small group. Most researchers define a small group as having at least three and no more than twelve or fifteen members. With three members, coalitions can be formed and some kinds of organization are present. Too large of a group (more than twelve or fifteen members) inhibits the group members' ability to communicate with everyone else in the group.

Most experts agree that group is a number of people when it consists of two people or more interacting with each other. Based on the statement above, it can be said that group is a number of people when it consists of more two people interacting with each other, with or without an assigned leader in such a way that
each person influences, and is influenced by another person in the group. Small
group itself, according to Baker is three or more people interacting face to face,
with or without an assigned leader in such a way that each person influences, and
is influenced by another person in the group (Fowler, 1980: 310).

Based on the statement above it can be said that small group interaction is
the process by which three or more members of a group exchange verbal and
nonverbal messages in an attempt to influence one another (Tubbs, 2004: 157-
166).

The classroom organization does not deal directly with the reading
process, or with materials, methods, or approaches to teaching reading
comprehension. Yet, without good classroom organization and classroom
management, reading instruction may be totally ineffective. It is enough for
teachers to know what organizational patterns and management techniques are
conductive in learning.

Strategies that can be applied in the learning activities is a small group.
As for size, interaction and purpose of small groups are:

a. Size

Most researchers define a small group as having at least three and no more
than twelve or fifteen members. A group needs to have at least three members,
otherwise it would simply be a dyad. With three members, coalitions can be
formed and some kind of organization is present. Too large of a group (more
than twelve or fifteen members) inhibits the group member’s ability to
communicate with everyone else in the group.
b. Interaction

A group member must be able to communicate freely and openly with all of the other members of the group. Groups will develop norms about discussion and group members will develop roles which will affect the group’s interaction.

c. Goals

A group must have a common purpose or goal and they must work together to achieve that goal. The goal brings the group together and holds it together through conflict and tension.

In using Small Group Interaction, the class has to be in charge in each of the group. The writer also believes the interaction group applied to junior high school students still has to get more directions from the teacher. Hence, the students might have opportunity to arrange the chairs and tables in order to have communicative class using a small group interaction in the classroom after they get the instructions from the teacher.

In small group itself, according to Baker (1987: 159), there is more face to face interaction the group members. Johnson (1975: 78) gives solution that students should be arranged so that each student can see all other members of his group and can be heard without shouting and disturbing the other groups.

The small group interaction learning can be conceptualized in various ways and that proponents of the techniques have assessed only certain types of model. But when the group has found out how to plan and work together, they may not all agree. The members of the group know well enough to really trust
each other, and they still have to determine each other’s skills, knowledge, situation and attitudes, they often feel comfortable and “lost” (Barker, 1989: 168).

2. The Process of Small Group Interaction in Classroom

The classroom organization does not deal directly with the reading process, or with materials, methods, or approaches to teaching reading comprehension. Yet, without good classroom organization and classroom management, reading instruction may be totally ineffective. It is enough for teachers to know that organizational patterns and management techniques are conductive in learning.

Nunan (1989: 91) points out that setting in the classroom are important. Setting here refers to the classroom arrangements specifying or implying the task, and it also requires consideration whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly in the classroom. For example, an activity involving small group will be an

3. The Application of Small Group Interaction

The application of small group in the classroom has many steps:

First, start one small group that works well together. Let them arrange their desks in a small circle and proceed to plan and make choices about their project. It would be a good idea for them to elect a chairman and to carry out their ideas. In this way, they will have a full range of group work experience and will have encountered several of the problems in working together that will crop up again and again.

Second, separate individual from their group to each small group and provide them as leaders for other groups. The separate individual from that group
can the serve effectively as helping persons in new groups who have no experience.

Third, set some well defined, accomplishable tasks that provide early reinforcement. If the group is getting the job done, the students will be more satisfied with the group and with their participation in it.

Fourth, work with each group specifically in turn. This should be done so that the students are aware of your attention and feel comfortable in knowing that your time is theirs. Sit down with them and systematically explore the “state of the project” with each group member. This activity can increase student’s motivation in learning.

Fifth, provide resource materials of several kinds.

The teacher also can give the media; such as picture or real to increase student’s intake of information sessions to be more understandable to all group members. Material for making media aids for the group report should also be provided.

Sixth, if the students getting their job done, the teacher asks the student’s in each group to report and discuss the result of student’s small group interaction and develop suggestion for a brief, lively information sharing session (Lapp, 1975: 235-236).

4. Teacher and Learner’s Role in the Reading Comprehension Activities

The teaching of reading comprehension using a small group interaction means that the class has to be communicative. Nunan (1989: 10) informs : too many will consider the communicative task a piece of classroom work that involves learner in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the
target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.

The researcher in communicative classroom according to Breen and Caldin as quoted by Nunan (1989: 87) has three main roles. The first is to act as facilitator for the communicative process, the second is to act as participant, and the third is to act as an observer and learner. While learners have more active role, they can communicate directly with each other, rather than exclusive with the teacher. As an activity is carried out in a small group work, it makes it possible for a greater amount of individual participation than when it is done in the class teaching situation.

Thus, it is clear that using a small group interaction, the learner and the teacher can interaction with each other in the classroom. Nunan (1989: 87) points out that the interaction can be either between the teacher and the students, or between students as they interact in small group works. The writer here concludes that in a classroom, students will be motivated by cooperative interaction in a group.

C. Basic Assumption

Reading skill is the most important thing in mastering language because I would be useful to improve their comprehension of a text. We can see most of the students still find difficultly in reading or comprehend a text when they are in teaching and learning process. The difficulties maybe come from the teacher when delivering material and from the students themselves when facing the text. Small group interaction is one way that can stimulate students and cooperation in reading activity in the class.
Hopefully, through applying small group interaction in reading activities, the students can get any ideas, to understand the content of a text. It can stimulate their motivation and interest to read. Consequently, by applying small group interaction, their reading comprehension will be better.