

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

At this point, the writer explains many theoretical frameworks which will deal with the data go in the field. The theoretical framework focus mainly on definition of reading comprehension, the purpose of reading technique of reading, reading process, and some types of reading comprehension problems.

A. Definition of Reading Comprehension

1. Reading

Reading is one of the language skills that has various definitions: Reading is one of general language skills, and a component of written communication (Tampubolon, 1987: 5). Reading is an active skill.

It constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself question (Grellet, 1988: 7). Reading is converting printed symbols into ideas (Ramelan, 1990: 1)

Reading as the meaning interpretation of printed or written verbal symbols (Nuttal in Simandjutak, 1988: 14). It means that reading is a result of the interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent language and the reader's language skills, cognitive skills, and the knowledge of

the word. In this process, the reader tries to recreate the meaning intended by the writer. Mackay in Simandjutak (1988: 14) Gives the definition that reading is an active process. Carlk and Silberstein in Simandjutak (1988: 15) define reading as an active cognitive process of interacting with print and monitoring comprehension to establish meaning. Reading is an instaneous 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 is combined with and the visual (written) information results in this comprehending the message. Therefore, reading is actually a conversation of sorts between a writer and reader. Reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text; in this case, most particularly with the reader's knowledge of the experiential content of the text (Nunan, 1991: 70). Reading is the process of putting the reader in contact and communication with ideas (Simanjuntak, 1988: 3).

Reading is getting meaning from printed or written materials (Finochiaro, 1986: 77), and in Tarigan (1994: 8), reading is bringing meaning and getting meaning from printed or written material. It means that understanding a written text

means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. The reader looks at and understand what has been written.

The key here is “Understand“, so the readers need to understand everything in the texts. The reader is not a passive object, fed with letters, words, and sentences, but is actively working on the text, and is able to arrive at understanding without looking every letter and word.

From the definitions above, it can be summarized than reading is a process to understand the message available in the text. In other word, reading is a process of getting meaning intended by the author from printed or written information. During this process, a reader combines his language skills and knowledge of the real world to graps the meaning.

2. Reading Comprehension

There are lots of reading comprehension definitions, and one of them is proposed by Finochiaro (1986: 77), who says that reading comprehension means understanding information as efficiently as possible. There are some steps of readingcomprehension such as prior knowledge, reading text, comprehension tasks and language exercise.

Prior knowledge consists of activities which are aimed to activate the prior knowledge of the students through two methods: vocabulary preview where the students will try to elicit the meaning of some difficult words before they read the text; and the second method is anticipation of context where the students will be given time to anticipate the content of the text based on a given direction.

The second step is *reading text* consisting of a reading passage, which is needed to be read. The third is *comprehension tasks*, which consists of three main activities namely literal level (there are a number of statements which can be found in the text) and interpretive level (there are a number of statements, where each of them must be an implicit conclusion of the text). The last level is application level (there are also some statements where each of them must be an appropriate generalization of the text). *language exercise* focuses on reviewing the linguistic device from the text in order to reinforce the students' comprehension ability.

A study conducted by Aslanian in Nunan (1991: 69) shows that schematic knowledge structures can either facilitate or inhibit comprehension according to whether they are over- or underutilized.

If a reader relies too heavily on his knowledge and ignores the limitations imposed by the text, or vice versa, then he will not be able to comprehend the intended meaning of the writer.

Whether one has understood the text or not depends very much on text variables such as sentence structure and length, vocabulary intensity, number of new concepts introduced, the difficulty and the novelty of the subject matter, etc to understand the nature of the act of reading more clearly and comprehensively. One needs also to find out and describe the reader's strategies and reactions with regard to the reading tasks, and to see how the reader copes with the reading tasks and solves the problems (Aslanian, 1985: 20).

From those descriptions, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is defined as an ability to comprehend the message from printed or written material.

B. The Purpose of Reading

The main purpose of reading is looking for and getting information from books or texts. Readers have to understand the idea, the context, and the meaning of the text or passages. According to Tampubolon (1987: 210 – 211), there are some purpose of reading. Among others are *reading for study* which is reading to find out certain information to solve the study problems. *Reading for business* is to find

out and to understand some information about business. The other purpose of reading is *reading for fun* whose purpose is to be an activity in leisure time and satisfy the feeling and imagination, and the reading materials can be novel, newspaper, article, and essay. Grellet (1981: 4) supported the aims of reading to get pleasure and information (in order to find out something or in order to do with information one got).

C. Technique of Reading

Reading technique has important role in understanding the material as it helps students read efficiently and quickly. According to Walter in Nunan (1991: 71 – 72), good readers utilize the following strategy when encountering a difficult text. First of all, they read slowly, pause to consider what they have read. Then, they reread the text, look from one part of the text to other parts in order to make connections between these different parts, and to make a summary of what they have read. She claims that the people who read in this way remember both the general point and the details of what they have read better than those who use other strategies.

At least there are three techniques of reading proposed by Grellet (1988: 7). *First is skimming*, which is reading fast to get general idea of the text. Skimming is a technique of reading when the readers go through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to

know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. Skimming involves processing texts: Selectively to get the main ideas and discourse topic as efficiently as possible, carefully to main ideas and the discourse topic as efficiently as possible, rapidly and selectively to locate information so as to complete written assignments. The aim of skimming exercise is certainly not to encourage the students to read all texts such a superficial way (this would be in contradiction with the principle of flexibility mentioned earlier), but should make the students better readers, that is reader who can decide quickly what they want or need to read.

The second technique of reading proposed by Grellet is *scanning*. Scanning is a very fast reading. When scanning, only try to locate specific information and often do not often follow the linearity of the passage to do so, simply let the eyes wander over the text until one finds what is looking for, whether a name, a date, or a less specific information. Scanning is a searching that requires to float over the material until a reader finds what he needs, then stops and reads as necessary in order to answer the question. The exercise suggested to practice scanning also puts the students in an authentic situation where they would naturally scan the text rather than read it. The students solve a specific problem as quickly as possible, which is only possible by means of scanning. Scanning in looking quickly over a text in order to locate specific point of information.

The last technique of reading proposed by Grellet is *sensitizing*. The aim of this action is to provide exercise that will develop the strategies that students need to cope with unfamiliar words and complex or apparently obscure sentences. It should ensure that they do not stumble on every difficulty or get discouraged from the outset.

D. Evaluating Reading

Reading is the process of understanding and interpreting to get out of the printed message or written text. The main purpose of reading is to find out and get information, it includes the content and the meaning.

According to Brown (2004: 188), there are some macro skills and micro skills representing the spectrum of possibilities for objective in the assessment of reading comprehension.

1. Macro Skills

- a. To recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation
- b. To recognize the communicative function of written texts, according to form and purpose
- c. To infer the context that is not explicit by using background knowledge
- d. To describe events, ideas, etc., infer links and connection between events, deduce, causes and effect, detect such relation

as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification

- e. To distinguish between literal and implied meanings
- f. To detect cultural specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata
- g. To develop and use a battery of reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of the words from context, and activating schemata for interpretation of texts

2. Micro Skills

- a. To discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthography of English
- b. To retain chunks of language of different lengths in short term memories
- c. To process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose
- d. To recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance
- e. To recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), system (e.g., tenses, agreement), pattern, rules, and elliptical forms
- f. To recognize that plural meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms

- g. To recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between among clauses

In making set of question in reading test, it covers the comprehension of these features (Brown, 2004: 206)

1. Main idea (topic)
2. Expression/idioms/phrases in context
3. Inference (implied detail)
4. Grammatical features
5. Detail (scanning for specially stated detail)
6. Excluding facts not written (unstated detail)
7. Grammatical features
8. Supporting idea (s)
9. Vocabulary context

Based on the explanations above, the macro skills and micro skills that will be used to evaluate students' reading comprehension are as follows:

1. Macro Skills
 - a. Skimming text for the gist and for the main idea, scanning text for specific information (names, dates, key words)
 - b. Understanding given information stated in the passage
 - c. Understanding context inference that is not explicit by using background knowledge

2. Micro Skills

- a. Identifying referents of pronoun
- b. Using context to guess meaning of unfamiliar words
- c. Understanding cohesive in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses

In this research, multiple-choice test is used because it offered a useful way of testing reading comprehension. This method is good enough to measure the ability of the students in authority of the sentences and in using main idea, vocabulary, inference, reference, and identifying. Those could be shown in this table.

Table 2.1

The Item Numbers of Components Reading Comprehension

Component in Reading Tested in The Instrument	Number of Items
Main idea	1, 5, 7, 17
Vocabulary	3, 13, 16
Inference	2, 9, 10, 11
Reference	4, 6, 20
Identifying	8, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19

E. Reading Process

The complex reading process consist of two major sub process. The first level is simple “identification”, and the second level is “interpretation” (Simandjuntak, 1988: 5). The process of identification is the way of determining rapidly and accurately just what the text says. Good readers know the language in its printed form and convert print to language skillfully. They will be able to recognize words and phrases on the printed page for the most part automatically with fewer errors and more quickly and more rapidly in context. Therefore, good decoding skills are crucial to good reading.

Information is simply defined as “the reduction of uncertainty”. At this level reading is a kind information processing, the transferring of specific “bits” of information from one system to another.

To make any sense of information thus acquired, a good reader must relate it to what he already knows about the subject at hand to his cognitive structure, and in combining the two, he must in fact create a new structure of meaning. This is the process called “Interpretation”.

At this level, the reader must negotiate a meaning the writer of the text.

There are three models of the reading process proposed by Simandjuntak (1988: 7).

1. Bottom – up Model

The bottom – up model of reading process is that “reading is a precise process involving exact, detailed sequential perceptions

and identification of letters, words, spelling, patterns and larger language units“(Eskey in Simandjutak, 1988: 7). This model assumes that a reader proceeds by moving his eyes from words, then combining the words to form the phrases, clauses, and sentences of the text.

2. Top – down Model

Top – down processing occurs as the system makes general prediction based on higher level, general schemata and then searches the input for information (Carell and Eisterhold in Simandjutak, 1988: 7). In this model, the process of comprehension deals with the background knowledge to predict the meaning of the text. It means that a reader reads a text by reading the sentence, and then tries to find the information by guessing the meaning.

3. Interactive Model

This model deals with a particular type of cognitive behavior, which is based on certain kinds of knowledge which form a part of the reader’s cognitive structure in the brain. The word “interactive” refers to both the interaction of the reader’s several kinds of knowledge and the interaction of the reader and the text. The interactive model predicts that good readers will not become progressively less concerned with identification, but rather progressively more efficient at it as they develop their interactive skills.

F. Some Types of Reading Comprehension Problem

There are five types of reading comprehension problems (Sharpe, 2002: 303)

a. Reading for main ideas

By reading main ideas, a reader identifies the point of view of the author. Main idea of paragraph is one sentences that tells what all of the sentences say about topic. In other words, the main idea is expressed in a single statement which summarizes all the idea in the paragraph. A main idea is a complete sentence that contains a subject, a verb, and usually a complement. A main idea contains a topic and controlling idea, and it names the topic and limits the topic to a specific details. The position of main idea in a paragraph not give any specific details.

The position of main idea in a paragraph is varies. It maybe in the first paragraph or in the last paragraph.

Example :

Bali, Indonesia-the island of gods-lost its innocence at around 23.15 hours on Saturday 12 october 2002, when terrorist triggered a bomb placed in front of the US Embassy. Two subsequent blasts followed, in legian, kuta tearing through the popular nightclubs of Paddy's and Sari Club killing almost 200 international tourists and locals alike, with many more injured.

The effect of the blasts triggered a crisis and the like which had never been seen in Bali before and indeed shocked the world.

The main idea of that paragraph is ...

- a. Paddy's and Sari Club were very popular in Bali.
- b. Bali lost its innocence after the bomb blasted.
- c. almost two hundred people were killed by the Kuta bombing.
- d. the tourism industry in Bali decreased because of the tragedy.

Answer :

The main idea of that paragraph is Bali lost its innocence after the bomb blast (b).

From those explanations, it can be concluded that the main idea is the essence of the paragraph, or the important idea that the author develops throughout the paragraph.

b. Using Contexts for Vocabulary

Context is the combination of vocabulary and grammar that surrounds a word. Contexts help the reader make general prediction about meaning. If a reader knows the general meaning of sentence, making prediction from contexts is very important when one reads a foreign language. In that way, a reader can read and understand the meaning of a passage without stopping to look up every word in dictionary.

Example :

At the age of sixty-six, Harland Sanders had to auction off everything he owned in order to pay his debts. Once the successful proprietor of a large restaurant, Sanders saw his business suffer from the construction of a new freeway that by passed his establishment and rerouted the traffict that had formerly passed.

(Sharpe, 2002: 305)

The meaning of underlined word is

- a. owner
- b. buyer
- c. seller
- d. businessman

Answer :

Proprietor means owner (a)

The understanding about meaning of words in paragraph is important. If the readers understand the meaning of each word in paragraph, they also understand of the paragraph.

- c. Inferences

In a reading passage, the readers will find a direct statement of fact. That is called evidence other times, readers will not find a direct statement, and then they will need to use the evidence they have to mean inference. An inference is a logical conclusion based

on evidence. It can be about the passage or about the author's view point.

Example :

When an acid dissolved in water, the acid molecule divides into two parts, a hydrogen ion and another ion. An ion is an atom or a group of atoms which has an electrical charge, the charge can be either positive or negative. If hydrochloric acid is mixed with water, for example, it divides into hydrogen ions and chlorine ions.

A strong acid ionizes to a great extent, but a weak acid does not ionize so much. The strength of an acid, therefore, depends on how many hydrogen ions are produced. It is interesting that nitric acid and sulfuric acid become greatly ionized whereas boric acid and carbonic acid do not.

(Sharpe, 2002: 306 – 307)

1. What kind of acid is sulfuric acid?
2. What kind of acid is boric acid?

Answer :

1. A strong acid ionizes to a great extent, and sulfuric acid becomes greatly ionized.

Conclusion: sulfuric acid is a strong acid

2. A weak acid does not ionize so much and boric acid does not ionize greatly

Inference is a conclusion based on the statement in the which is explained by the author in the passage.

d. Reference

Usually, after reading a passage, a reader will be asked to find the antecedent of a pronoun. An antecedent is a word or phrase to which a pronoun refers. In the texts there are pronouns such as “its,” “them,” or “their,” and then in the questions of that text, readers will be asked to locate the reference word or phrase in the passage.

Example :

The national road, also known as the Cumberland Road, was constructed in the early 1800s to provide transportation between the established commercial areas of the East and northwest territory. By 1818, the road had reached Wheeling, West Virginia, 130 miles from its point of origin in Cumberland, Maryland. The cost was a monumental thirteen dollars per mile.

Upon reaching the Ohio River, the National Road became one of the major trade routes to the western states and territories, providing Baltimore with a trade advantage over neighboring cities. In order to compete, New York State authorized the construction of the Erie Canal and Philadelphia initiated a transportation plan to link it with Pittsburgh. Towns along the

rivers, canals, and the new National Road became important trade centers.

(Sharpe, 2002: 308)

1. The word “its” in the first paragraph line 4 refers to
 - a. The road
 - b. The cost
 - c. The areas
 - d. Transportation
2. The word “it” in second paragraph line 4 refers to
 - a. The Philadelphia
 - b. The rivers
 - c. The Canal
 - d. The National Road

Answer :

1. The word “its” refers to the road (a)
2. The word “it” refers to the canal (c)

From those descriptions and examples, reference is to find the pronouns which refer to certain understand in paragraph.

e. Identifying

Example :

All music consists of two elements, expression and design. Expression is an inexact and subjective and may be enjoyed in a personal or instinctive way. Design, on the other hand, is exact and must be analyzed objectively in order to be understood and appreciated. The folk song, for example, has a definite has medical design that relies on simple repetition with a definite beginning and ending. A folk song generally consists of one stanza of verse.

Because of their communal and usually uncertain origin, folk songs are often popular verse set to music. They are not always recorded and tend to be passed on in kind of musical version of oral history. Each singer revises and perfects the song. In part as a consequence of this continuous revision process, most folk song are almost perfect in their constuction and design. A particular singer's interpretation of the folk song may provide an interesting expression, but the simple design that underlines the song itself is stable and enduring.

(Sharpe, 2002: 307)

All of the followings are true of a folk song EXCEPT

- a. There is a clear start and finish
- b. The origin is often not known
- c. The design may change in the interpretation

d. Simple repetition is characteristic of its design

Answer :

The design may change in the interpretation (c)

Usually after and reading a passage, the reader would be asked to identify exceptions, it depends on the statements in questions and the author's need.

