

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the general background of the English language, the importance of reading, reading comprehension, types of reading, techniques of teaching reading comprehension, stages in teaching reading, problems revealed from reading comprehension and factors affecting reading comprehension .

1.1 General Background

Language is a means of communicating ideas, emotions and thoughts. It can also be taken as a social phenomenon which is used in our society to establish the relation among the human beings. Human beings have unique place in the universe due to the possession of language. We can perform several things by using language. We cannot think of any social, academic and artistic activities going on without language.

“Language is the system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangements of sounds(or their written representation) into larger units, e.g. Morphemes, words, sentences, utterances”(Richards et al. 1999, p.196). According to Sapir (1921,as cited in Yadhava, 2001, p.8), “language is purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas , emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.” This definition makes it clear that language, the soul property of all and only human beings is a vehicle to exchange ideas , feelings, desires and emotions via voluntarily produced symbols.

Different scholars have defined language differently but none of the definitions are absolutely complete in themselves. So, defining a language depends on the perspective a person is based on. However, different definitions given by different scholars clearly share some common characteristics of language. It can be said that language is a set of structurally related elements for the

encoding and decoding of the message. It is also a voluntary vocal system of human communication. It makes understanding among people. It is human species- specific property and not possessed by other beings.

1.1.1 Importance of Reading

Among the four language skills, reading is the third in order. It is regarded as the most important skill for gaining knowledge. Modern world without reading materials cannot be imagined.

According to Grellet (1981, p.16), "Students who read slowly will easily get discouraged, they will also tend to stumble on unfamiliar word and fail to grasp the general meaning of the passage". Reading is a receptive skill in the sense that the reader receives some sort of information through the printed works. So, reading means reading and understanding. It refers to the total understanding or meaningful interpretation of a message in a text. Language can be learnt through reading books. Reading the literary works like poems, stories, essays, dramas, magazines and newspapers provide us with not only entertainments and information but also help to understand the world. Reading, actually, broadens the horizon of knowledge and builds background to read any literary text.

Regarding the English Curriculum for Secondary level, the teaching and learning of reading has been emphasized much. Forty-five percentage of the marks has been allocated for the testing of reading in S.L.C examination. The students of this level do reading more than other skills practically. At the end of secondary level, the students should be able to read in different aspects of their life. This is the foundation of college level. A student needs to read for his study as well as to handle his daily life. Reading is important everywhere and the best way of getting information, increasing one's professional knowledge. So, reading is very important in a person's life.

1.1.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading is a multi- dimensional cognitive process of decoding symbols for the purpose of deriving meaning and/or constructing meaning. Reading opens the gates of knowledge. Reading has been defined in many ways. It generally means understanding or making sense of a given text. It is the total understanding of a message in the text. This means the meaning is not merely lying in the text waiting to be passively absorbed. On the contrary, the readers have to be actively involved and have to work to get the meaning out.

Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. It is called reading comprehension which involves understanding the value of each utterance that composes it.

Reading comprehension is interpreted as “ extracting the required information from a written text as efficiently as possible.” (Grellet, 1981, p. 33). It is generally accepted that reading is the most essential activity of the learners of EFL. Reading comprehension is so pervasive and complex that it is difficult to cope with what reading is composed of and what reading is necessary to develop this ability in a learner. In the words of Davies (1974, p.185), “Reading comprehension is a process of analysis of receiving message from a written text”. In the same way, Richards et al. (1999, p. 306) define reading and comprehension separately as “Reading: Perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents. Comprehension: the process by which a person understands the meaning of written or spoken language.” Reading ,obviously, is an active skill because the reader has to be actively involved in order to receive information.

Reading comprehension is an overall understanding of a text which can either be poetry or any kind of prose. Mere understanding of the meaning of words and sentences is not sufficient to understand a whole text because the meaning

of a single word and sentence may fail to express the intended meaning. That is why understanding of the whole text is very much important. To comprehend a text properly, one needs to know its organization, prosodic features used, nature of the text etc.

Reading is one of the skills of language which includes different sub-skills. According to Munby (1978, as cited in Grellet, 1981, pp. 4-5), reading involves a variety of sub-skills as follows:

- Recognizing the script of a language.
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding-Understanding information when it is not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning.
- Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.
- Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices.
- Interpretation text by going outside it.
- Recognizing indicator in discourse.
- Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse.
- Distinguishing the main ideas from supporting details.
- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc.)
- Basic reference skills.
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Trans-coding information to diagrammatic display.

1.1.3 Types of Reading

Readers do not go through a text unless they have some purpose in mind. Based on the purpose of reading and the level of the readers involved, we can identify different types of reading.

1.1.3.1 Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is also known as oral reading. In Doffs' (2005, p. 58) words, "Reading loud be useful at the earliest stages of reading, it can help students to make the connection between sound and spelling." This kind of reading is carried out to enable the students to read with correct pronunciation, articulation, intonation and rhythm.

1.1.3.2 Silent Reading

According to Richards et al. (1999), silent reading is "perceiving a written text in order to understand its content." It refers to understanding the message from graphic symbols by our eyes. Silent reading is considered to be the best kind of reading as the mind is fully engaged in this act.

1.1.3.3 Rapid Reading

Rapid reading is also known as speed or faster reading. It consists of understanding of what they read. More effective eye movements are required in rapid reading. Rapid reading is always silent because reading aloud always checks up the speed of reading. It develops students reading speed.

1.1.3.4 Intensive Reading

In intensive reading , students are expected to understand everything they read and be able to answer detailed vocabulary and comprehension questions.

Intensive reading is generally at a slower speed and requires a higher degree of understanding than extensive reading. Harmer (2001, p. 204) says, “Intensive reading or listening tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal”. The purpose of intensive reading is linguistic rather than literary. Extracting specific information and developing accuracy are the purposes of intensive reading.

1.1.3.5 Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is also known as independent reading which is meant for fluent reading with general comprehension, involves reading of larger texts. We need such a reading for the students so that they develop the habit of reading outside the class. In Harmer’s words (2001, p. 204), “Extensive reading suggests reading or listening at length, often pleasure and in a leisurely way.”. It refers to the reading in which the students feel free and comfort.

1.1.3.6 Skimming

Skimming is a kind of search reading which is used to establish what a text is about, before deciding where to read. According to Grellet (1981, p.19), “When skimming, readers go through the reading material quickly in order to get gist of it, to know how it is organized or to get an idea of the tone of the attention of the writer”. Skimming is therefore a more thorough activity requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading.

1.1.3.7 Scanning

When scanning, readers mainly try to locate specific information and often they do not even follow the linearity of the passage to do so. Readers only let their eyes wander over the text until they find what they are looking for, whether it

be a name, date or less specific piece of information. According to Grellet (1981, p.4), “ Scanning refers to quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information”. So scanning is far more limited since it only means retrieving what information is relevant to our purpose.

1.1.4 Techniques of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Language teachers are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word stopping to look up every known vocabulary item until they reach the end. When they do this students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom up techniques. One of the most important functions of the language instructor, then , is to help students move past this idea and use top down strategies as they do in their language.

Effective language teachers show students how they can adjust their reading behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of inputs and reading purposes. They help students a set of reading techniques and match appropriate techniques to reading situation. According to Grellet (1981, p. 17), techniques they can help students read more quickly and effectively includes:

- a. Previewing :** Reviewing titles, section heading, and photo captions to get a sense of the structures and content of a reading section.
- b. Predicting:** Using knowledge of the subject matter to make prediction about content and vocabulary and check comprehension: using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse, structure: using knowledge about the author to make prediction about writing style, vocabulary and content.

- c. **Skimming and Scanning:** Using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question, or make predictions.
- d. **Guessing of the Context:** Using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words instead of stopping to look them up.
- e. **Paraphrasing:** Stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text.

When language learners use reading techniques, they find that they can control the reading experience and they gain confidence in their ability to read the language.

1.1.5 Stages in Teaching Reading

Teaching of a reading text generally follows three successive stages: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading (Doff, 1988; Nuttall, 1996).

a. Pre-reading Stage

Pre-reading stage takes place before the students go through the actual reading materials. There are various things we can do before reading a text which will make it easier for students to understand the text and help them focus attention on it as they read. Those tasks which we give our students before they read the texts are called pre-reading activities. The purpose of the activities in pre-reading stage is to arouse interest in the students, motivate them, and prepare them for the text they are going to read. Such activities may include:

- guessing the topic and content through headlines, illustrations, pictures, etc.
- presenting some new words which will appear in the text

- giving a brief introduction to the text
- brainstorming about the content, plot or characters of the text
- giving one or two 'guiding' or 'sign-post' questions(orally or on the board) for students to think about as they read
- telling the purpose of the reading text
- giving illustration from different texts

Such pre-reading activities develop the prediction skills of the students.

b. While-reading Stage

At this stage, the actual reading takes place- students read the text to find the answers to some specific questions or to get the gist of it, etc. While-reading activities may include one or more of the following tasks:

- scanning the passage to locate some specific information
- skimming for general idea
- answering the questions asked to them
- completing the incomplete sentences
- completing the table, chart, map, etc.
- labeling the pictures
- matching halves
- choosing the appropriate answer among the alternatives
- asking questions to each other

As the students read and do the tasks, the teacher can move around the class and help those students who need help.

c. Post-reading Stage

This is the evaluation stage, and the teacher asks the students to check their responses. In addition, s/he may introduce some additional tasks related to the text but not necessarily related to reading skills. In other words s/he asks

students to do some other language activities related to the topic. Thus, reading skill can be practiced in combination with speaking or writing.

Post-reading activities may take one or more of the following forms:

- discussing the new and interesting event in the text
- discussing and debating about the controversial topic in the text
- doing the language exercises based on the text
- summarizing the text, orally or in written form
- role-playing or improvising the scenes of the text

Thus, reading skill is not an independent skill, but an integration of all language skills.

1.1.6 Problems Revealed from Reading Comprehension

According to Lenz (2003, p.2), “comprehension may become difficult if the foundation skills of reading have not been automatized”. When the reader is not habituated to the foundation skills of reading, he/she cannot comprehend the reading text. When a person attempts to speak a language in which he has not become automatic yet, he will necessarily have to divide his attention between the content of his message and the language itself. The poor reader is forced to apply his whole concentration to word recognition, and therefore has no concentration left to decode the written word and as a result he will not be able to read with comprehension.

Problems arise in reading comprehension because of the reader's knowledge of the topic. When the topic of the reading material and the reader's knowledge about the topic do not match, then the reader feels difficulty even if he/she reads the material attentively.

Knowledge of the structures of the sentences also plays a vital role in reading. One cannot read a text unless one knows the existing structures of the

particular language. If a child's knowledge of English is poor, then his reading will also be poor, and naturally also his reading comprehension. Thus, to strengthen the reading comprehension, the reader should be well acquainted with the basic and existing structures of the language in which the text is written.

Duke (2003, p. 2) says, “comprehension difficulties are also caused by word recognition and decoding difficulties”. To enhance the reading comprehension, the reader should be capable of decoding the written words by integrating them with his fore knowledge. By foreknowledge, it is understood as the range of one's existing knowledge and past experience. If one reads something that cannot directly be connected with his existing knowledge, he cannot decode or decipher the contents of the message. Therefore, lack of foreknowledge about the reading topic is the next major problem that many readers face in comprehension reading.

He further says that “lack of reading engagement may cause comprehension difficulties.” The reader should have persistence and/or continuity in reading the text. Reading some sentences of one paragraph and diverting into another task will never alleviate / help to blaster the comprehension capacity. Once one starts reading a particular text, he/she is supposed to read the whole episode or text. Only then, the intended meaning / sense can be deciphered. That's why reader's ability to persist reading until deriving the message is a must.

Reading comprehension is also problematized when the reader cannot picturize the images of the reading text in his/her mind's eye. When we read, the words and thoughts comprising the message call up images in our mind's eyes. If this does not occur, the message will not make any sense. If you read a sentence in an unfamiliar language, it will not make any sense to you, simply because none

of the words will call up any pictures in your's mind's eye. This ability plays a very important role in decoding of the written word.

It is found from the practical study in teaching that the secondary level students have difficulty in comprehending the text because of their unfamiliarity of some vocabularies, phrases and idioms. Such problem can frequently occur if the students do not get proper exposure. Thus, to overcome such problems, the language teachers should familiarize the students with phrases and idioms frequently used in secondary level course.

1.1.7 Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text. Reading comprehension involves at least two people: the reader and the writer. The process of comprehending involves decoding the writer's words and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer's message.

According to Lenz (2003, p. 5) "Comprehension is affected by the reader's knowledge of the topic, knowledge of language structures, knowledge of text structures and genres, knowledge of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, their reasoning abilities, their motivation and their level of engagement".

The reader is supposed to have the knowledge of language structure to understand what they read. Similarly, the structure of different genres are quite different in one another. So that the reader should be familiar with the basic structure of language and the genre which he/she is reading. In addition, background information of the topic eases in the reader's comprehension.

Likewise, the reader who has strong reasoning faculty in his mind can easily comprehend the text related to reasoning than the reader who does not have

strong reasoning capacity. Furthermore, if the readers are motivated towards the text, they can concentrate their mind on the text which eases the reading capacity. Along with this, the reader should approach the text frequently. They are not supposed to quit the text in the middle of reading for comprehension.

Grellet (1981, p.7) says, “it is important to use authentic texts whenever possible”. Reading comprehension is also affected by the quality of the reading material. So, some writers are better writers than others and some writers produce more complex reading material than others. Text that is well organized and clear is called “ Considerate Text” , and difficult to understand can be called “Inconsiderate Text”. The more considerate the text , the more work will be required of a reader to comprehend the text. Readers who do not have the background abilities or motivation to overcome the barriers presented in inconsiderate text have more difficulty comprehending these types of texts.

Students who had trouble in learning to decode and recognize words often will have difficulty with reading comprehension. Students who struggle with decoding rarely have a chance to interact with more difficult text and often learn to dislike reading. As a result, these students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers.

Imagination plays a role in decoding. It is doubtful whether a person really understands something unless he is able to think about it in terms of pictures. When we read, the words and thoughts comprising the message call up images in our mind's eye. If this does not occur, the message will not make any sense. If you read or hear a sentence in an unfamiliar language, it will not make any sense to you, simply because none of the words will call up any pictures in your mind's eye. This ability plays a very important role in the decoding of the

written word. Furthermore, by using one's imagination while reading, one's emotions can be addressed during the reading act.

Lenz (ibid.) further says, “The type of instruction that a student receives will also affect reading comprehension”. Strategies for improving reading comprehension must be taught directly by teachers. Simply providing opportunities or requiring for children to read will not teach many students the comprehension strategies they need to be proficient readers. These need to be taught directly as students learn to read simple sentences and this direct instruction needs to continue in different forms throughout a student’s elementary and secondary school experience.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

A number of researches directly or indirectly related to teaching reading comprehension had been carried out in the Department of English Education. I have reviewed some of the researches related to “Reading Comprehension” which are as follows.

Poudel (1994) carried out research on “Teaching Reading skill in English.” Here, the researcher has focused on the overall comprehension of reading texts and analyzed the data in terms of comprehension ability of students in urban area schools have better comprehension of reading texts in comparison to students from rural area. This study concluded that 41.3 percentage students from urban and only 5 percentage students from rural school could comprehend the meaning of a text well.

Similarly, Siwakoti (1996) carried out a research on “An Analysis of the Reading Proficiency of the Secondary School Students of Jhapa District.” He also utilized a comparative analysis of students performance based on rural and urban schools in Jhapa District. He found that the students in urban schools performed better than the rural schools on the same reading texts.

Likewise, Shrestha (1998) studied on “ A study of Reading Comprehension in the English Language of the students of Grade VIII” and found weaker condition in lower secondary level than primary level. His study was also based on the comparative analysis of scores obtained by students at different grades (from primary to lower secondary) and grade eight students had achieved last in reading comprehension tests, the reading texts set in the government mandated text book.

Subedi (2000) made a research on “Reading Comprehension of the Grade IX Students of kathmandu and Jhapa District: A comparative Study.” He found that the students of urban schools had a better performance in higher reading comprehension level in magazines than in newspaper.

G.C (2002) carried out research on “ Reading comprehension Ability of PCL First Year Students”. He utilized both ‘student-seen and student-unseen’ reading texts to determine the reading ability of the students. He found that PCL students had better comprehension in seen reading text than in unseen reading text.

Patel (2003) has studied on “Reading Comprehension Ability of the Students of Grade X.” He found that the average proficiency of grade X of Rahutahat and Makawanpur in comprehending unseen text is 46.78 percentage and seen text is 62.19 percentage. Then, he concluded that the students have better reading comprehension percentage in seen reading texts. The average comprehension in both types of texts was 51.38 percentage.

Likewise, Poudel (2005) had carried out research on “TOEFL Based Reading Comprehension Ability of Bachelor Level Students.” He found that students had weaker proficiency in TOEFL based reading than seen reading text.

Pokhrel (2007) conducted a research on “Reading Comprehension Ability in the English language.” He had taken population from grade nine of Kavrepalanchok district. He found that students did better in seen text than in

unseen text. In the same way students could comprehend Para-orthographic text then that students of private schools excelled than those of public schools.

Again, Koirala (2008) conducted a research entitled “ Reading comprehension Level of the Poetry and Short Story “ He found that the comprehension level of the students is better in poetry than in short story.

The researches so far consulted have used the product aspect of reading comprehension. This product aspect of reading comprehension depends on what the reader gets out of the given text which does not say anything about the difficulties or problems the readers faces in comprehending the reading text. The study is different from those in the sense that it focuses on the difficulties in reading comprehension and the causes of poor reading comprehension of secondary level students.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- (i) To explore difficulties in reading comprehension.
- (ii) To explain the causes of poor reading comprehension.
- (iii) To suggest some pedagogical implications on the basis of the findings of the study.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Teaching has always been a difficult job, and with the advent of time and development of newer and nobler methods and techniques, it has become more challenging. Language teaching trend is moving from simplicity to complexity from uniformity to diversity and from oneness to pluralism. English language teachers, around the globe, are confronted with the challenge of teaching students with diverse academic abilities together well. Having students with

different level of language proficiency is one of the biggest problems that teachers face. Since this study focuses on explaining difficulties in reading comprehension and exploring causes of poor reading comprehension, it will be of considerable importance to English language teachers working in ELT classes. The study will be significant also for the prospective researchers who want to undertake researches in the area of reading comprehension. Similarly, the study will be equally beneficial for English teachers, trainers, text book writers and course designers since it provides them with an insight into difficulties in reading comprehension. The study will help the readers to overcome such difficulties and increase their capacity in reading comprehension. In addition, all the person who are directly or indirectly involved in English language teaching will be benefited from this study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This research had the following methodology.

2.1 Source of Data

For this research study, both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection.

2.1.1 Primary Sources

The primary sources of my research were the secondary level English teachers and students from various schools of the Kaski district.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources

I consulted different books, dissertations, journals and articles as well as visited some related websites to collect more information for the facilitation of the study. Some of the such research sources were Grellet (1981), Alderson (2000), Nuttall (2000), different websites, etc.

2.2 Population of the Study

Secondary level students and the English language teachers from different schools of Kaski district were the population of this study.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

Sixty secondary level (Grade 10) students studying in different schools of Kaski district and twenty English language teachers teaching in the same level and same place were the sample of this study. Twenty schools of Kaski district were selected through judgmental sampling procedure and one teacher was taken from each school. For the selection of the students, six schools among the

above twenty schools were selected through purposive sampling procedure and ten students were selected from each of the six schools.

2.4 Tools for Data Collection

Two sets of questionnaire (see appendix I and II) were used as the tool for collecting the required information for the study.

2.5 Process of Data Collection

I collected the data from the primary sources by administering two sets of questionnaire. For this purpose, I adopted the following steps:

- (I) At first, I went to the selected schools, talked to the authority, built rapport with them and explained them the purpose of the study to get their permission to consult secondary level students.
- (II) After getting permission from the authority, I consulted the secondary level students, built rapport with them, explained them the purpose of the research and requested them to take part in responding the questionnaire. I assured them of the confidentiality in terms of ethics of research regarding the information obtained through the questionnaire.
- (III) After this, I distributed the questionnaires.
- (IV) Finally, I collected the questionnaire, thanking the informants and school authority for their cooperation.
- (V) I followed the same procedure to collect the data from the teachers too.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

The present study had the following limitations.

1. The study was limited to secondary level students studying in government schools of Kaski district and English language teachers working in the same level and same place.
2. It was limited to difficulties in reading comprehension and causes of poor reading comprehension.
3. Questionnaires were the only tool for data collection.
4. Only 60 secondary level students and 20 teachers working in the same level were involved in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the primary sources. Twenty secondary level English teachers working in the Kaski district and sixty students studying in the same level and same place were the primary sources of data and the two sets of questionnaire were the tools for data collection from both teachers and students. Most of the questions were close-ended in nature where the respondents were requested to show their response by ticking the most appropriate option. A very few questions were open-ended in nature in which case the respondents had to write a few words or sentences to show their opinion. The data collected through the questionnaire to the students and teachers are analyzed and interpreted under this chapter. While analyzing the data, the total number of students and teachers for each response has been counted and tabulated.

3.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data taken from Questionnaire to the students

The students were provided with a set of twenty problems/questions. There were 17 close ended and 3 open ended questions in a questionnaire. The itemwise analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the students is presented under this topic. I have analyzed all the problems/questions collected from students by using both statistics and descriptive tools. While analyzing the data, the total responses of the each item has been counted and tabulated. This has been presented in the table below:

Table No. 1
List of Students' Responses on each Items

Item No.	Responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	56	-	4
2	57	1	2
3	55	-	5
4	40	5	15
5	43	5	12
6	38	6	20
7	52	-	8
8	-	-	-
9	40	6	14
10	47	4	9
11	-	-	-
12	35	14	11
13	48	3	9
14	36	10	14
15	44	6	10
16	42	7	11
17	-	-	-
18	40	6	14
19	-	-	-
20	-	-	-

On the basis of this table, each item has been analyzed and interpreted separately below:

Item No.1: Sometimes I do not understand a reading text because the language structure used in it is difficult for me.

The table shows that the students' responses on language structure makes reading text difficult to understand for them.

Table No. 2
Level of Difficulty of Language Structure

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	56	93.33%
Disagree	–	–
Undecided	4	6.66%

The above table shows that the maximum number of students i.e.56 (93.33%) have agreed with that statement. On the other hand, 4 students (6.66%) are found to express undecided on it. The table does not show any negative attitude regarding this statement. This implies that grammatical structure or language structure used in the text is one area of difficulty for secondary level students which checks their reading comprehension. Thus, to strengthen reading comprehension, the reader should be well acquainted with the basic and existing structures of the language in which the text is written.

Item No.2: Difficult vocabulary items in text, sometimes make me unable to understand the text.

The table shows that the students’ responses on difficult vocabulary items checks reading comprehension.

Table No. 3
Students Responses on Difficulty in Vocabulary Items

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	57	95%
Disagree	1	1.66%
Undecided	2	3.33%

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of respondents i.e. 57 students (95%) agreed with the statement, only 2 students (3.33%) marked undecided and a student (1.66%) marked the disagree option. From the responses given to this statement, we can conclude that the most of secondary level students

cannot comprehend the reading text because of their unfamiliarity of some vocabulary items used in it.

Item No.3: Sometimes the material in a text is organized in such a way that becomes quite difficult to understand.

The table shows that the responses of the students on the organization of the material in a text becomes quite difficult to understand.

Table No. 4
Organization of the Material in Text

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	55	91.66%
Disagree	–	–
Undecided	5	8.33%

From the third statement, it is noticed that the readers must be familiar with the organization of the subject matter in a text for comprehension. Here, the significant number of respondents i.e. 55 students (91.66%) agreed and 5 students (8.33%) undecided with the statement. It implies that the organization of the subject matter plays vital role to understand the reading text.

Item No. 4: Lack of knowledge about the subject matter can also affect my ability to understand a text.

The table shows that the responses of the students on lack of knowledge about the subject matter can also affect my ability to understand a text.

Table No. 5
Lack of Knowledge about the Subject Matter

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	40	66.66%
Disagree	5	8.33%
Undecided	15	2.5%

It is ascertained that the two third of respondents i.e. 40 students (66.66%) agreed with the statement. On the other hand, minority of the respondents i.e. 15 students (25%) undecided and 5 students (8.33%) disagreed with the statement.

Item No. 5: If the teacher does not give clear instruction before we read a text then we have difficulty in understanding it.

The table below shows that the responses of students on lack of clear instruction before reading a text makes it difficult to understand

Table No. 6
Lack of Clear Instruction before Reading

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	43	71.66%
Undecided	12	20%
Disagree	5	8.33%

From the questionnaire provided to the respondents, it is obtained that the majority of respondents i.e. 43 students (71.66%) agreed with the statement. Similarly, 12 students (20%) undecided and 5 students (8.33%) disagreed with the statement. So, we can say that clear instruction given by the teacher before reading helps the students to understand the text.

Item No. 6: I do not understand a reading text easily if my physical condition is not well.

The table shows that the students' responses on physical condition of them affects reading comprehension.

Table No. 7
Physical Condition of Readers

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	38	63.33%
Disagree	6	10%
Undecided	20	33.33

From the table above, it is identified that if the physical condition of the readers is not well, it also affects reading comprehension. The majority of the respondents i.e. 38 students (63.33%) agreed and 20 students (33.33%) undecided with the statement. Only a few number of the respondents i.e. 6 students (10%) disagreed with the statement.

Item No. 7: I have difficulty in understanding a text if my attention is diverted from the reading text.

The table shows that the students' responses on lack of attention creates difficulty in understanding the reading text.

Table No. 8
Responses on Lack of Attention

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	52	86.66%
Disagree	-	0.00%
Undecided	8	13.33%

Similarly, I found that the readers have difficulty in understanding a text if their attention is diverted from the reading text. It is noticed that almost all 52

students (86.66%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, 8 students (13.33%) marked undecided and no students (0%) marked the disagree option. So, we can say that to comprehend the text better, the readers should concentrate their attention towards the reading text.

In addition, the actual question no. 8 put up to them was, ‘what are the factors which affect your ability to comprehend a reading text?’ Regarding the responses given by the students, 54 respondents (90%) mentioned that they have difficulty in understanding the meaning of some vocabularies, idioms, phrasal words and technical words used in the text which affect their ability to comprehend a reading text. Similarly, 53 students (88.33%) of the respondents mentioned that they have lack of knowledge about the language structure (grammatical structure) which affects their reading comprehension. Likewise, a few number of respondents i.e. 22 students (36.66%) presented that they cannot pronounce the text well which affect their comprehension.

Item No. 9: Lack of background information about a text from the teacher makes us difficult to understand it.

The given table presents the responses of the students on the belief that lack of background information about a text from the teacher makes the students difficult to understand it.

Table No. 9
Lack of Background Information

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	40	66.66%
Undecided	14	23.33%
Disagree	6	10%

This Item is about the students’ responses on lack of background information about the text from the teacher makes it difficult to understand. This table

shows that 40 respondents (66.66%) agreed with the statement that lack of background information about the text from the teacher makes it difficult to understand. Fourteen respondents (23.33%) undecided and 6 respondents (10%) disagreed with the statement. This implies that lack of background information about the text from the teacher makes the students difficult to understand it.

Item No. 10: Use of visual materials helps us to understand the reading text better.

The table below explains the responses of the students on the belief that the use of visual materials helps to understand the reading text better.

Table No. 10
Responses on Use of Visual Materials

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	47	78.33%
Undecided	9	15%
Disagree	4	6.66%

It is found that the majority of respondents 47 students (78.33%) agreed with the statement that use of related visual materials helps the students to understand the reading text better. Similarly, 15 per cent of respondents i.e. 9 students undecided and 4 students (6.66%) disagreed with the statement.

On the other hand, the respondents were varied in their opinion with the statement “I understand a text better if I read it a) Loudly or b) Silently.” It is noticed that a significant number of respondents i.e. 35 students (58.33%) selected 'silently' and 25 students (41.66%) selected 'loudly' options. From this we can say that the teachers should ask the students to read silently for comprehension purpose.

Item No. 12: I couldn't make the image of the text while reading. So I feel difficulty in reading.

The table shows that imagination plays important role in reading comprehension.

Table No. 11
Students' Responses on Imagination Ability

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	35	58.33%
Disagree	14	23.33%
Undecided	11	18.33%

Similarly, almost all the students agreed to the statement that they could not make the image of the text while reading. So they feel difficulty in reading comprehension. Here, the 35 students (58.33%) agreed with the statement., 14 students (23.33%) disagreed and 11 students (18.33%) undecided on it. From this, we can conclude that reading comprehension is also problematized when the reader cannot picturize the images of the reading text in his/her mind's eye.

Item No. 13: Reading comprehension is difficult for me because of my weak reasoning ability.

The following table shows the responses of students with the statement Item that reading comprehension is difficult for them because of their weak reasoning ability.

Table No. 12
Responses on Reasoning Ability

Responses	Number of Students	percentage
Agree	48	80%
Undecided	9	15%
Disagree	3	5%

The respondents presented different opinions on the statement 'Reading comprehension is difficult for me because of my weak reasoning ability.'

Most of the respondents i.e. 48 out of 60 (80%) agreed, 9 students (15%) undecided and only 3 students (5%) disagreed. This shows that the readers must have strong reasoning capacity to comprehend the reading text.

Regarding the Item no 14, it is noticed that the readers' level of engagement in reading text also affects their comprehension. The majority of respondents i.e. 36 students (60%) agreed that they have the habit of leaving the text without completing it which complicates their reading comprehension. In addition to that 14 students (23.33%) undecided and 10 students (16.66%) disagreed with the statement. This can be presented in the table below:

Table No. 13
Readers' Level of Engagement

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	36	60%
Disagree	10	16.66%
Undecided	14	23.33%

This above table implies that the reader should have persistence and/or continuity in reading the text. Reading some sentences of one paragraph and diverting into another task will never help to increase the comprehension capacity. Once one starts reading a particular text, he/she is supposed to read the whole episode of text. Only then, the intended meaning/sense can be understood.

Item No. 15: I don't make further reading / study of other texts which are related to the present text. So this habit also creates difficulty in my reading comprehension.

The table shows that the students' response on lack of further reading of other texts related to the present text creates difficulty in reading comprehension

Table No. 14
Lack of Further Reading of Other Texts

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	47	78.33%
Undecided	9	15%
Disagree	4	6.66%

Similarly, it is found that 47 respondents i.e. (78.33%) agreed with the statement “I do not make further reading of other texts which are related to the present text. So this habit also creates difficulty in my reading comprehension.” It is also noticed that 15 per cent of the respondents undecided and 6.66 per cent of respondents disagreed on it. This shows that the students should practice a lot of other texts which are related to the present reading text for comprehension. If the readers do not make further reading of other related text, this habit creates difficulty in their reading comprehension.

Item No. 16: I do not have the source of inspiration and motivation. So I do not have great interest in reading the text.

If the readers motivate towards the text, they can concentrate their mind on the text which eases the reading comprehension. The given table explains the responses of students on the belief that motivation plays vital role in reading comprehension.

Table No. 15
Role of Motivation in Reading Comprehension

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	42	70%
Disagree	7	11.66%
Undecided	11	18.33%

It was noticed that significant number of respondents i.e. 42 students (70%) agreed with the statement. On the other hand, a few number of respondents i.e.

11 students (18.33%) undecided and 7 students (11.66%) disagreed with the statement. This shows that motivation plays important role in reading comprehension. Regarding the question no.19 and 20, most of the students motivate towards story and drama. Some students select biography as well. Very few students prefer poem and novel genre to other genres. From this, we can say that teachers should give any information of particular lesson in the form of drama and story first to the secondary level students for increasing their comprehension capacity.

3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of Data from Questionnaire to the Teachers

The teachers were provided with a set of twelve questions. The item wise analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the teachers is presented below.

The first question put up to the teachers was ‘Do you teach reading comprehension to your students?’ Regarding this question, it is found that all the respondents i.e. 20 teachers (100%) marked the 'yes' option. From this, we can say that all the secondary level English teachers teach reading comprehension to their students. It is one of the most important skills of language which is very important for the secondary level students from the examination point of view as well.

Question No. 2: What difficulties do your students face while teaching reading comprehension?

Regarding the English curriculum for secondary level, the teaching and learning of reading has been emphasized much. Forty-five percentage of the marks has been allocated for the testing of reading in S.L.C examination. But

the majority of government schools' students have failed in English subject. From this, it is noticed that students face many difficulties in reading comprehension. The table below shows the responses of the teachers on difficulties faced by the students while teaching reading comprehension.

Table No. 16
Difficulties Faced by the Students

S.N.	Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Unfamiliar vocabulary items, phrases and idioms	19	95
2	Lack of knowledge about language structure	18	90
3	Poor in pronunciation	19	95
4	Lack of the readers' knowledge of the topic	16	80
5	Lack of fore knowledge about the subject matter	17	85
6	Weak reasoning abilities	14	70
7	Trouble learning to decode and recognize words	9	45
8	Poor imagination ability	7	35

From the above table, it is found that almost all the respondents i.e. 19 teachers (95%) mentioned that the secondary level students have difficulty in comprehending the text because of their unfamiliarity of some vocabularies, phrases and idioms. Such problems frequently occur for the reason that the students do not get proper exposure. Thus, to overcome such problems, the language teachers should familiarize the students with phrases and idioms frequently used in secondary level course. Similarly, the significant number of respondents i.e. 18 teachers (90%) expressed that lack of knowledge about grammatical structure is one of the difficulties which the secondary level students face in understanding the reading text. From this, we can say that one

cannot read and comprehend a text unless one knows the existing structures of the particular language. Thus, to strengthen the reading comprehension, the reader should be well acquainted with the basic and existing structures of the language in which the text is written.

Likewise, almost all the respondents i.e. 19 teachers (95%) mentioned that the students are very poor in pronunciation. They cannot pronounce even a very simple word. From this we can conclude that the majority of the students have difficulty in pronunciation which hinders their reading comprehension. Furthermore, the table shows that 80 per cent of the respondents explained that the problems arise in reading comprehension because of the readers' knowledge of the topic. When the topic of the reading material and the reader's knowledge about the topic do not match, then the reader feels difficulty even if he/she reads the material attentively.

In addition, from the data collected through the questionnaire to the teachers, it is noticed that the students have difficulty in understanding the text because of the lack of foreknowledge about the subject matter. Seventeen teachers (85%) of the respondents mentioned that lack of foreknowledge about the subject matter is the next major problem that their students face in comprehension reading. Similarly, the majority of respondents i.e. 14 teacher (70%) expressed that the students' weak reasoning ability is another major problem in reading comprehension. From this, we can say that the students should possess strong reasoning ability to increase their reading comprehension capacity.

From the table above, it is ascertained that the students who had trouble learning to decode and recognize words often have difficulty with reading comprehension. Some respondents i.e. 9 teachers (45%) mentioned that decoding and recognition ability of the students affect their reading comprehension. So, we can say that students who struggle with decoding rarely have a chance to interact with more difficult text and often learn to dislike reading.

As a result, these students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers. In addition to this, imagination plays a role in decoding. A few respondents i.e. 7 teachers (35%) agreed with this statement. We can conclude that, it is doubtful whether a person really understands something unless he is able to think about it in terms of pictures. When we read, the words and thoughts comprising the message call up images in our mind's eye. If this does not occur, the message will not make any sense.

Question No. 3: What are the causes of your learners' poor reading comprehension?

The given table shows the responses of the teachers on causes of their learners poor reading comprehension.

Table No. 17
Causes of Learners' Poor Reading Comprehension.

S.N.	Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of motivation and persistency	9	45
2	Quality of reading materials	6	30
3	Type of instruction	7	35
4	Less exposure in English	13	65
5	Lack of using enough teaching materials	5	25
6	Inappropriate classroom management	8	40
7	Lack of competent teacher	3	15
8	No correlation between the text and given exercises.	2	10
9	Phobia created by the earlier generation against English	4	20

From the table above, it is noticed that the readers should have persistency and motivation for comprehensive reading. The significant number of respondents

i.e. 9 teachers (45%) mentioned that the students' reading comprehension is affected by their motivation and persistency. Reading some sentences of one paragraph and diverting into another task will never help to increase the comprehension capacity. Once one starts reading a particular text, he/she is supposed to read the whole episode. Then the intended meaning can be understood. That is why reader's ability to persist reading until deriving the message is a must. It is found that the quality of reading materials is also one of the causes of learners' poor reading comprehension. As regards this, about one third of the respondents i.e. 6 teachers (30%) presented that secondary level students' comprehension is also affected by the quality of the reading materials. From this, we can conclude that reading materials should be supplied with according to the level of the students' ability and it should be of good quality.

Similarly, it has been found that the majority of respondents i.e. 7 teachers (35%) agreed with the statement that lack of clear instruction given by the teacher affects students' reading comprehension. Strategies for improving reading comprehension must be taught directly by the teachers. Simply providing opportunities or requiring for children to read will not teach many students the comprehension strategies they need to be proficient readers. These need to be taught directly as students learn to read simple sentences and this direct instruction needs to continue in different forms throughout a student's elementary and secondary school experience. Furthermore, it is found that exposure plays vital role in reading comprehension. The significant number of respondents i.e. 13 teachers (65%) mentioned that exposure in English is very less which affects students' reading comprehension. In government schools, all the subjects are taught in Nepali medium and only one English subject is taught in English medium which makes students poor in reading comprehension.

Likewise, it is found that the lack of teaching materials affects reading comprehension. About one third of the respondents i.e. 5 teachers (25%) mentioned that teachers should use relative materials in teaching which enhance students' comprehensive reading. Similarly, it is proved that appropriate classroom should be managed for effective and purposive teaching/learning activities. Eight teachers (40%) expressed that the students' reading comprehension becomes poor because of inappropriate classroom management. In addition, a few respondents i.e. 3 teachers (15%) mentioned that lack of competent teacher or experienced teacher is one of the causes of students poor reading comprehension. Furthermore, 2 teachers (10%) expressed that sometimes there is no correlation between the text and given exercise which make the students difficult to understand the reading passage. Likewise, some respondents i.e.4 teachers (20%) expressed that phobia created by the earlier generation against English is one of the causes of poor reading comprehension. Students earlier take English as a hard subject which also affect their learning.

Regarding the fourth and fifth questions, almost all the teachers do not follow the stages of teaching reading comprehension while teaching. At first, they make the students' familiar with correct pronunciation and meaning of difficult words. The teacher presents synonyms and antonyms as well. Then he/she reads the text and the students are asked to listen. At last, students are asked to read the text themselves and do the given exercises. Similarly, in response to the next question i.e. 'Do you use authentic texts and variety of exercises in teaching reading to motivate the students?' Nine teachers (45%) of the respondents marked 'No' option. From this, we can conclude that teachers should use authentic texts and variety of other related exercises while teaching reading to increase comprehension ability. Likewise, about half of the respondents marked 'No' option to question no 7 and 8. But the teachers should

let the students to preview the text before they read and predict while reading a text which facilitates in better understanding. Similarly, all the respondents agreed with the statement that clear instruction to the students affects their ability to comprehend a text. In addition, all the respondents agreed with the next statement that classroom management plays outstanding role in teaching reading because the students get conducive environment in this management.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Findings

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings have been arrived at.

- i) It was found that most of the students (95%) responded their difficulty in comprehending the text when they encountered the unfamiliar words, phrases and idioms.
- ii) The difficulty in comprehending the text was mainly due to the lack of knowledge about grammatical structure of the language in students.
- iii) The lack of exposure in English was one of the major causes of learners' poor reading comprehension.
- iv) The lack of students' persistence and / or continuity in reading the text affected their comprehension.
- v) Likewise, lack of the use of enough teaching materials in the classroom was found as another causes of learners' poor reading comprehension.
- vi) The students did not have the source of inspiration and motivation which affected their reading comprehension.
- vii) A few students mentioned that they could not read the text with correct pronunciation which made difficult to understand the reading text.

4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations have been suggested.

- i) The language teachers should familiarize the students with difficult words, phrases and idioms frequently used in secondary level course to strengthen reading comprehension ability.
- ii) The language teachers should familiarize the students with basic and existing structure of language in which the text is written
- iii) Students should be provided with more exposure in English. The teachers should try to use the English language and motivate the students to use only the English language in the classroom. Classroom environment should be more interactive.
- iv) The teachers should facilitate students' persistence / continuity in reading the text. Once one starts reading a particular text, he/she is supposed to read the whole episode of text for comprehension.
- v) The teachers should use more and more reading materials as far as possible to arouse interest in their students and present the subject matter effectively.
- vi) The teacher should motivate the students towards reading the text before teaching.
- vii) The teacher should make the students familiar with pronunciation of difficult words as well which helps them to understand the text better.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire to the Students

Dear informants,

This study entitled “Difficulties in Reading comprehension” is being carried out as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Education, under the guidance of **Dr. Laxmi Bahadur Maharjan, Reader, Department of English Education, T.U., Kirtipur**. The information you provide will be kept confidential.

Researcher

Neeta Baral

Name:

Name of the school :

Grade:

Tick the best answer.

- 1) Sometimes I do not understand a reading text because the language structure used in it is difficult for me.
a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 2) Difficult vocabulary items in text, sometimes, make me unable to understand the text.
a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 3) Sometimes the material in a text is organized in such a way that becomes quite difficult to understand.
a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 4) Lack of knowledge about the subject matter can also affect my ability to understand a text .

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

5) If the teacher does not give clear instruction before we read a text then we have difficulty in understanding it .

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

6) I do not understand a reading text easily if my physical condition is not well.

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

7) I have difficulty in understanding a text if my attention is diverted from the reading text.

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

8) What are the factors which affect your ability to comprehend a reading text ?

.....
.....

9) Lack of background information about a text from the teacher makes us difficult to understand a text .

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

10) Use of visual materials helps us to understand the reading text better.

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

11) I understand a text better if I read it :

a) Loudly b) Silently

12) I couldn't make the image of the text while reading. So I feel difficulty in reading.

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided

- 13) Reading comprehension is difficult for me because of my weak reasoning ability.
 a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 14) I have the habit of leaving the text without completing it which complicates my reading comprehension.
 a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 15) I don't make further reading / study of other texts which are related to the present text. So this habit also creates difficulty in my reading comprehension.
 a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 16) I don't have the source of inspiration and motivation. So I don't have great interest in reading the text.
 a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 17) Do your teacher provide you sufficient reading materials when he teaches ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 18) Background Information about a text helps us to comprehend a reading passage .
 a) Agree b) Disagree c) Undecided
- 19) What type of text/genre motivates you to read ?

- 20) Why do you prefer reading this genre to other genres ?

- 4) How do you teach reading comprehension to your students ?

- 5) Do you use authentic texts and variety of exercises in teaching reading to motivate the students?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 6) Do you follow the stages of teaching reading comprehension while teaching ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 7) Do you let your learners preview the text before they read?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 8) Do you ask/ encourage your students to predict while reading a text?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 9) Do you let the learners guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary items from the text?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 10) Does lack of clear instruction to the students affect their ability to comprehend a text?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 11) If Yes, briefly explain, why ?

- 12) Classroom management plays outstanding role in teaching reading because the students get conducive environment in this management.
 a) Agree c) Disagree b) Undecided