

CHAPTER II
FACTORS CAUSING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN READING
COMPREHENSION

A. The Nature of Reading

1. Definition of Reading

There are four skills that the students have to master. They are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This aim is reasonable since the punch line of teaching foreign language is to be able to communicate in other language. Communicate using other language is not simple as talking in native language because it means shifting frames and norms. There is something we should not say or taboo. Shortly, studying other language involves not only words and structures, it is kind of thinking differently about language and communication. The end of process in studying other language is cross culture understanding. The concern of this phenomenon is to understand the way of thinking by reading. According to Harmer (2001: 199), Reading is a receptive skill. Receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. In this aspect, the cognitive processes involved in reading are similar to those employed while listening. Though, in both, students are engaged in decoding a message rather than encoding, reading is not simply an act of absorbing information only. It is communicative act that involve creating discourse from text.

From that definition reading can be regarded as a complex process means to get information from the printed page it is receiving idea and impression from author via printed page. It can be said that reading is interpreting sigh, letters, or symbols by taking meaning. In other words, reading is interpreting graphic symbols, which involves an interaction between the researcher and the reader trough text. In a very sort and proper definition, reading is interaction between a reader and the text. According to Brown (2001:292) reading aims can concentrate around the

development of any aspect of skilled reading. The development such as improve the students' motivation, increase awareness of different of reading purposes including finding out what the text is about, location a particular item of information, entertaining one self, informing oneself, performing a task. The aims of reading can also develop different reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and reading intensively, and improve comprehension skill.

It is necessary for the teachers to motivate and help students' to read, it means that the teachers has a big duty to teach students' how to motivate and help the students' to comprehend in reading based on the students' learning. By reading the students' can learn more about what they need to know in reading texts. Reading is also a good way to improve our general English. One can only learn from reading, however, if what one reads is not too difficult. For this reason, it is important to know what makes texts difficult and how we can improve our chances to learn new vocabulary and structure.

2. The Purposes of Reading

The main purpose of reading is to understand all the information contained in the reading text to develop the readers' intellectual property. Wallace (1992: 6-7) classifies the purposes of reading asked for the personal reasons as follow:

a. Reading for Survival

Reading for survival is reading a text that is very crucial for life, for examples are a warning sign, an admonition sign, an instruction sign, etc. Survival reading serves the immediate need.

b. Reading for Learning

It is expected to be exclusive in school. Reading is the support to learning in the class. The reader needs to translate the text, literally or metaphorically, to learn vocabulary, to identify useful structure, to use a text as a model for writing and to practice pronunciation.

c. Reading for Pleasure

Reading for pleasure is a reading activity to get happiness by enjoying the rhythm or rhyme of the text. Meanwhile reading is very important to do for all people as what has been stated, there are main reasons for reading, that is reading for pleasure.

Moreover, Brown (2001:306) mentions, basically, reading process involves the readers mind of the ideas, information. The goal of reading is also important for effective teaching emphasizes four points:

- 1) Encouragement of the full use of the individuals capacities in reading, so that it will have maximum influence on their welfare and also lead to self-realization;
- 2) Efficient use of reading as a tool of learning and inquiry; and also for relaxation and escape;
- 3) Constant broadening of students' reading interest;
- 4) Encouragement of an attitude toward reading which will lead to life time interest in reading of many kinds and for many purposes.

3. Strategies of Reading

Reading strategy is a method or technique to absorb information conveyed through written media. Reading strategies are used by readers to get messages from what they read. Good readers will use it often. They use this strategy before, during, and after reading. Reading strategy help the students become the purposeful and active reader to control their own reading in order or comprehend the whole meaning of a text. Brown (2004: 188-189) mentions principle strategies of reading, as follows:

- a. Identify the purpose of reading.
- b. Apply spelling rules and conversations for bottom up decoding.
- c. Use lexical analysis (prefixes, roots, suffixes, etc.) to determine to mean.
- d. Guess at meaning (of words, idioms, etc.) when you are not certain.
- e. Skim the text for the gist and mains ideas.
- f. Scan the text for specific information.

- g. Use silent reading techniques for rapid processing.
- h. Use margin notes, outlines, charts, or semantic map for understanding and retaining information.
- i. Distinguish between literal and implied meaning
- j. Capitalize on discuss markers to process

Reading aims can concentrate around the development of any aspect of skilled reading. The development such as improving the students' motivation, increasing awareness different of reading purposes including finding out what the text is about, the location of a particular item of information, entertaining oneself, informing oneself, performing a task. The aims of reading can also develop different reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, and reading intensively, and improve comprehension skills.

The teacher can apply some techniques of reading to the students'. Some of those are skimming, scanning and cooperative learning. According to Gebhard (1996:203), skimming is used to quickly identify the main ideas of a text. When the students' read the text, they are probably not reading it word by word, instead they are skimming the text. Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading. Students' often skim when they have lost of material to read in a limited amount of time.

They are many techniques that can be used when skimming. Some students' read the first and last paragraphs using headings, summarizes and other organizers as they move down the page or screen. Students' might read the title, subtitles, subheading, and illustrations. Consider reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This technique is useful when they are seeking specific information rather than reading for comprehension.

In addition, the other technique used in reading is scanning. Scanning is a technique you often use when looking up a word in the text, students search for key words or ideas. In most cases, students know what

you are looking for, so they are concentrating on finding a particular answer. Gebhard (1996:203) says that scanning involves moving your eyes quickly down the page seeking specific words and phrases. Scanning is also used when students' first find a resource to determine whether it will answer their questions. Once they have scanned the text, they might go back and skim it.

When scanning, the students' should look for the author's uses of organizers such as numbers, letters, steps, or the words, first, second, or next. Look for words that are bold faced, italics, or in a different font size, style, or color. Sometimes the author will put key ideas in the margin.

B. Reading Comprehension

1. Definition of Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is a thinking process, it is thinking through reading. Therefore, it is dependent upon the readers' basic cognitive and intellectual ability or skill, their background of experience such as vocabulary. Nunan (1989:33) says "It is important to bear in mind that reading is not an invariant skill, that there are different types of reading skills that correspond to the many different purposes we have for reading". It shows that there are some types of reading that we have to know relating to the purposes of reading itself.

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

Related to the explanation of reading comprehension, Olson and Diller (1982:42) refer reading comprehension to a term used to identify those skills needed to understand and apply information contained in a written material. This term refers to the activity of the students' to find out

the detail in texts. In the words, the students' should be able to gain the information from reading text.

In teaching reading comprehension a teacher needs to be well-prepared. It means that to improve the quality of the teaching learning process of reading comprehension, the teacher needs to prepare materials, teaching media, techniques and method of teaching. They are interdependent in teaching learning process of reading comprehension. Therefore, the teacher should develop teaching reading comprehension practice. one way that can be used by the teacher is by asking the students' to answer question. To be effective, question and answer should be designed to ask for information. That means in every question and answer activity, there must be a communicative purpose and an information gap to be filled.

Based on the definition of reading comprehension above, the researcher concludes that reading comprehension refers to the ability of the students to identify the information from passages and comprehend the all things in the passages themselves.

2. Aspects of Reading Comprehension

There are several aspects that must be understood when reading. According to Nuttal (1982:139), there are five aspect of reading comprehension which the students should comprehend a text well, such as:

a. Main Idea

Main idea is the core idea of a paragraph. A text consist of some main ideas that spread out in each paragraph. It controls the arrangement of the message of information that is written by the author.

b. Supporting Detail

A paragraph consist facts, statements, examples-specific which guide us to full understanding of the main idea. They clarify, illuminate, explain, describe, expand and illustrate the main idea are supporting details.

c. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the aspect that relates to the meaning of words. It will determine people in comprehending the text. Someone will not be able to comprehend the text if they do not know the meaning of words.

d. Reference

Each reference word has its own grammar and when learners have difficulty understanding these words in a context, this grammar should be used as the basis for preparation before the exercise and for discussion.

e. Inference

Inference is the process of arriving at a hypothesis, idea, judgment or drawing conclusions which refers to information is never clearly stated in the text.

this research, the researcher classifies the five aspect into three, that are : word meaning (vocabulary), reference and state and implied information which consists of main idea, supporting detail and inference.

C. Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

1. Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

Difficulty in understanding the text is usually caused by several factors. Oberholzer (2005:11) stated that difficulty with reading can have an increasingly negative effect on the students' schoolwork and tertiary education, as reading requirements become greater and more extensive. If the students find difficulties in comprehending the text, it will affect their study. They will have difficulty in understanding the texts in the future. The students will also not please with English. In reading the source of difficulty can be divided into two kinds:

a. Inter-lingual Difficulty

This type of difficulty is cases by interference coming from the students' native language. Possible interference can be predicted partly

from the knowledge of differences between first language and the second language. The learners of a foreign language make mistake in the target language by the effect their mother tongue.

b. Intra-lingual Difficulty

This type of difficulty is these which reflect the grammar characteristic of rules of learning. Students may make a mistake in the target language since they do not know the target language very well; they have difficulties in using it.

2. The Factors of Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

Comprehension problems can be caused by a variety of different factors. It may be due to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Weak comprehension surely makes the students difficult to fill a reading texts exercise in examination. Some factors of causes of poor comprehension followed by Westwood (2008:88) are:

a. Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary is the most important component in creating meaning. That is because the texts consist of several words namely vocabulary. Is a student has difficulty understanding what he or she is reading, it is worth consider whether there is a serious mismatch between the students' own knowledge of word meanings and the word used in the text.

b. Lack of Fluency

Some students often find these difficulties because they are not reading well. Students who read very slowly or faster often comprehend poorly. Slow reading tends to restrict cognitive capacity to the low level processing of letters and words rather than allowing full attention to be devoted to higher order ideas and concepts within the text. But very fast reading may result in accurate word recognition and important details being overlooked.

c. Lack the Familiarity with the Subject Matter

Commonly, at the first meeting the teacher directly gives apperception from the school textbook. Whereas it is better to provide information first by other terms like video, posters, mini lecture, etc. But in fact, many teachers give introduction theory use school textbook directly. It makes the students poor in comprehension.

d. Difficulty Level of The Text (Reliability)

The difficulty level of text is a major factor influencing whether or not material can be read with understanding. Text that is complex in terms of concepts, vocabulary, sentence length and structure is difficult for readers to process. It means that the students have to read based on their level. For example the students at eight grades are taught narrative text, it also taught at the ninth grade. But the level of the text is different.

e. Inadequate Use of Effective Reading Strategies

This causes of difficulties which always happened in teaching and learning process. Actually the students need variety strategies from the teacher, because the teachers as the facilitator and the manager in the classroom. Strategy in reading is extremely needed for enhancing their comprehension. Unfortunately, there is evidence that reading is not being taught as a thinking activity and many teachers do not spend much time instructing students in the use of comprehension strategies.

f. Weak Verbal Reasoning

This difficulty is caused by poor students' connection between new information and their existing knowledge. But it depends on the students' ability to reason while reading process. It determined by an individual's level intelligence.

g. Problems with Processing Information

Everybody has different working memory capacity. Whereas in reading process, the reader should has enough memory for receiving message. In order to maintain the meaning of text as the sentence and paragraphs accumulate, a reader has to be able to keep relevant

information within working memory and make necessary connection between ideas. Therefore, the implication of teaching are that slow readers should be encouraged re read the material, several times if necessary, in order to process the information successfully.

h. Problems in Recalling Information After Reading

Recall depends on the students giving adequate attention to reading task and knowing that is important to remember details. Commonly the students found these problems which make the difficulties in comprehending the text. That is because students poor in attention while reading. Recall is strongest when readers connect new information in the text to their previous knowledge and experience, and when they rehearse key points from the texts. Using mind map or graphic organizer can help students to recall information from the texts.