

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This is an introductory part of the research work which subsumes background/context of the study, statement of the problems, rationale of the study, significance of the study and delimitations of the study. This provides an insight into the area of present secondary level English curriculum and reading comprehension.

1.1 General Background

The present secondary level English curriculum is based on the communicative approach to language teaching. It aims at developing communicative competence in the students. Therefore, the textbook of this level has focused on those activities that foster the communicative skills of the students. Developing communicative competence in the students means developing four language skills in the students, including other aspects of communication. Among other several skills, reading is one of the basic skills to be learned by the students. In order to have a competence in handling the language, the knowledge of reading skill is a must. In this sense, we, as teacher, should focus on teaching reading skills and activities. Students merely get mastery over the language provided that they are able to handle the reading texts efficiently. Considering these aspects, existing secondary level English curriculum has incorporated different sorts of reading texts in each unit. So, what is to be deemed in these texts are to be taught properly to the students. Reading comprehension is the most important aspect of teaching reading. Unless students are able to comprehend the reading texts, they cannot decipher the texts. In that sense, students should have good reading comprehension ability. If teachers know the students' reading comprehension ability in advance, they can easily teach this skill to the students appropriately. Reading encompasses different sorts of texts. The good knowledge of those reading texts is pre-requisite to have proficiency in English language. Reading here means reading comprehension. Unless the students comprehend the reading texts, this is not reading in the real sense. That is to

say, merely barking at the words is the reading without understanding its intended meaning or sense. Therefore, comprehension plays a significant role in reading. For learning language efficiently, having a good command over reading skill is preferred. Taking into account the worth of reading skill, the present secondary level English curriculum of Nepal has focused on reading skill. We can see this in the organization of the texts in the textbook of grade nine and ten. Reading texts have highly been focused and included in the textbook. There are reading texts in each unit. Students are expected to read all these reading texts thoroughly. Similarly, teachers are supposed to teach the given reading texts accordingly. In accordance with the English curriculum of secondary level, reading skill covers 40 % of the total marks in the SLC examination. If students have a good reading comprehension ability, they can secure good marks in the SLC board exam, together with the improvement in the competence in the English language. In this context, this study has attempted to find out the reading comprehension ability of the SLC candidates in reading texts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Reading is one of the basic skills of language. It is the most important language skill, for we cannot get knowledge without reading skill. We can get different sorts of knowledge by reading. Therefore, reading skill should be properly developed in the students. In the context of Nepal, reading is primarily taught at the secondary level schools. According to the English curriculum of secondary level, this skill covers 40% in the SLC examination. However, this skill is neglected and not taught properly. Therefore, it is important to know the reading comprehension ability of the students. If we know the reading comprehension ability of the students, students can be taught properly. However, the problem is that we do not know the exact reading comprehension ability of the students. So, the students have the paucity of reading skills. They are not going to pursue their higher studies with ease. They are confronting with many difficulties to cope with higher study. Therefore, an attempt has

been made to gauge the reading comprehension level of the students to bring change in their existing level.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Reading is one of the important language skills. For the development of reading comprehension ability in the secondary level students, reading is focused at this level. The textbook of this level includes reading texts in each unit. Furthermore, reading skills are also focused in the examination. Forty percent of the total marks is allocated for reading skill in the SLC board examination. The course expects students to have a good reading comprehension ability. Similarly, teachers are expected to teach this skill well to the students. Not only are there different sorts of reading texts, but also there are different types of students (boys versus girls), schools (public versus private) in our country which cause variation in the development of reading comprehension. The actual reading comprehension ability of the students can be inferred from the reading texts. Similarly, SLC examination is taken as of the great importance in the Nepalese context. That is why, it is imperative to find out the reading comprehension ability of SLC candidates. The texts here refer to the reading texts which they have not gone through in advance. If done so, it will certainly assist to teach this skill properly and improve the reading comprehension ability of the students, resulting in the upliftment of SLC result as well. Therefore, this topic was selected in order to find out the actual reading comprehension level of the students. .

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The present study had the following objectives:

- a) To find out the reading comprehension ability of SLC candidates.
- b) To compare the reading comprehension ability of the students in terms of gender.
- c) To suggest some pedagogical implications.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was oriented to find out the answers to the following research questions:

- a) What is the reading comprehension ability of SLC candidates?
- b) Who (boy or girl) has better reading comprehension ability?
- c) What is the students' attitude toward reading?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has made an attempt to find out the reading comprehension ability of the SLC candidates of different schools. Thus, research findings will be very helpful for the teachers to teach this skill properly and efficiently to the secondary level students by preparing materials in accordance with the need and interest of the students and their present level. As this skill covers 40 % of the total marks in the examination, it will also help to improve the result of the exam. The findings will also be very useful to find out the students' level of reading comprehension. Furthermore, the findings of the study will be fruitful and work as the guidelines for the syllabus designers, materials writers, policy makers and other concerned stakeholders to devise appropriate teaching learning materials and design syllabus to cater the need and level of the students.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

-) The study was limited to Arghakhanchi district.
-) The study was limited to the students of grade ten only.
-) The study was only focused on reading comprehension.
-) The study was limited to only 30 students of public schools.

1.8 Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

The definitions of some related terms have been mentioned below:

Comprehension: Ability to comprehend and decipher the reading texts.

Ability: A level of skill or intelligence

Communicative competence: Ability to use language appropriately in appropriate situations

Attitude: one's thinking or feeling about something.

CHAPTER: TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter consists of theoretical framework and conceptual framework of the study. Similarly, the details of the reviewed literature and their implications for the study have been included in this chapter as well.

2.1 Review of Related Theoretical Literature

Language is the means of communication. Human beings express their feelings, emotions, desires and ideas with the help of language. Therefore, all the normal people of the world speak at least one language (usually mother tongue, i.e. first language). However, the 'language' is used by many people, it is not easy to define it. Different linguists have defined it differently. Crystal (1994, p.212) defines language as "the systematic, conventional use of sound, signs, or written symbols in a human society for communication and expression". Thus, language is the most advance and powerful means of human communication.

As language is the universal phenomenon, it is taught and learned everywhere in the world. English is an international language, and is widely spoken all over the world. English language Teaching (ELT) has become common term for all in the world. Language has four skills viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among them, listening and reading are receptive skills, while speaking and writing are regarded as productive skills.

Most of the world's literature is written in English. People get several types of knowledge by reading texts. In this sense, reading assists to enrich knowledge about world and other facts. Reading is a process of gaining knowledge from the printed or written texts. It is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the purpose of getting and/or receiving intended meaning. Reading

is a means of language acquisition, of communication and of sharing information and ideas. Reading opens the gate of knowledge. That is why, everyone is expected to have a good reading skill.

Reading skill is closely associated with literacy. It is so because only a literate person can read. A person should have the knowledge of graphic symbols of language in order to read well. Furthermore, persons can call for other skills of language for successful reading. Therefore, people should be made literate/educated prior to making them read the texts. Unless the people have sound knowledge of the systems of language, people cannot read well. In this way, reading is one of the important language skills.

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a process of extracting information from the given texts. It is related to the process of comprehending of meaning imported by the reading texts. In this regard, Ur (1996, p. 138) mentions that 'Reading means reading and understanding of the texts. So, reading the words without knowing what they mean is not reading at all. Translating written symbols into corresponding sound is not reading at all. It subsumes the decoding of meaning as well. When the readers get the intended meaning of the texts, it becomes reading. Reading without understanding is just like barking at prints, and therefore, reading involves understanding or comprehension. Understanding or comprehension comes under receptive skill. That is to say, reading involves the process of decoding (i.e. converting language into message). While reading, the reader constructs message from the strings of graphic symbols.

Reading is an activity that we generally do while reading newspaper, books, posters, magazines, tables, charts, and so forth. The purpose here is to extract required information as efficiently as possible. According to Grellet (1998, p.3), "reading comprehension involves the process of extracting the required information from a written text as efficiently as possible". Although the reading varies in accordingly with the purpose of reading, type of text, etc.,

comprehension comes to the fore. Therefore, merely getting the gist is not sufficient, detailed understanding is essential. Thus, reading is not a simple and easy activity as we generally perceive. We do several things to get message from the text. Similarly, the role of schema is equally important. The term 'schema' refers to the assumption that a reader has in his/her mind or the assumption that a reader has in his/her mind or the existing knowledge of the text. The text becomes easy to understand provided that the schemata of both the readers and writers tally. Therefore, the comprehension level varies from person to person and text to text. In this context, Nuttall (1993, p.7) expresses his views that the way we interpret successfully depends on whether our schema are sufficiently similar to the writer's. Besides, the experience, culture and socio-economic background also influence the comprehension of the reading texts. That is why, both the readers and writers should have some sort of common ground for the ease in the comprehension of the meaning. In reading process, the reader receives information encoded in the graphic symbols by the writer. It is a psycholinguistic process because it starts with a linguistic surface representation and ends with meaning, which the reader constructs and re-constructs. There is an interaction between language and thought. The reader constructs meaning with some level of agreement with the original meaning of writer. Readers attempt to seek the most direct way to meaning and always exploit the strategies to reduce uncertainty. Efficient readers reduce the maximum dependence on visual details.

The reading comprehension involves two different processes. Reading does not necessarily involve comprehension. However, comprehension is must in reading comprehension. Generally, vocalization is must in reading comprehension. This vocalization comes under the process of reading, whereas silent reading followed by detailed understanding is called for in reading comprehension.

There are different reasons for reading. Reading is done for various purposes. Reasons for reading mean reasons for getting students to read texts in a

teaching reading lesson. Harmer (2006, p.68) talks about the following reasons for reading:

-) Reading for practicing the skill of reading.
-) Reading for study in general.
-) Reading for getting pleasure.
-) Reading for developing career.
-) Reading for getting language exposure that is useful for language acquisition.
-) Reading for being acquainted with models for future writing.
-) Reading for language study.
-) Reading for being acquainted with good reading texts.

There are some principles of reading. Teachers should follow certain principles while teaching reading. Following Harmer (2008, pp.101-102), there are following principles that we have to follow while teaching reading:

-) Encouraging students to read as often and as much as possible.
-) Students need to be engaged with what they are reading.
-) Encouraging students to respond to the content of a text, not just concentrating on its construction.
-) Prediction is major factor in reading.
-) Matching the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts.
-) Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full.

In this way, the aforementioned principles are to be followed while teaching reading lessons. They help to get mastery over the reading skills.

2.1.2 Types of Reading

Reading skills refer to the specific abilities that enable a person to read with independence and interact with the message. Students at the university do a quite lot of reading unlike the students in secondary school. In other words, reading skills enable readers to turn writing into meaning and achieve the goals of independence, comprehension and fluency.

Types of reading can be referred to as categorization of reading. Reading can be of slow reading and fast reading on the basis of its speed., silent reading and loud reading on the basis of the focus of its attending., intensive and extensive reading on the basis of its general purpose, reading of authentic text and reading of non-authentic text on the basis of the nature/type of the reading text. However, Harmer (2008, pp.99-100) explicitly talks of just intensive and extensive reading. All these types of reading have been explained as below.

Slow Reading

Slow reading is very slow in its nature. Readers read the text slowly. That is to say, the pace of reading is slow and readers are expected to have detailed understanding of the reading text.

Fast reading

The pace of reading is very fast. The readers read the text fast. They read the text in order to have the general idea of the reading text. Readers are not expected to know each and every aspect in this sort of reading.

Silent reading

Readers read the text silently. When one has built confidence in reading accurately or when readers have developed the correct pronunciation, articulation, intonations and rhythm of language, they can start silent reading. Especially advanced level learners adopt this sort of reading. Abboaut and Winard (1985, p.8') assert that normally reading is silent and individual activity, since the writer's expectation was that the text would be read, not

heard. Silent reading is higher faculty in the art of reading. It is deemed as the best type of reading, for reader's mind is utterly library reading and sometimes even for classroom reading purpose. It is mostly done to develop in students the way to enjoy and recreate themselves, thus cultivating interest in varieties of reading.

Reading aloud

As its name implies, this sort of reading is done loudly. This is particularly imperative to improve pronunciation. Readers read loudly, i.e. producing sounds. Learning to read a forcing language (FL) at first is to a large extent a matter of learning and practicing a new set of sound- symbol correlation of foreign language. Therefore, it is the barking at print. This sort of reading enables student to read with correct

Pronunciation, articulation, intonation, rhythm, and so forth. Reading aloud is a complex activity because our attention is divided between reading and speaking. It exploits several sense organs such as eye, ear, mouth, etc. simultaneously. Therefore, students cannot read properly provided they do not learn proper co-ordination among different sense organs.

Skimming

Skimming is a kind of search reading which is used mainly to establish what a text is about before deciding where to read. Skimming means looking quickly over a text to get an idea of what it is about and of how it is organized. While skimming, we should not read every word; instead we should look at headings, pictures, graphs, and highlighted words. It focuses its attention for the purpose of getting the purpose of getting the gist of a text. The eyes of the readers run quickly over the text to discover what it is about, the main ideas, or the gist.

Scanning

Scanning is a search read as well. It stands for reading quickly in order to find a specific piece of information. While scanning, our eyes pass over the text,

stopping only when we find the word or information we are looking for. It focuses its attention to see if a particular point is present in the text or to locate it. It involves the checking of specific items and can also be called as 'item-check reading. It is fairly fast reading. Thus, in scanning, the reader is on the look-out for a particular item or items she believes is in the text, for instance, the symbol number in a result sheet.

Intensive reading

Intensive reading is the reading generally at a slower speed and calls for a higher degree of understanding. It involves in-depth reading, pausing, regression and reflection on what is read for the purpose of learning and appreciation. It is also called study reading which involves close study of the text.

Extensive reading

Extensive is a good rapid silent reading for pleasure and unconscious language learning. Extensive reading is the ultimate aim of teaching reading. Extensive reading refers to the reading in which the students feel free and comfort. Specially, extensive reading concerns subject matter that the student would read in his first language for pleasure. In extensive reading, the readers have the option of skipping whole sections they find either too tough or less interesting. It is a pure pleasure reading. This type of reading is often associated with supplementary reading books read outside the classroom. This includes the reading of short stories, novels, and magazine and newspaper article and usually a very private matter, teacher free and desirable for learners to aim at a fairly good speed.

2.1.3 Phases of Comprehension in Reading

Readers have to go through various phases of comprehension for the proper understanding of the text. Readers cannot get the detailed understanding of the text based on the superficial reading of the text. They need to read the text from different angles for the comprehension of detailed information different scholars have mentioned different phases of comprehension while reading any piece of reading texts. Following Tickoo (2009, pp 44-45), creative reading act involves four hierarchical phases. They are described as follows:

-) Descriptive phase: In this phase, the reader's focus is on the information contained in the text. The questions asked her encompass what happened, when and how and also who did it or even why. Most such answered can be found in the text and arriving at these answer represents the surface level of comprehension where reading is largely an act of receiving
-) Personal interpretative phase: In this phase, readers relate the information in the text to their own experiences and feelings. The questions asked here include. Have I seen or felt or experienced something similar ?, How did I feel on reading it ?', Did I like or late or love reading it ?, and so on.
-) Critical analysis phase: In this phase, readers relate the text to broader social issues and may draw conclusions asked at this stage may include ' Is it valid ?, ' Does it benefit some or all or a few people ?, ' etc. The main focus of this activity is to involve pupils in higher-order thinking processes to deepen their comprehension of events and to explore their larger social implications.
-) Creative actions phase: In this phase, readers try to translate the result of the first three phases into concrete action. They do so to improve their lives or the lives of others who may benefit from such action.

2.1.4 Encouraging Students to Read

Encouragement is the prime factor in reading. Unless the students are motivated and encouraged towards reading, they cannot be proficient in reading. Students develop their reading skills by reading different sorts of authentic texts. Therefore, students need to be engaged in reading all the time. The teachers need to provide students with suitable reading environment. Harmer (2008, pp.109-110) gives the following ways of encouraging students to read extensively.

-) By providing libraries to the students.
-) By providing choice on reading materials and tasks.
-) By giving the students opportunities to give feedback.
-) By providing time for reading.

Not all students become active readers. While some are highly motivated and consume books avidly – others don't have the same appetite. We cannot force students to read, of course, but we should do everything we can to encourage them to do so.

2.1.5 Reading Skills

Reading is not a single skill. It has several specific component skills such as recognizing the letters by the alphabet, reading groups of letters as words, understanding meaning of punctuation, making inferences, reading longer texts, skimming for gist, reading for details, scanning for specific information, making notes, summarizing, and so forth.

Different scholars have given different types of reading skills. Brown (1994, as cited in Tickoo, 2009, pp. 30-31) lists 14 micro skills that mature readers of English use.

-) Recourse the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English;
-) Retain chunks of Language of different lengths in short-term memory;
-) Read what is written at an efficient rate of speed.
-) Recognize a core of words, and derive meaning from word-order patterns;
-) Recognize grammatical word classes (noun, verbs, etc)
-) Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse.
-) Work out context that is not explicit by using background knowledge;
-) Work out links and connections between events, ideas, etc. described.
-) Distinguish between literal and implied meaning;
-) Detect culturally specific information and understand it by placing it in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata;
-) Develop and use a wide range of reading strategies such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, etc.

Harmer (2008, p.100) has talked of skimming, scanning and reading for detailed comprehensions as the skills of reading. For Munby (1978, p.37 as cited in MS Saud, 2010, ELT Theories in Method), reading involves the following skills.

-) Recognizing the script of Language.
-) Understanding the conceptual meaning.
-) Understanding explicit and implied meaning.
-) Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items.
-) Understanding the communicative value of sentences and utterances.
-) Interpreting the text by going outside.
-) Extracting points selectively for summary.

-) Skimming the text to see what it is about
-) Predicting what will come next.

In this way, reading involves different skills. Students need to develop and/or have these skills to be proficient in reading. Unless the readers get mastery over those skills, they cannot get the intended meaning of the reading texts.

2.1.6 Stages of Teaching Reading

Teaching reading is also one of the important parts of language teaching.

Teaching reading enables students to read the texts efficiently. While teaching reading to the students, different stages are adopted. Generally, there are three stages of teaching reading. They are given as below:

-) Pre-reading stage: This is the preparatory stage of teaching reading. This stage creates students' motivation towards reading texts. This stage takes place before the actual reading begins. Different pre-reading activities are conducted at this stage. For example, picture discussion, giving background information, guessing the content of the text, pre-teaching of vocabulary items, etc. Actually, those activities are conducted in order to arouse student's interest, motivate them and prepare them for the text they are going to read.
-) While-reading stage: This is the actual stage of teaching reading. Students read the given text and do the activities based on it. Students are involved in various activities at this stage. Some of them include scanning the text, skimming the text, answering the questions, completing the incomplete sentences, matching items, and so on.
-) Post-reading stage: Follow-up activities are conducted at this stage. This is the evaluation stage and students are asked various questions in order to check their understanding of the texts. Furthermore, the teacher may introduce some additional tasks related to the text as well as this stage.

Writing summary, reviewing the text, writing similar sorts of text, interpreting meaning, etc., are conducted in this stage.

2.1.7 Reading as both Receptive and Productive Skills

Reading is deemed both receptive and productive skills. Generally speaking, reading is one of the receptive skills, for we receive information after we read a text. Readers get information reading the given texts. Writers have born a great pain in producing the text for the reader and the reader has just to go through the text and get everything found there. Harmer (2001, p. 199) asserts that receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. We usually read in order to obtain information which is found in written form. Reading as a receptive skill can be viewed as a combination of different skills which are as follows:

-) Predictive skills
-) Extracting specific information
-) Getting the general picture
-) Extracting detailed information
-) Recognizing functions and discourse patterns
-) Deducing meaning from context

Reading, on the other hand, can also be review as the productive skill.

Although traditionally reading skill has been viewed as the passive receptive skill, nowadays it has been widely taken as both productive and active skills. It is more than just getting information. Readers do not just read passively but they strive to grasp the intended and exact meaning from the text. Furthermore, readers make inference and verify hypotheses while proceeding through the text based on reading text. For instance, as we read any piece of text, we may hypothesise what the writer intends to convey to the readers. Reading texts

trigger activities in readers mind and they do something based on the text.

Reading as a productive skill subsumes the following:

-) Reading a map and following the direction.
-) Reading a letter and writing reply to it.
-) Reading an instruction manual and operating a machine.
-) Reading a recipe and preparing a cake.
-) Reading a passage and writing a summary.

2.1.8 Testing Reading

Reading is usually regarded as a receptive skill because we receive message by reading something. However it is also thought to be a productive skill because it involves pronunciation. Reading without understanding is just barking at prints and therefore reading involves understanding or comprehension. That is to say, reading subsumes the message. While reading, the reader constructs message from graphic symbols. Reading is an active process. The reader reads words as connected parts of sentence and moves his/her eyes forward and background to get the meaning of the text.

Undoubtedly, every normal human being can acquire listening and speaking skills. However, without the knowledge of graphic symbols, it is impossible to read any orthographic text. Thus, reading is a specialized skill. This skill is necessary to all in the present world. Students need to read a number of texts to get the knowledge and develop reading skills. Testing reading here refers to testing reading comprehension. It encompasses the testing of all the components of reading skill.

In order to test reading skill, reading texts are given to the texts and they are required to go through those texts and perform some sort of written or oral task based on the texts given, generally, testing reading involves testing reading

aloud and testing reading comprehension. For the former, students are asked to read the text aloud and evaluated based on it. However, for the latter, different types of comprehension questions are asked to the students. We can exploit the following types of test items in order to test the reading comprehension ability of the students:

-) Short answer question
-) True/false item
-) Multiple choice item
-) Matching item
-) Fill in the blank item
-) Cloze item.

2.1.9 Reading Skill in Secondary English Curriculum

The present English curriculum of secondary level is based on the communicative approach to language teaching. It has incorporated four language skills and language functions as its contents. Reading skill is also focused in the curriculum. In the examination, 40% of the total marks is allocated to reading skill. For the development of reading skill in the students, there is the provision of reading lesson in each unit of the textbook. There are several reading text in each unit. The curriculum has mentioned the following objective of teaching reading.

-) Reading short texts intensively for detailed understanding.
-) Read longer texts extensively for general understanding.
-) Show understanding of the underlying them and ideas of texts.
-) Show understanding of an argument.
-) Retrieve specific information from text.
-) Identify the structure and the organization of paragraphs by developing an awareness of connectives.

-) Anticipate the likely continuation of the interrupted texts.
-) Appreciate literary text of an appropriate level.
-) Deduce the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items by means of contextual, syntactic and semantic clues.
-) Use an authentic English dictionary effectively.
-) Interpret information presented in diagrammatic forms (pie chart, graph chart, table etc.)

2.2 Review of Related Empirical Literature

Reading comprehension is a broad area of study. Several studies have been carried out in this area. Some of the researches carried out in this area have been reviewed as below:

Siwakoti (1996) carried out a study entitled “An Analysis of Reading Proficiency of the Secondary Level Students of Jhapa District”. The purpose of his study was to find out the reading proficiency of the students of both public and institutional schools. He selected eighty students through purposive non-random sampling procedure from both public and private schools.

Questionnaire and observation tools were used for data collection. He came with the findings that urban school students performed better than rural school. He also concluded that private school students’ performance was better than the community aided schools on all items of textbook and non-textbook materials.

Shrestha (1998) carried out a research entitled “Reading Comprehension in the English Language of the Students of Grade VII”. The purpose of this study was to find out the students’ reading performance in reading texts. She had selected hundred students from five different schools by using simple random sampling procedure. The questionnaires were main tools for her research. The findings of her research showed that the students had better performance on seen passage.

than on unseen passage, and the performances on seen and unseen passage were positively correlated.

Gaulee (2001) carried out a study entitled “English Reading speed of Nepalese Student: A Practical Study.” The major objective of his research was to find out the English reading speed of Nepalese students. He had sampled forty Nepalese students as the informants. Questionnaires having reading texts were the tools for data collection. He found out that the average English reading speed of Nepalese students was about almost half of the reading speed of native students of approximately the same level of education. He also found out that the average English reading speed of Nepalese students of secondary level was 89.10 words per unit, while the same level native students’ average speed was 187.85 words per unit.

Chapagain (2002) conducted research entitled “Reading Comprehension and Reading Speed of Ninths Graders”. In this study, she attempted to measure the level of reading comprehension and reading speed of the students studying in a public school. She made classroom experiment on both seen and unseen texts for four weeks. Pre-test and post-test were conducted as well. Her findings showed that the students who could correctly comprehend the seen text were also better on unseen texts in both the pre-test and pos-test.

Neupane (2006) carried out research on “Reading Proficiency of Grade Ten students of Kathmandu and Gorkha District”. She took 100 students studying in grade ten in Kathmandu and Gorkha district as the informants. Different types of test items were used for the collection of data for the research purpose. She concluded from the research that the reading proficiency of the students of Kathmandu was better than of the students of Gorkha district.

Adhikari (2008) conducted research on “Reading proficiency of Bilingual and Multilingual Learners”. The major objective o his study was to find out the reading proficiency of bilingual and multilingual learners. Fifty students studying in class ten in different schools of Kaski district were selected as the sample population of the study. The population was of two types: Bilingual

(Nepali as L1 and English learnt at school and multilingual (Gurung, Magar, Lama, Hindi, Nepali and English). The finding of the study showed that multilingual learners were less proficient in reading comprehension than bilingual ones.

Khadka (2008) carried out a research entitled “Reading Comprehension Ability of Differentially-able and Able Students”. The main objective of his study was to find out the reading comprehension ability of differentially-able and able students. He adopted purposive random sampling design for the research. The researcher collected the data from class nine and ten students studying in regular and special schools of Kathmandu district. He used simple statistical tools to analyze and interpret the collected data. The finding of the research showed that the able students were better than the differentially-able students in both seen and unseen reading texts.

2.3 Implication of the Review for the Study

All the above mentioned studies are related to teaching reading. Most of them are related to reading comprehension, which are closely associated with the present study. Different tools have been used in those studies. Lots of insights have been received regarding the formulation of research tools, adoption of methodology, analysis and so forth. Therefore, the review of the aforementioned studies have great relevancy to this study. By going through all these researchers, I expanded the horizon of my knowledge to

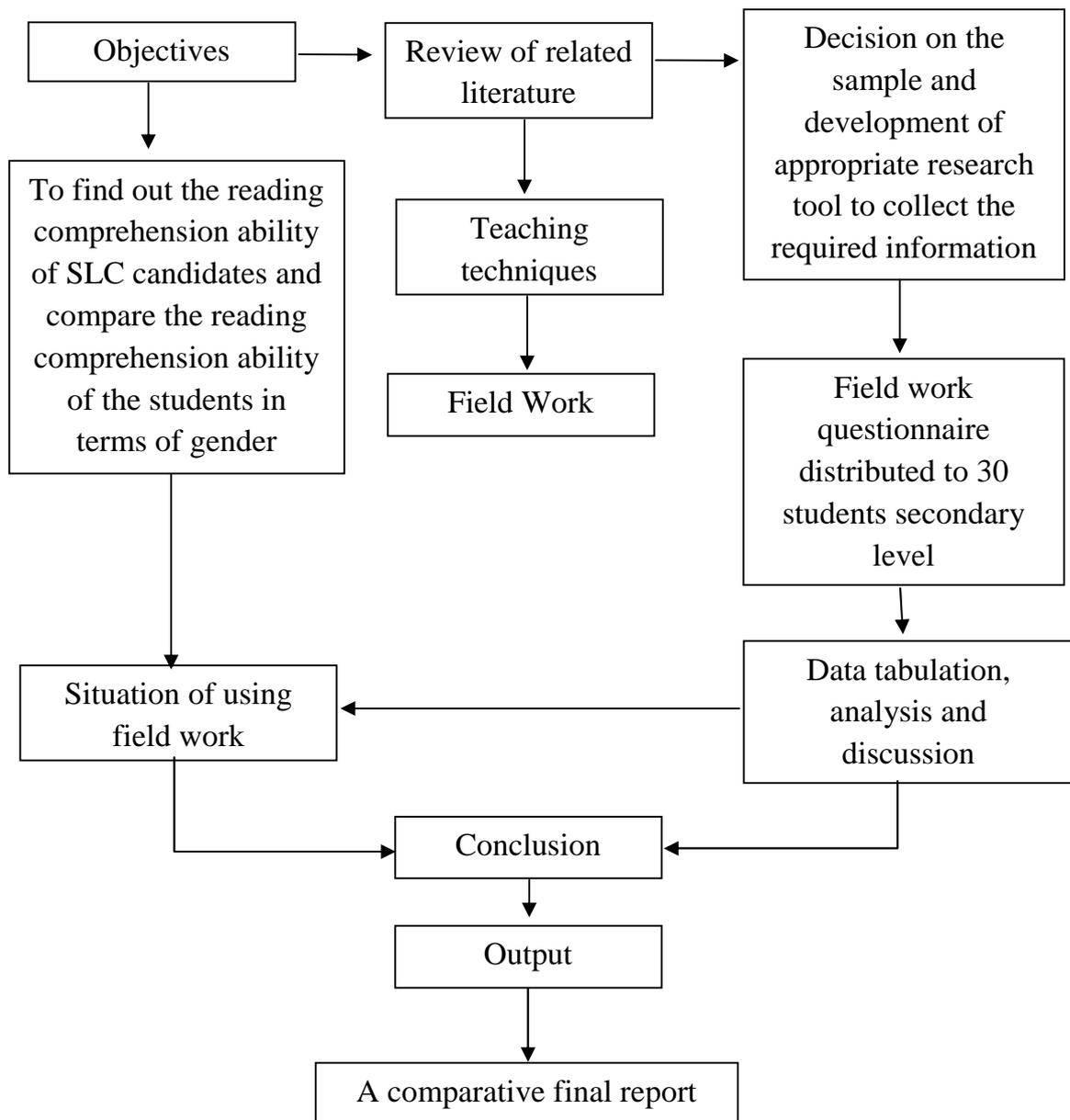
-) formulate of research tools,
-) analyze and interpret the data and
-) exploit suitable and relevant research design.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study attempted to find out the reading comprehension ability of the students. For the fulfillment of the research objectives, first of all, review of both theoretical and empirical literature was done. Similarly, decision on the

sample and development of appropriate research tools was made in order to collect data. Then after, data were collected visiting the concerned places. Data were analysed, tabulated, interpreted, etc. for the assertion of conclusions.

After the formulation of objectives, the different sorts of relevant literature were reviewed. Similarly, research tools were formulated along with the assessment of the present situation. Thirty students were selected as the population of the study. The conceptual framework has been presented below:



CHAPTER: THREE

METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

In order to carry out the research, the following methodology was exploited.

3.1 Design of the Study

The research was carried out based on both the qualitative and quantitative research designs. In this way, mixed research design was followed in order to carry out the research. Quantitative and qualitative research designs are differentiated on the basis of the type of information collected for analysis. Generally, the term quantity stands for the amount that is measured in terms of number whereas quality refers to the description based on what things or attributes are found in a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the type of information we attempt to look for in quantitative research is different from that of qualitative one. In qualitative research, the data are collected using various sorts of tools in the form of numerical value; and after the collection, the raw data are tabulated and statistical operation is applied upon the data. For instance, this sort of research subsumes the calculation of percentage, mean, correlation, etc. Then data are analysed using statistical tools and procedures. In gathering, organizing, analyzing and interpreting numerical data, statistical technique will be helpful. In the case of qualitative research, the organization and analysis of data is more complicated than the quantitative one. The qualitative data collected using the tools of open ended questionnaire are huge in amount. While analyzing such data, they need to be organized and classified in to specific patterns and orders for analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher needs to ensure that the data are preserved well without any change. They need to be studied frequently to derive the intended meaning of the participants. In this regard, Kumar (2005, p.12) asserts:

The study is classified as qualitative if the purpose of the study is primarily to describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event; the

information is gathered through the use of variables measured on nominal or ordinal scales (qualitative measurement scales); and if analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it. Similarly, the study is classified as quantitative study if we want to quantify the variation in a situation, phenomenon, problem or issue; if information is gathered using predominantly quantitative variables; and if the analysis is geared to ascertain in the magnitude of variation.

In this way, qualitative research advocates the use of qualitative methods while quantitative research advocates the use of quantitative methods. The former is process oriented and the latter one is product oriented. The combination of these two research designs is known as mixed methods. My research is also based on mixed research designed because I have analyzed and interpreted the collected through test items by statistical tools with certain numerical values and descriptively analyzed and interpreted the data collected through questionnaire without assigning any numerical values. Thus, the data collected through questionnaire have been oriented towards the process of developing reading comprehension or measuring reading ability without any quantification. However, the data collected through the test items are related to product of reading i.e. finding out the answers after reading the text.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study was will the secondary level students of Arghakhanchi district. Studying in grade 10 in the public schools. Similarly, the sample of the study was the students of class ten of the thirty selected school. Three schools were selected for the research purpose, and ten students (both boys and girls) from each school were selected. As a whole, the sample comprised of 30 students, fifteen boys and fifteen girls.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The researcher selected thirty students from the public secondary level schools. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling procedure. For this, all the students of the class were identified by their respective roll numbers and then all those roll numbers were put in a box. In this way, the required number of students was taken out without looking them. In this way, the sample population was selected.

3.4 Tools for Data Collection

In order to carry out the research, a set of test was used. The test items encompassed short answer questions, True/False items, matching items, fill in the blank items, etc., vocabularies items etc. based on the reading texts.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The following procedure was adopted in order to collect the data from the primary sources:

-) First of all, reading texts (seen) were collected. Based on those texts, test items were prepared to test the students' reading comprehension ability.
-) After preparing the test items, marking scheme was prepared.
-) Then, the concerned schools were visited and sought consent from the school administration.
-) The required number of students was selected non-randomly.
-) The test was administered on the students.
-) After the administration of the test, answer sheets were collected, and marked.
-) Finally, all the students and school administration were thanked.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedure

The collected data were analysed and interpreted exploiting quantitative and statistical tools such as percentage, mean and so forth. Similarly, qualitative data were analysed descriptively.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter subsumes the detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the students. Similarly, results and discussion of analysis have been asserted.

4.1 Results

The purpose of this study was to find out the reading comprehension ability of SLC candidates. The data collected from the informants were analyzed and interpreted. The study shows that the average reading comprehension ability of the students was 4.84(i.e.48.35%). However, the reading comprehension ability of the girls was 49.4%, and that of the boys was 44.9%. In this way, girls were found better than boys in reading comprehension.

4.2 Discussion

This is mainly concerned with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The data collected from the students were analyzed and interpreted to find out the reading comprehension ability of the students. The analysis was done mainly on the basis of the marks obtained by the students. That is to say, this chapter deals with analysis and interpretation of the data. In order to analyze and interpret the data, the statistical tools such as mean (average) and percentage (%) were used on the score obtained from the students studying in the public schools of Arghakhanchi district. The test was administered to the students of class 10. There were two types of reading texts: Unseen Reading Text (URT) and Seen Reading Text (SRT) to the both sex: boys (M) and girls (F). The full mark of the each set of reading text was assigned 10 and the obtained marks of each set of reading text by each student was analyzed and interpreted on the basis of following headings.

4.2.1 Reading Comprehension Ability of Students in Seen Texts

For the purpose of finding out the student's reading comprehension ability in the seen texts, a test was taken from the reading texts taught in the classroom. Student's answers were marked after the administration of the test. The full mark of the test was ten. Students and the marks obtained by them are shown in the table no.1.

Table No. 1
Marks Obtained in Seen Texts

S.N.	Name	MOST (out of 10)	%	Rem
1.	Ashmita Bhandari	6.5	65	
2.	Samina Rai	6.5	65	
3.	Dipendra Basnet	4	40	
4.	Asbin Gurung	3.5	35	
5.	Subarna Thapa Magar	6	60	
6.	Pratima Sunuwar	6.5	65	
7.	Atma Ram Bhujel	5	50	
8.	Bishal Sewa	5	50	
9.	Sabina Thapa	6.5	65	
10.	Sangita Mijar	4	40	
11.	Anisha Shrestha	4.5	45	
12.	Urmila Pariyar	4	40	
13.	Abishek Tamang	3	30	
14.	Amir Banjade	4.5	45	
15.	Sunil Tamang	4.5	45	
16.	Roshani Gurung	6	60	
17.	Anisha Tamang	8	80	
18.	Wiki Tamang	3	30	
19.	Sujan Limbu	4.5	45	
20.	Dinesh Khanal	5.5	55	

21.	Bipin Giri	3.5	35	
22.	Gautam Banjade	6	60	
23.	Bibek K.C.	6.5	65	
24.	Ujjwal Chapagain	4.5	45	
25.	Bibek Khanal	6.5	65	
26.	Jasmina Giri	7	70	
27.	Susanta Bankatti	2	20	
28.	Melina Thapa	8	80	
29.	Dikshya Sharma	5.5	55	
30.	Sajana Poudel	8	80	
	Average	5.25	52.5	

Note: MOST-Marks obtained in seen text

The marks obtained by 30 students have been shown in the aforementioned table. Similarly, the marks obtained by them were converted into percentage. After that the average percentage was calculated. On average, students got 5.25 out of 10. Based on the data, students got 52.5% in the reading text taught in the classroom.

4.2.2 Reading Comprehension Ability of Students in Unseen Texts

In order to find out the student's reading comprehension ability in the unseen texts, a test was administered on them. Two authentic reading texts were extracted from literary collections for the purpose of conducting the test. Students and marks obtained by them in both of the unseen texts have been presented in the table no. 2.

Table No. 2
Marks Obtained in Unseen Texts

S.N.	Name	MOUT-I (out of 10)	%	MOUT-II (out of 10)	%	Rem.
1.	Ashmita Bhandari	5	50	2	20	
2.	Samina Rai	5	50	3	30	

3.	Dipendra Basnet	4	40	1.5	15	
4.	Asbin Gurung	5	50	3	30	
5.	Subarna Thapa Magar	5	50	2	20	
6.	Pratima Sunuwar	5	50	2	20	
7.	Atma Ram Bhujel	5	50	4	40	
8.	Bishal Sewa	6	50	2	20	
9.	Sabina Thapa	4	40	1	10	
10.	Sangita Mijar	5.5	55	3.5	35	
11.	Anisha Shrestha	6	60	2	20	
12.	Urmila Pariyar	4.5	45	7	70	
13.	Abishek Tamang	5	50	6	60	
14.	Amir Banjade	4.5	45	7	70	
15.	Sunil Tamang	5.5	55	6	60	
16.	Roshani Gurung	4.5	45	6	60	
17.	Anisha Tamang	4.5	45	6	60	
18.	Wiki Tamang	5.5	55	3	30	
19.	Sujan Limbu	5	50	0	0	
20.	Dinesh Khanal	4.5	45	5.5	55	
21.	Bipin Giri	5.5	55	2	20	
22.	Gautam Banjade	4.5	45	2	20	
23.	Bibek K.C.	7	70	4	40	
24.	Ujjwal Chapagain	4.5	45	4	40	
25.	Bibek Khanal	6.5	65	4	40	
26.	Jasmina Giri	5	50	4	40	
27.	Susanta Bankasssti	5.5	55	0	0	
28.	Melina Thapa	6	60	7	70	
29.	Dikshya Sharma	5.5	55	6.5	65	
30.	Sajana Poudel	6	60	6	60	
	Average	5.1	51	3.73	37.33	

Note: MOUT-Marks obtained in unseen text

The two unseen texts were used in order to find out the student's reading comprehension ability. Both of the reading texts were of 10 full marks each. Their marks were first of all converted into percentage, and then the average percentage were calculated. On average, student's got 5.1 (51 %) out of 10 in the first unseen text and they got 3.73 (37.33 %) out of 10 in the second unseen text. As a whole, student's reading comprehension ability in the unseen texts was 4.42 (44.2 %).

4.2.3 Reading Comprehension Ability of Students in terms of Gender

Three schools were selected for the purpose of research. Similarly, ten students (five boys and five girls) were selected from each school. Student's reading comprehension ability was also analysed on the basis of the variable, i.e. gender. The average marks obtained by both the boys and girls have been presented in the table no.3.

Table No. 3
Gender wise Marks

Gender	Name	Marks Obtained			Rem.
		ST	UT-I	UT-II	
BOYS	Dipendra Basnet	4	4	1.5	
	Asbin Gurung	3.5	5	3	
	Subarna Thapa Magar	6	5	2	
	Atma Ram Bhujel	5	5	4	
	Bishal Sewa	5	6	2	
	Abishek Tamang	3	5	6	
	Amir Banjade	4.5	4.5	7	
	Sunil Tamang	4.5	5.5	6	
	Sujan Limbu	4.5	5	0	
	Dinesh Khanal	5.5	4.5	5.5	
	Bipin Giri	3.5	5.5	2	
	Gautam Banjade	6	4.5	2	

	Bibek K.C	6.5	7	4	
	Ujjwal Chapagain	4.5	4.5	4	
	Bibek Khanal	6	6.5	4	
	Average	4.8	5.17	3.5	
GIRLS	Ashmita Bhandari	6.5	5	2	
	Samina Rai	6.5	5	3	
	Pratima Sunuwar	6.5	5	2	
	Sabina Thapa	6.5	4	1	
	Sangita Mijar	4	5.5	3.5	
	Anisha Shrestha	4.5	6	2	
	Urmila Pariyar	4	4.5	7	
	Roshani Gurung	6	4.5	6	
	Anisha Tamang	8	4.5	6	
	Wiki Tamang	3	5.5	3	
	Jasmina Giri	7	5	4	
	Susanta Bankatti	2	5.5	0	
	Melina Thapa	8	6	7	
	Dikshya Sharma	5.5	5.5	6.5	
Sajana Poudel	8	6	6		
	Average	5.73	5.17	3.93	

Note: ST-seen text, UT- unseen text

As displayed in table no.3, boys obtained 4.8 out of 10 in seen text, 5.17 out of 10 in unseen text-I, and 3.5 out of 10 in unseen text-II. Similarly, girls obtained 5.73 out of 10 in seen text, 5.17 in unseen text-I, and 3.93 out of 10 in unseen text-II. That is to say, boys obtained 4.8 out of 10 in seen text and 4.34 out of 10 in unseen texts; girls obtained 5.73 out of 10 in seen text and 4.55 out of 10 in unseen texts. On average, boys got 4.49 (i.e. 44.9%) out of ten in the reading texts, whereas girls got 4.94 (i.e. 49.4%) out of ten in the reading texts. As a whole, girls had better reading comprehension ability than boys.

4.2.4 Student's Attitude towards Reading

In order to find out the student's attitude towards reading, some questions were asked to the students in the interview. Based on the data obtained from the interview, students were found to have positive attitude towards reading texts. However, they were found to be interested in literary texts (i.e. story). Most of the students were found to be interested in the reading texts. Some students were found to practice the reading texts in their daily classes. In accordance with the students, their teachers encouraged them to read the reading texts on their own. Furthermore, the teachers were found helping their pupils to go through the reading texts. Students were found reading texts to find out the particular piece of information, not for the summary. In this way, scanning was found being used in the classroom. Similarly, students were found preferring the seen reading texts, for they were easy to solve. However, students were found facing a lot of problems in solving the unseen reading texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

5.1 Summary

Reading is one of the crucial language skills. It is the receptive skills of language. Information cannot be obtained without reading. Therefore, it is very important for language teaching. The main purpose of language teaching is to develop communicative competence in the students. Students cannot develop communicative competence without having good skills of reading. That is to say, students must have good reading comprehension ability for the effective learning of language. SLC level is the final level of secondary level education system of Nepal. This level is the foundation for the higher education. Reading skill occupies greater scope in SLC board examination. More specifically, this skill covers 40 % of the total marks. Therefore, students must have a good reading comprehension ability. Thus, this study has been carried out in order to find out the reading comprehension ability of the students of grade ten (i.e. SLC candidates). Similarly, it has also made attempt to compare the reading comprehension ability of boys and girls.

The present study entitled “**Reading Comprehension Ability of SLC Candidates**” was carried out with the aim of finding out the reading comprehension ability of SLC students. In order to fulfill the research objectives, the research was carried out in Arghakhanchi district, where three community schools were taken as sample. Ten students (both boys and girls in equal number) from each school were selected as the sample population of the study. After that the test was administered in order to find out the reading comprehension ability of the students. The reading texts comprised of both seen and unseen texts. Similarly, post-test discussion was held with the students for the purpose of finding out students’ various views towards reading. For that some related questions were prepared in advance, and students’ responses were noted down as the data for the research.

Based on the data, reading comprehension ability of the students in seen texts was found to be 52.5%, and that of unseen text was merely 44.2%. Similarly, the reading comprehension ability of the girls was 49.4%, and that of boys was 44.9%. In this way, the girls of community schools were found better than boys in terms of reading comprehension ability. On average, the reading comprehension ability of the students was 48.35%. Based on the data obtained from the post-test discussion, the majority of the students were found being interested in the reading texts. However, they were found facing problems in the unseen texts. Thus, their reading ability was found to be an average.

5.2 Conclusion

Reading comprehension ability is crucial for the development of communicative competence in the students. However, in this study the reading comprehension ability of the students of community schools did not seem so satisfactory. Students were found very poor especially in the unseen reading texts. Similarly, the result of this study also showed that the girls had better reading comprehension ability than boys. As a whole, since the reading comprehension ability of the students did not seem so satisfactory, more attention should be paid to uplift the reading comprehension ability of the students. Some more conclusion has been outlined below:

-) The reading comprehension of the students in seen texts was found to be 52.5 (i.e.52.5 %).
-) The reading comprehension ability of the students in unseen texts was found to be 44.2 (i.e. 44.2 %).
-) Most of the students were found enjoying the reading texts.
-) Most of the teachers were found not teaching the reading texts as they should have been taught to their students.

-) Most of the teachers were found teaching reading texts using translation method since the result depicts the fact.

5.3 Implications

Every study has certain implications. This study has some significant implications as well. The study can be exploited in the field of teaching and learning as well as policy formulation, including further research. The implications of this study have been categorized into various types, which have been mentioned in the following section.

5.3.1 Implications at the Policy Level

Policy is a plan of action agreed or chosen by a certain organization, business, state and so on. Every nation has its own policy in different sectors. Since policy is a higher level action, it works as a catalyst for the development of the country. This study has great implications at the policy level. Some of the implications are mentioned below:

-) The government should plan to develop reading comprehension ability of the students.
-) The government should formulate special policies for the effective implementation of the curriculum.
-) The government should make mandatory provision for the effective monitoring, supervision, and conduction of teaching learning activities.

5.3.2 Implications at the Practical Level

Reading itself is a receptive skill of language. Without reading, students cannot get the knowledge. Therefore, students should have good reading comprehension ability. The result of the study showed that students did not have good reading comprehension ability though this is must for them. The study has also several implications at the practical level. Some of the implications at practice level are given below:

-) Reading skills should be taught properly in the classroom.
-) Teachers should teach reading comprehension taking into account the student's age, level, background, achievement and so on.
-) Students should be provided with great exposure to the authentic reading texts.
-) Students should be encouraged to skim and scan the reading texts.

5.3.3 Implication for the further Research

Nothing can be absolutely perfect in this universe. This study could not cover all the areas of the study. It had some limitations as well. However, it had pointed out some relevant areas for the further study. Such implications are presented herewith:

-) This study can work as a ladder by stepping on which other researcher can achieve their goals.
-) This study will be very useful to other researchers who want to study the reading comprehension ability of the students of higher level.
-) This study can be very useful to the teachers and others who want to increase the reading comprehension ability of the students.
-) This study can be extremely supportive for those who want to find out the impact of reading comprehension ability on the achievement test.
-) This study can also be beneficial for all who want to study in the related field and subject matter.

References

- Crystal, D. (1994). *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gaulee, U. K. (2001). *English reading speed of Nepalese students: A practical study*. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis, T.U., Kirtipur.
- Ghimire, S. D. (1998). *A sociolinguistic account of gender difference in English language proficiency*. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis, T.U., Kirtipur
- Grellet, F. (1998). *Developing reading skills*. New York: CUP.
- Harmer, J. (2008). *How to teach English*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.
- Khadka, B. K. (2008). *Reading comprehension ability of differentially-able and able students*. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis, T.U., Kirtipur.
- Kumar, R. (2005). *Research methodology*. India: Dorling Kindersley.
- Nuttal, C. (1993). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. London: Prentice Hall International Limited.
- Richards, J.C. & Renandya, W.A. (Eds.). (2010). *Methodology in language teaching* Cambridge: CUP.
- Shrestha, L.C. (1998). *A study of reading comprehension in the English language of the students of grade eight students*. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis, T.U., Kirtipur.

Siwakoti, P. (1996). *An analysis of reading proficiency of the secondary level students of Jhapa district*. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis, T.U., Kirtipur.

Tickoo, M. L. (2009). *Teaching and learning English* . India: Orient Blackswan Private Limited.

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. India : CUP.

Yadav, R.N. and Yadav, S.K. (2011). *Language testing*. Kathmadu: Kshitiz Prakashan.