

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Language is defined as a means of human communication. It is one of the most widely used means of communication. Language is meant to transmit and interchange ideas, feelings and wants. Language can also be taken as social phenomenon that is used in our society to establish a good relationship among human beings. There are several purposes to learn languages. One of them is to make oneself capable of living as well as versed social being in the world.

Chomsky (1957, p.13) maintains that "language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements." Similarly, Wardhaugh (1998, p.1) defines language as "what the members of a particular society speak".

Language refers to a set of symbols of communication and the elements that are used to manipulate human language i.e. a language primarily intended for communication between humans. It is the most widely used means of communicating ideas, emotions and thoughts. It refers to the cognitive faculty that enables human to learn and use systems of complex communication. The human language faculty is thought to be fundamentally different from and of much higher complexity than those of other species. Human language is highly complex in that it is based on a set of rules relating symbols to their meanings, thereby forming an infinite number of possible utterances from a finite numbers of elements. Humans acquire language through social interaction in early childhood, and children generally speak fluently when they are around three years old. The use of language has become deeply entrenched in human culture and, apart from being used to communicate and share information. It also has social and cultural uses, such as signifying group identity, social stratification, and for social grooming and

entertainment. Language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols.

According to Sapir (1921, p. 8), "Language is a purely human and non– instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols" (as cited in Lyons, 2009, p. 3). The main point to be noted in this definition is that language is the sole property of all and only human beings. It is a vehicle to exchange ideas, feelings, desires and emotions via voluntarily produced symbols. Similarly, Richards et al. (1999) define language as "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" (p.196). In their *Outline of Linguistic Analysis*, Bloch and Trager (1942, p.5) write "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which social group co–operates" (as cited in Lyons 2009, p. 4). This definition takes no appeal to the communicative function of language. Instead, it puts all the emphasis upon its social functions. Different scholars have defined language differently but none of the definitions are absolutely complete in themselves but they share the same theme. 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 voluntary vocal system of human communication. In conclusion, every language is used to communicate ideas, emotions and thoughts. Actually, language learning or teaching requires the development of four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSWR). It is essential to give equal emphasis on all four skills of language to get mastery over the language in question. It is completely impossible to teach or learn one skill neglecting the rest. Language skills are divided into two groups: receptive and productive skills. According to this division, listening and reading are grouped under productive skills. Though listening and reading are considered receptive skills, sometimes they are also called passive skills. But in reality, a listener or a reader, during

listening or reading, does not stay passive but, s/he receives some things and it leads her/him towards productive skills. Without receiving anything, production is impossible. Information and knowledge can be received either by listening or by reading a material. Thus, we can say that receptive skills are the pre-requisite for the productive skills. So, they are interrelated to each other.

There are innumerable languages in the world and English is one and the most indispensable of them. It is a major international language. It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations and the means of international communication in South Asia. English has been the second language in all the schools of Nepal and medium of teaching and learning in the levels of higher education. The English language was introduced in Nepal by the Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana with the establishment of Durbar High School in 1854 AD. Since the implementation of NESP in 1971, the English language teaching was introduced from class four as a compulsory subject. Now it has been taught from class one in government aided schools. The main aim of teaching English in the present situation is to enable the learners to communicate in it effectively and properly. Emphasis should be given to communicative competence for which any learner should have the ability of producing grammatically correct and situationally appropriate sentences.

1.1.1 Language Teaching

Language teaching involves teaching the second or foreign language. The purpose of teaching language is to enable the students to communicate in the target language. Many schools of thought have emerged in the field of language teaching and learning. In the same way language teaching methods have come in practice and have declined in course of time. Language teaching is a very complex job. Many things should be borne in mind while teaching language. Only standing in front of the class with no theoretical assumption about classroom management, different aspects of language, theoretical concepts of elements of language,

teaching becomes nonsense. A language teacher should theoretically be sound with different aspects of language teaching.

Language teaching is a highly skilled activity which is learned by careful observation and patient practice. Language teaching cannot be carried out successfully by following a set of rules of thumb, when our knowledge of all the factors involved is incomplete and when, consequently, many of the decisions on how to proceed must be left to the private knowledge and experience of the practitioner. It involves many different considerations or, in technical language, variables, the relative importance, or value of which, even if we were aware of them all, cannot readily be assessed, or quantified. To get mastery over language, everybody needs to have the ability in all aspects of language and language skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing to communicate properly and convey our thoughts, intentions, wishes, information, etc. Brown, (1994, p. 7) defines language teaching as "showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand." He defines teaching in relation to learning. He mentions that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning. He further says that teaching is enabling the learners to learn and setting the conditions for learning.

1.1.2 Language Skills

Language exists in two forms namely the spoken and the written. Speaking and writing themselves are the encoding processes whereby we communicate our ideas, thoughts and feelings through one or the other forms of the language; and listening and reading are the parallel decoding processes by which we understand either a spoken or written message. So, to be able to use any language well, one needs to develop all the skills of a language.

There are four language skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these skills, listening and reading are considered as receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are productive skills. In the natural order of language

learning receptive skills come first and the productive skills come later. It is impossible to develop productive skills unless one masters receptive skills. Though listening and reading are considered receptive and passive skills, the learner does not stay passive at the time of listening and reading but he or she receives something and it leads him or her towards productive skills. Since our concern in this research is on reading comprehension test strategies, the focus is given on reading skill below.

1.1.3 Reading

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. It is making meaning from print. It requires that we identify the words in print – a process called word recognition; construct an understanding from them – a process called comprehension; co-ordinate identifying words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate – an achievement called fluency. Sometimes we can make meaning from print without being able to identify all the words. Sometimes we can identify words without being able to construct much meaning from them. Finally, sometimes we can identify words and comprehend them, but if the processes do not come together smoothly, reading will still be a labored process.

According to Richards et al. (1999, p. 306) reading means, "perceiving a written text in order to understand its content." This definition makes us clear that reading involves perceiving the written form of language, either visually or kinesthetically. Reading is a receptive skill in written mode. This skill involves a variety of other skills. Those skills under reading as given by Munby (1978, as cited in Grellet, 1981, pp. 4-5) are listed below.

- a. Recognizing the script of language.
- b. Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- c. Understanding explicitly stated information.
- d. Understanding information when not explicitly stated.

- e. Understanding conceptual meaning.
- f. Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.
- g. Understanding relations within the sentence.
- h. Understanding relations between the parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices.
- i. Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices.
- j. Interpreting text by going outside it.
- k. Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- l. Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse.
- m. Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.
- n. Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc.)
- o. Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
- p. Basic reference skills.
- q. Skimming.
- r. Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- s. Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

Reading in its fullest sense involves weaving together word recognition and comprehension in a fluent manner. These three processes are complex but each of them is important. Complex in the sense that to develop word recognition, children need to learn how to break down and manipulate the sounds in words i.e. phonic awareness; certain letters are used to represent certain sounds i.e. alphabetic principle; how to apply their knowledge of letter – sound relationship to form

words that are new to them i.e. decoding how to analyze words and spelling patterns in order to become more efficient at reading words i.e. word study; to expand the number of words they can identify automatically, called the sight vocabulary. Similarly, to develop comprehension children need to develop background knowledge about many topics; extensive oral and print vocabularies; understanding about how the English language works; understanding about how print works; knowledge of various kinds of texts; various purposes for reading; strategies for constructing meaning from text and problem solving when meaning breaks down. In the same way, to develop fluency, children need to develop a high level of accuracy in word recognition; maintain a rate of reading active enough to facilitate comprehension; use phrasing and expression so that oral reading sounds like speech; transform deliberate strategies for word recognition and comprehension into automatic skills. But if reading is not pleasurable or fulfilling, children will not choose to read and they will not get the practice they need to become fluent readers. Therefore, reading also means developing and maintaining the motivation to read. Reading is an active process of constructing meanings. Finally, to develop and maintain the motivation to read children need to appreciate the pleasure of reading, view reading as social act, to be shared with others; see reading as an opportunity to explore their interests.

1.1.4 Reading and Reading Comprehension

The term 'reading' can be defined in many ways. It is regarded as the amalgamation of visual and non-visual experience or behavior. It is a process of 'understanding a text' in its simple sense. Understanding a text means comprehending a text. Thus, reading is the total understanding of a message or a message in a text. So in a usual way, reading is handled as reading comprehension. 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 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, ". . . reading comprehension is a way to measure different sub-skills, word meaning, literal comprehension, inference, metaphor selecting salient point from a text" (Harrison and Dolan, 1979, pp. 13-23).

"Reading comprehension is an implication of a set of sub-skills to get a message from a text" (Lunzer et al. 1979, p. 37). In the word of Hosenfield (1983, p. 233) "reading comprehension is a process of uncovering the kinds of strategies used in solving the problems of understanding foreign language texts, efficiently." On the whole, it appears that reading is an activity which can be seen as a complex task which depends on, ". . . a multiplicity of perceptual, linguistic, and cognitive processes" (Adams, 1980, p. 11); an interactive process involving linguistic, psycholinguistic, and pragmatic information that a reader has at one time, and a strategic process in the sense that understanding of a passage can be achieved if the reading involves purpose, motivation, and real effort of the reader.

Alderson and Urquhart (1984, p. xviii) warn that the product of reading (i.e. reading comprehension) can vary according to the purpose and interest of the reader; so in the assessment of reading comprehension, this issue is important mainly for designing test-tasks for reading comprehension. Therefore, the effectiveness of testing reading comprehension can be determined through the type of measuring tools, which are applied to test it.

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of writing. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. Many educators in the USA believe that children need to learn to analyze text (comprehend it) even before they can read it on their own and comprehension instruction generally begins in pre-kindergarten. But other US

educators consider this reading approach to be completely backward for very young children, arguing that the children must learn how to decode the words in a story through phonics before they can analyze the story itself.

During the last century, comprehension lessons usually comprised students answering teachers' questions, writing responses to questions on their own or both. The whole group version of this practice also often included "Round-robin reading" where in teachers called individual students to read a portion of the text (and sometimes following a set order). In the last quarter of the 20th century, evidence accumulated that the read-test methods assessed comprehension more than they taught it. The associated practice of 'round-robin' reading has also been questioned and eliminated by many educators.

Instead of using the prior read-test method, research studies have concluded that there is much more effective way to teach comprehension. Much work has been done in the area of teaching novice readers blank 'reading strategies' or 'tools' to interpret and analyze text. There is not a definitive set of strategies, but common ones include summarizing what you have read, monitoring your reading to make sure it is still making sense and analyzing the structure of the text.

Some programs teach students how to self monitor whether they are understanding and provide students with tools for fixing comprehension problems. Instruction in comprehension strategy use often involves the gradual release of responsibility, where in teachers initially explain and model strategies. Over time, they give students more and more responsibility for using the strategies until they can use them independently. This technique is generally associated with the idea of self-regulation and reflects social cognitive theory, originally conceptualized by Albert Bandura.

Similarly, reading comprehension simply refers to the process of extracting three levels of meaning from the graphic symbols. These three levels of meanings are lexical meaning, structural or grammatical meaning and social-cultural meaning. On the basis of reader's purpose on reading, there are four kinds of reading comprehension. According to Richards et al. (1999, p. 306), they are as follows:

- a. **Literal Comprehension:** reading in order to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a passage.
- b. **Inferential Comprehension:** reading in order to find information which is not explicitly stated in a passage, using the reader's experience and intuition, and by inferring.
- c. **Critical or Evaluative Comprehension:** reading in order to compare information in a passage with the reader's own knowledge and values.
- d. **Appreciative Comprehension:** reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from a passage.

In the present situation, English language curriculum has played the crucial role to develop reading comprehension ability in students focusing on reading skill. A variety of English texts for reading comprehension are provided to evaluate students' knowledge along with other skills. According to the curriculum of English developed by CDC, Nepal, 45 percent of the marks should be allocated to reading skill for national examination. It is here clear that reading skill is emphasized nowadays. Therefore, the students should have sound skill in reading and comprehending different types of literary and non-literary as well as seen and unseen texts.

1.1.5 Testing and Teaching

Assessment and evaluation can be used interchangeably. They are equally related to testing. In the past, assessment and teaching were treated as separate subjects and were separated from each other. But both of them are so closely interrelated that it is quite impossible to work in either field without being concerned with other. Tests are constructed either to reinforce learning or to motivate the students or as a means of testing the students' performance in the language. The same basic understanding of the facts of language learning applies to language test what the students have to learn constitutes the corpus of what we have to test. Since the student has to learn language, it is language that we must test. Nowadays many public examinations attempt to measure the students' success in performing purposeful and relevant tasks and their actual ability to communicate in the language. Such examinations have beneficial influence on syllabuses and teaching strategies in comparison to the past.

A large number of examinations in the past have encouraged a tendency to separate testing from teaching. Both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other. Tests may be constructed primarily as a device to reinforce learning and to motivate the student or primarily as a means of assessing the students' performance in the language. In the former case, the test is geared to the teaching that has taken place, whereas in the later case the teaching is often geared largely to the test (Heaton, 1988, p. 5).

There are two kinds of assessment which teachers will do at school level viz. formal and informal evaluation. The former is done to up-grade students from one grade to another. This evaluation does not accurately evaluate the level of competency of the learners when they finish each lesson or some units. Therefore,

informal evaluation is also desirable and this should be done continuously so that teachers can see how far students are progressing and what the weaknesses and strengths of their students are. This will provide teachers with the opportunity to see, not only the weakness and strength of their students, but also to evaluate their own teaching and try to devise new methods and techniques to make their teaching more effective. Testing and assessment go together. Testing means evaluation. Evaluation reflects the teaching and learning process. Then, like teaching, evaluation should be done carefully and it should be valid, reliable and effective. If the evaluation is not effective, the result does not show the weakness and strengths of teaching and learning.

1.1.6 Testing Language Skills

There are four major skills in communicating through language namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In many situations these skills should be carefully integrated and used to perform as many communicative tasks as possible. It is done where English is taught for general purposes. For this time the test writer should be careful to manage the test. He should concentrate on such test items which are directly relevant to the ability to use language for real life communication, especially in oral interaction. For example, in written test, questions requiring students to write letters, essays, reports, etc should be used. The questions should not be of traditional types where there would be no rigid distinction drawn between the four skills. Heaton (1988, p. 8) suggests some ways of assessing performance in the four major skills:

- a. listening (auditory) comprehension in which short utterances, dialogues, talks and lectures are given to the testees;
- b. speaking ability, usually in the form of an interview, a picture description, role play, and a problem-solving task involving pair work or group work;

- c. reading comprehension, in which questions are set to test the students' ability to understand the gist of a text and to extract key information on specific points in the text ;and
- d. writing ability, usually in the form of letters, reports, memos, messages, instructions, and accounts of past events, etc.

The process of language teaching encompasses a set of language skills. Among the four skills of language, 'Reading' is one of the significant language skills, especially for the learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Different approaches have been developed and adopted to describe and test the language skills and abilities over different periods of time, in the field of language teaching and testing. In the teaching of English, mainly four skills are taught and tested. There have been developed and adopted different kinds of testing devices to test the language proficiency of the learners. Primarily for testing language skills, test items are found in use. In the same way, various modes of test methods have also been adopted to test language proficiency and performance.

Among the four skills of language teaching, reading is also one of the significant skills. It can be tested by the use of many approaches but the test items are found widely in use to test this skill as well. The two mode-based tests: objective test and subjective test are found in practice for testing 'reading'. However, they are not one and only devices to test reading, there are many other such devices but the primary concern is their efficacy in testing.

1.1.7 Testing Reading

In teaching and learning, the term testing is always associated with them because it is a tool to measure the learner's ability in learning. The term testing in teaching and learning refers to testing of various skills of language viz. listening, and learning speaking, reading and writing, whereas reading means a process of

retrieving and comprehending some kinds of information and ideas. Teaching and testing are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being concerned with the other. Testing is a device to reinforce, motivate and assess the students and their performance. It gives the teacher a measure of progress and helps to supplement necessary feedback if it is applied properly.

According to the type of reading materials, the purposes of reading and the level of the learners, various test items such as true/false, multiple choice, cloze procedures-test, short questions answers, completion items, rearrangement etc. can be constructed to assess the reading proficiency of the students. One of the purposes of testing reading proficiency is to assess the students' understanding capacity. Among them the most widely used techniques are:

- a. Multiple choice questions
- b. Short answer questions
- c. True/False items
- d. The cloze test

a. Multiple Choice Questions

In this type of test, a question is given with three or four options. Students/learners have to select one that is absolutely true answer of the questions.

b. Short Answer Questions

Based on the text, short comprehension questions are prepared to check the reading proficiency of the students. These questions help the teacher to evaluate his students and to measure how much the learners have known of whatever was taught.

c. True/False Items

It is one of the most widely used tests to check the reading comprehension. These test items are easy to construct than multiple choice items. In true/false items,

statements are given relating to the message of the text. Students have to write 'true' or 'false' comparing the statements with the text.

d. The Cloze Test

In recent years, the cloze test has become popular among ESL/EFL teachers. In this test some words are deleted at a regular interval. Generally a fifth or seventh word from the text is deleted and students have to fill the blanks using their ability or capacity. They have to fill exact word or appropriate word without destroying the meaning.

1.1.8 Testing Reading Comprehension

I have already mentioned that there are three kinds of reading comprehensions viz. literal, referential and critical. Although comprehension takes place at several levels, mastery at anyone level is not a prerequisite to comprehension at another level. Furthermore, the reading skills for each level come across ages; they are relevant to young readers in primary schools, secondary school students right up to students at tertiary level. EFL/ESL teachers also need to keep in mind that the three levels are not distinct. Dividing comprehension into literal, referential and critical levels is only intended as a guide for teachers when preparing reading tests. Studies have shown that teachers tend to ask their students mainly literal comprehension questions. They need to be aware that there is more to reading than just the basic skills of reading and recalling information.

Reading comprehension tests are the most common types of published reading test that is available. The most common reading comprehension test involves asking a child to read a passage of text that is leveled appropriately for the child, and then asking some explicit, detailed questions about the content of the text. However, there are some variations on reading comprehension test. For example, instead of asking explicit questions about facts directly presented in the text, the child could be asked to answer inferential question about information which was implied by the text, or the child's comprehension might be tested by his or her ability to retell

the story in the child's own words or to summarize the main idea or the moral of the story. Another common reading comprehension test is called a 'cloze' test. Young children's reading comprehension can be tested by asking them to read and follow simple instructions.

Reading comprehension is an active and complex process that involves understanding written text, developing and interpreting meaning, and using meaning as appropriate to type of text, purpose and situation. To construct meaning, readers must decode words fluently, understand vocabulary, make inferences, and relate the ideas in text to their prior knowledge and experiences, these skills vary with age, experience, instruction, context, and motivation so both the processes and the products of reading comprehension are constructive, multidimensional, developmental, and variable. Thus, reading comprehension is difficult to define simply and measure neatly.

1.1.9 Strategy

Process, style and strategy can be used interchangeably in some cases. To be specific, process is the most general one among the three concepts. According to Brown (1988, p. 104):

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. They are conceptualized battle plans that might vary from moment to moment, or day to day, or year to year. Strategies vary intra-individually; each of us has a whole host of possible ways to solve a particular problem and we choose one- or several of those in a sequence – for a given problem.

1.1.9.1 Strategy in Foreign Language Testing

Mainly there are three types of strategies namely learning strategy, communication strategy and testing strategy. Foreign language testing is a complex job. Lado (1954, pp. 26- 29) mentions the following strategies in foreign language testing.

- a. Situation versus Language
- b. Skills versus Elements of Language
- c. Group Testing versus Individual Testing
- d. Objective versus Subjective Test

a. Situation Versus Language

If there were a high uniformity in the occurrence and use of the various variables and units of language we could simplify the testing of a foreign language a great deal. We could take any situation and engage the students in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and could give him an achievement score that would be the same if we choose a different situation and a longer topic.

The situations in which language is the medium of communication are potentially almost infinite. No one, not even the most learned, can speak and understand his native language in any and all the situations in which it can be used. There is the technical language of the scientists in a particular field that is not understood by scientist from other field of study. There is the language of the trained sailor which is not understood by the outsider. Even though all the classes in a large university may be taught in the same language it is doubtful that any professor could go into any and all the classrooms of his university and understand what is being explained. It is easy to find situations in which a person who speaks and understands a language natively fails to understand what is said because the subject matter is not within his experience.

We have no assurance that we have tested language merely because a situation has been understood. And we have no assurance that it is lack of knowledge of the language when a situation is not understood.

Strategically a situation approach that does not specifically test language elements is not effective. It has only the outward appearance of validity. Furthermore, even if we could pick only valid situations and even if we could be sure that understanding these situations occurred through the language used, we would still have the problem of the great variety of situations which must be sampled. The elements of language on the other hand are limited, and it is more profitable to sample these elements than to sample the great variety of situations in which language can be used.

b. Skills Versus Elements of Language

Even when we decide to test the language as directly as possible we still are faced with choices between integrated skills and separate elements. It is economical and more comprehensive to test the sound segments systematically than to test only a few sounds and a few grammatical patterns in a general test of auditory comprehension, yet even in testing the sound segments systematically we have to decide whether to test this element in speaking or in listening.

The decision in the choice of skill versus element will depend to a considerable extent on the purpose for which the test is made and the available time for testing, plus the conditions under which the test must be given. If we want a comprehensive diagnostic test of pronunciation to be used for pinpointing specific problems yet to be mastered by the students, we would obviously choose a test that ranges over the sound system, a specific test of that element of language.

The conclusion here is that we need to test the elements and the skills separately and will choose one or the other or a combination depending on the purpose and conditions of the test.

c. Group Testing Versus Individual Testing

In general we will be interested in testing under practical teaching situations. In these we will have to handle considerable numbers of students under limited time and personnel. We will not be able to plan thirty hour interviews for each student such as the anthropologist may conduct in his investigations. Even when we need to give individual tests we will attempt to devise techniques to do it in the shortest possible time to permit language teachers to use such a test.

d. Objective Versus Subjective Test

These terms are used to designate two types of scoring. Objective tests are those that are scored rather mechanically without need to evaluate complex performance on a scale. Subjective tests are those that require an opinion, a judgment on the part of the examiner. In subjective test there are differences in scoring by different examiners.

1.1.10 Reading Comprehension Test Strategies

Language teachers apply various strategies to assess reading comprehension of their students. These strategies help students succeed on different types of assessments. The following strategies can ensure that students are successful on reading comprehension assessments.

1.1.10.1 Finding the Main Idea

A test question about the main idea asks students what a reading passage is mostly or mainly about. It also asks a student to choose the best title for a reading passage. The title that tells the main idea of the whole passage is going to be the best choice. Students should ask themselves what the reading passage is about.

1.1.10.2 Recalling Facts and Details

Test questions about facts and details ask students something specific that has happened in a reading passage and will also ask who, what or why questions.

Paying very close attention to the events of the story and the order in which they happened will help with this strategy.

1.1.10.3 Understanding Sequence

Test questions regarding sequence will ask when certain things happened and require students to put specific events from the reading passage in order. The words such as first, second, last, before or after will appear in the passage.

1.1.10.4 Recognizing Cause and Effect

Cause and effect questions ask what happened and why something happened. When the text uses words such as because, why, reason or what happened, this signals cause and effect.

1.1.10.5. Making Predictions

Prediction questions ask students to make a good guess about what will happen next in a reading passage. These questions usually contain words like predict, probably or most likely.

1.1.10.6 Find Word Meaning in Context

Some words have more than one meaning. So there will be questions that ask students the meaning of a word used in a reading passage. A test question often has several answer choices. Students should try each answer choice in the sentences where the word appears, and choose the one that makes the most sense in the reading passage.

1.1.10.7 Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion

Test questions regarding fact and opinion will ask students to determine which of the statements is a fact or opinion. Students simply need to ask themselves questions like: "Can this statement be proved?" or "Does this statement tell what someone thinks or feels?"

1.1.10.8 Identifying Author's Purpose

Author's purpose questions ask students the reason an author wrote a particular passage. Some questions will ask about the entire passage, and others will ask about a specific paragraph.

1.1.10.9 Making Inferences

When asked to make an inference, students need to figure something out that a reading passage does not explicitly state. These questions often contain the words students can tell, determine or conclude.

1.1.10.10 Interpreting Figurative Language

Figurative language test questions ask about similes, metaphors and idioms. Students will have to identify a particular type of figurative language.

1.1.10.11 Summarizing

A test question about summarizing may ask students to choose the best summary of a reading passage. Students will not find the answers to these questions in the reading passage. Students will need to think about the most important ideas to find the best summary.

1.1.10.12 Skimming and Scanning

Skimming is the rapid type of reading in which the eyes run quickly over the text to discover the main ideas or gist of it. It entails the reader's ability to pick up main points rapidly disregarding what is not essential or relevant to that; general idea of the text. On the other hand, scanning is a kind of search reading in which the eyes run quickly over a text to find out a particular piece of information. It focuses its attention to see if a particular point is present in the text or to locate it.

1.1.10.13 Understanding Relations Within the Sentence

Inability to infer the meaning of unknown elements often causes discouragement and apprehension in students when they are faced with a new text. A similar problem arises when students are unable to get an immediate grasp of sentence structures. This will happen in the case of texts with relatives, embedded clauses and complex structures. Therefore, it is important to train the students to look the core of the sentence first.

1.2 Review of the Related Literature

Significant number of researches related to reading comprehension has been carried out in the Department of English Education. For the present study, the researcher went through the various sources and works related to the selected area of his research. It has been found that there exist a number of researches related to teaching reading comprehension, testing reading proficiency and testing language skills in general. However, a very few of them have only slightly mentioned the reading comprehension test strategies used by English teachers of school level in particular. Therefore, the selected topic for this study seems new in this field. As the researcher went through the available related research reports and other similar literature resembling to the present study, he has cited them as follows:

Oller (1975, p. 52) in his conclusion of the descriptive research about "The Approaches and Techniques of Language Testing" mentions that cloze and dictation tests are the valid and reliable tests for the assessment of overall proficiency of reading skills. He clearly mentions further that cloze test is one of the sub-types of objective evaluation in language testing. Therefore, he primarily advocates on the use of objective type of tests in testing the overall language proficiency.

Khanal (1997) conducted a study on "The Effectiveness of the Cloze Test over Conventional Objective Test" in testing reading comprehension in English. The main objective of his study was to compare two testing systems, viz. cloze and

conventional objective test. It was a co-relational cum cross-sectional study. In his research finding, he mentions that cloze test was found more effective and reliable in testing reading comprehension.

Shrestha (1998) carried out a research on "Reading comprehension in the Language of the Student of Grade VIII". Her study attempted to explore reading comprehension ability of the students in English language in terms of the type of the text. She carried on the students of Lalitpur district and found out that the students could perform better on seen passage than on unseen passage.

Pandey (2002) carried out "A Comparative Study on Reading Comprehension through Cloze Test and British Council Reading Comprehension Test." His main objective was to compare reading comprehension abilities of the students through cloze test and British Council reading comprehension test. His research finding shows that the students' reading comprehension through cloze test was not satisfactory; however there was not a wide gap in reliability issue between these two test methods.

Similarly, Sah (2003) conducted "A Comparative Study between Subjective and Objective Type of Test for Grade Ten" and his objective of study was to compare subjective and objective tests. His research finding showed that the performance of the students was better in objective tests than in subjective tests in comprehending the given reading texts.

Bhattarai (2004) carried out a research on "Reading Comprehension and Reading Speed of PCL First Year and Grade Eleven Students." His main objective was to find out the reading comprehension ability and reading speed of both the groups of students and to compare their reading comprehension and speed variation on given reading texts. It was a proficiency finding comparative study. His research tools were test items of objective and subjective questions. His research finding shows that the performance of students in reading comprehension in seen texts was better

where the objective type of questions were applied as research tools in comparison to unseen texts.

Yuhong and Tiao (2004) mentioned about the selection of test items (i.e. test type) in "Testing Reading Comprehension in English for the Students of EFL." Their objective was to explore better test items in testing reading comprehension.

They found out that the wise selection of test-mode gives a better result of the learners' comprehension ability in reading skills.

Khaniya (2005, p. 135) describes about the ways of testing reading as:

. . . for testing reading skill, different techniques can be suggested, but
. . . it is important that a considerable attention should also be given to the selection of the text to be involved in the reading test. The quality of the test depends also on the text selected. Therefore, the techniques of testing reading comprehension can be carried out through the use of different forms of test types as such: true-false items, multiple choice questions, cloze procedures, C-test, short answer questions, long-answer questions, completion items, rearrangements, etc.

In the same way, Poudel (2005) carried out a research on "TOEFL Based Reading Comprehension Ability of Bachelor Level Students". The main objective of the study was to find out TOEFL based reading comprehension ability of the Bachelor level students. He found out that the students of TU were very poor in reading comprehension ability in terms of the TOFEL standard.

Similarly, Ghimire (2007) conducted a study on "The Effectiveness of Authentic Materials (newspaper) in Teaching Reading Comprehension for Grade Nine." He tried to find out the effectiveness of authentic materials in teaching reading

comprehension. His research finding explored that the use of authentic materials has positive effect in teaching reading comprehension. He has used test items containing objective and subjective tests to divide the subjects into experimental and control group.

Bhattarai (2007) carried out a study to find out "The Reading Comprehension Ability of the Students in the Bible College of Grade XII" within Kathmandu valley in terms of reading sub-skills such as skimming, scanning, inferring and guessing the meaning to compare the achievement between different variables. He tried to explore the reading comprehension ability of the students in Bible colleges. He used simple random sampling procedure to collect data using subjective and objective questions based on three unseen reading texts. His research finding reveals that the comprehension ability of the students in objective questions was better than that of the subjective questions.

Adhikari (2007) conducted a comparative study of reading comprehension to find out "The Reading Comprehension Ability of the Students of Grade Eight." She used objective and subjective test items to collect data for the study. She has drawn her research finding that the performance in reading comprehension of the students was better where the objective test items were used in comparison to the performance where the subjective test items were used.

Similarly, Bandari (2008) carried out a research entitled "Reading Comprehension of Poetry and Prose". His objective was to compare the reading proficiency in English poetry and prose. He found out that the students had better comprehension ability in prose texts than in poetry at B. Ed. first year.

Then, Silwal (2010) conducted a research on "Techniques of Teaching Reading Comprehension by Trained and Untrained Teachers". His purpose of the research was to identify, compare and contrast the techniques used by trained and untrained teachers on reading comprehension. He found out that most frequently used

technique by trained teachers were checking comprehension by yes or no questions whereas most frequently used techniques by untrained teachers were explanation of the text in English.

Although the studies mentioned above are related to comprehension, most of them focus on students. In other words, they are carried out from students' perspectives. Only a few are from teachers' perspective. The present study differs from the former studies because no one has carried out a research on "Reading Comprehension Test Strategies Adopted by English Teachers of School Level". This study provides many ideas regarding teaching reading comprehension in teaching learning field. Furthermore, it will help the language teachers by making them aware of the strategies that are useful in testing reading comprehension.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were as follows:

- a. To identify the test strategies of reading comprehension adopted by English teachers of school level.
- b. To suggest some pedagogical implications on the basis of the findings of the study.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research work will be quite beneficial for all English teachers of school level, curriculum designer, ELT experts and practitioners in particular. It will be equally related to the teachers who have very important role in English language teaching, especially, related to teaching reading comprehension and its testing. Reading paves the way for the further reading. So, its importance is obvious. Only by reading we can acquire the skills and speed needed for practical as well as general purposes. Higher education depends upon the quantity and quality of reading. So, this research has manifold significance.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the set objectives of the proposed study, I adopted the following methodological strategies:

2.1 Sources of Data

I used both primary and secondary sources of data. Thus, this study was based on the following sources of information.

2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data

The data which are collected from the respondents are called primary sources of data. In this study, the primary sources of data were the teachers of Gandaki and Bagmati zones.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data

In order to facilitate the study, I consulted various books on language testing, testing reading comprehension articles, journals and the research works such as Grellet (1987), Alderson (2000), Heaton (1988), Harrison (1994), Lado (1965), theses, articles and other written documents available in printed form and electronic media which are related to the study.

2.2 Sample Population

The sample population of this study was the English teachers from Gandaki and Bagmati zones. The number of population was forty. Among them 20 were from Gandaki and 20 were from Bagmati zone.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

In this study, the sample population was forty English teachers who were teaching in Gandaki and Bagmati zones. They were the teachers of school level. I

purposely selected them using purposive non-random sampling procedure. The teachers were teaching English in the lower secondary and secondary classes. Among them twenty were lower secondary English teachers and twenty were secondary English teachers. Similarly, 20 teachers were from Gandaki zone and 20 were from Bagmati zone.

2.4. Tools for the Data Collection

I used a set of questionnaire to find out reading comprehension test strategies adopted by English teachers of school level (as mentioned in appendix I).

2.5 Process of Data Collection

To collect the data from primary sources, I followed the following stepwise procedures:

- a. First of all, I prepared the questionnaires.
- b. I purposively visited twenty schools of Gandaki and Bagmati zones. Among them 10 were from Gandaki zone and 10 were from Bagmati zone. I purposively selected the teachers from each school. I managed one from lower secondary and one from secondary level.
- c. I contacted the administration.
- d. I built the rapport with the administration and asked for permission to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents.
- e. Then, I asked for permission to the respective teachers and requested them to fill up the questionnaires.
- f. Finally, I collected the filled questionnaires from the teachers.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

- a. This research was limited to school level English teachers only.
- b. This research was limited to carry out the strategies adopted by the English teachers while testing reading comprehension texts.
- c. This research was limited to only forty school level English teachers.

- d. This research was limited within the schools of Gandaki and Bagmati zones only.
- e. The research tool was limited to the questionnaires.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Findings cannot be drawn until and unless we analyze the data minutely in any research. The systematically collected data were coded, analyzed, interpreted and presented descriptively as well as analytically using appropriate statistical tools, diagrams and tables. This chapter mainly deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from primary sources to fulfill the set objectives. The main objective of this study was to find out the test strategies of reading comprehension adopted by English teachers of school level.

3.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Teachers' Responses on Each Question

There were twenty-five items in the questionnaire to find out the test strategies of reading comprehension adopted by English teachers of school level. As the sample teachers have responded the questionnaire, their responses are described separately on the basis of the data presented below.

3.1.1 Teaching reading comprehension

One of the questions in the questionnaire was "How do you start teaching reading comprehension text?" It was asked to identify the test strategies of reading comprehension adopted by the English teachers. The following table presents the data.

Table No. 1

Teaching reading comprehension

Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage
Dealing with vocabularies	6	15
Familiarizing the students with sign post questions	21	52.5
Explaining the text line by line	5	12.5
Others	7	20
Unknown	0	0

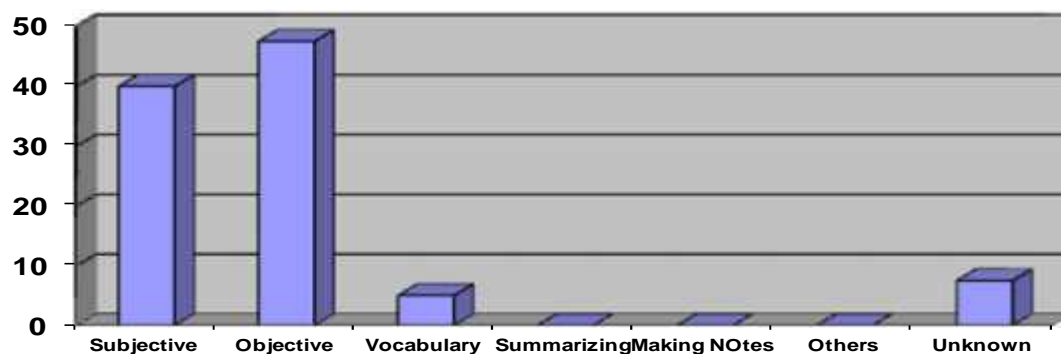
The above table shows that all the teachers responded to the first question i. e. 100% answered the first question. Similarly, among the four options, majority of the teachers i.e. 52.5% start teaching reading text by familiarizing the students with sign post question. In the table, others signify the respondent teachers' view and unknown signifies the unanswered percentage of the teachers. This showed that this strategy was widely used by many teachers.

3.1.2 Types of questions they used to find out the main idea of the text

The second question was "What kind of questions do you use to find the main idea of the text?" Here, I tried to find out the question types used by the English teachers to find out the main idea of the text. The following diagram displays the data.

Figure No. 1

Types of questions they used to find out the main idea of the text



The above figure shows that 7.5% of the teachers did not answer the question item number two in the questionnaire. It means they are unknown about this strategy. Among the six alternatives given in the questionnaire, majority of the teachers or 45.5% of the teachers used objectives question to find out the main idea of the comprehension text. In the same way, 40% used subjective questions and only 5% used vocabularies for testing it.

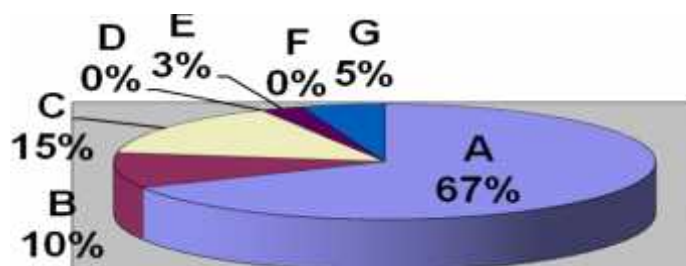
3.1.3 Questions used to ask the students to recall facts and details

The third item in the questionnaire included was "What type of questions do you prepare to ask the students to recall facts and details?" It was prepared to ask the

teachers how they asked the students to recall facts and details. The following figure shows the data.

Figure No. 2

Questions used to ask the students to recall facts and details



- A. Short question answer
- B. Long question answer
- C. Objective type of question
- D. Free writing
- E. Guided writing
- F. Other
- G. Unknown

From this figure, we can say that all the teachers are not familiar with this strategy because 5% of them have not answered the question. Apart from this, 67% i.e the greatest number of teachers asked the student to recall facts and details by asking short question answer. Similarly, 10% asked long question answer, 15% asked objective type of question and 3% asked guided writing. It can be said that this strategy was used by most of the school level English teachers.

3.1.4 Test items used to test the students sequential understanding of the text

The fourth question was "How do you test whether the students have understood the text in a sequence or not?" I prepared it to identify the test items asked by the teachers to check the students' understanding of the text in a sequence. The following table reflects the data.

Table No. 2

Test items used to test the students sequential understanding of the text

Response	No. of Teacher	Percentage
Asking them to make a flow chart	0	0
Asking them to make notes	3	7.5
Completing information in diagram	3	7.5
Asking them to present in the class orally	22	55
Asking them to write summary	7	17.5
Others	4	10
Unknown	1	2.5

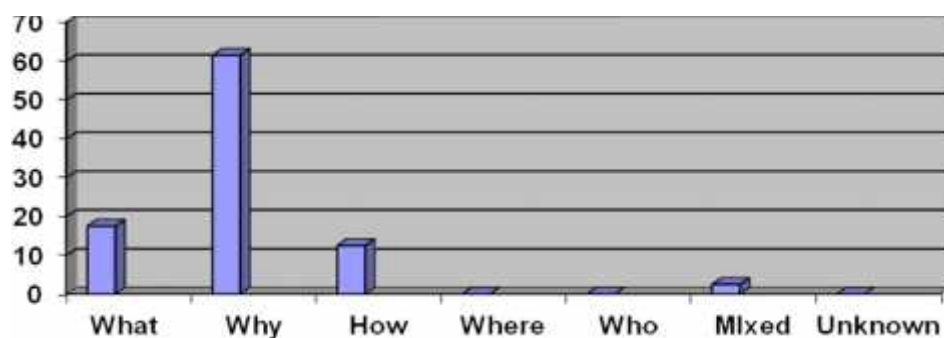
The above table shows that majority of the teachers used this strategy. Among them, 55% used it by asking them to present in the class orally turn by turn. Similarly, 17.5% asked them to write summary, 10% suggested their own techniques, 2.5% asked them to make a notes and diagram. On the other hand, 2.5% did not apply this strategy in the classroom.

3.1.5 Wh-questions used to ask about recognizing cause and effect

The fifth question was "What sort of wh-questions do you use to ask about recognize cause and effect?" In this section, I tried to find out whether the school level English teachers used the responses given in the questionnaire or not.

Figure No. 3

Wh-questions used to ask about recognizing cause and effect



The above figure shows that this strategy was used by all the respondents selected in the sample population. Here, it shows that 61.5% used this strategy by asking

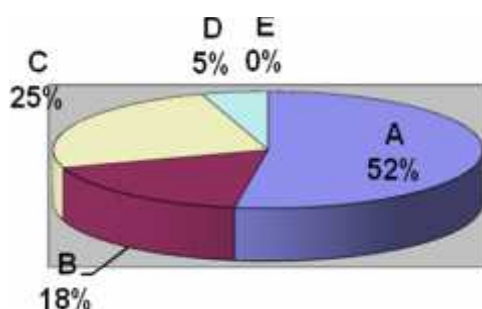
why question, 17.5% asked what question, 12.5% used how question and 2.5% used mixed questions while testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.6 Test items used to ask the students to make prediction

The sixth item incorporated in the questionnaire was "What kind of test items do you use to ask the students to make prediction?" I tried to find out how far the teachers used this item while testing reading comprehension. The following figure reflects the data.

Figure No. 4

Test items used to ask the students to make prediction



- A. Sign post questions
- B. Explaining background information
- C. Ask them to observe the illustrations given in the text
- D. Other
- E. Unknown

From the above figure, it can be concluded that 52% of the teachers used this strategy by asking sign post questions, 25% asked them to observe the illustration given in the text, 18% asked to explain background information and 5% suggested other technique of their own. On the basis of the above figure, we can say that all of the teachers i.e. 100% used this strategy while testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.7 Questions asked to check vocabularies of the text

Another question that was used in the item number seven was "How do you ask questions about vocabularies given in the text?" Here, I tried to find out how far the teachers used this item. The following table presents the data.

Table No. 3
Questions asked to check vocabularies of the text

Responses	No. of Teacher	Percentage
Finding word meaning in context	11	27.5
Matching word and meaning	12	30
Providing synonyms and antonyms	9	22.5
Using them in sentences of their own	8	20
Unknown	0	0

From the above table, it can be concluded that all the teachers i.e. the total sample population used this strategy while testing reading comprehension text. Among them 30% applied this strategy by asking the students to match word meaning, 21.5% asked to find word and meaning in context, 22.5% asked to provide synonyms and antonymous and 20% asked to use them in sentences of their own.

3.1.8 Strategy used to answer sign post question

"Which strategy do you apply to answer sign post question?" is one of the questions to ask about the strategy applied to answer sign post question. In this section, I tried to identify the strategy used by the teachers for this item. The following diagram shows the data.

Table No. 4
Strategy used to answer sign post question

Responses	No. of Teacher	Percentage
Providing answer yourself first	0	0
Discussing them in pairs/groups/ whole class	39	97.5
Giving them homework	1	2.5
Others	0	0
Unknown	0	0

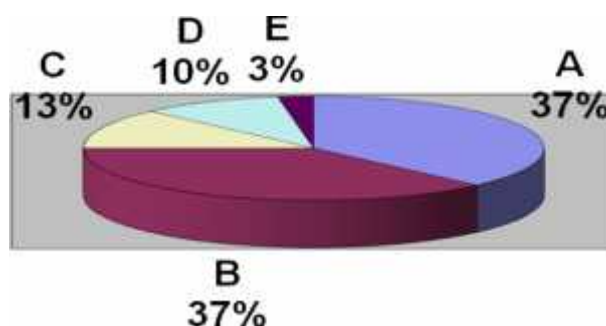
The above table shows that 97.5% teachers used this strategy by letting the students discuss in pairs/groups/the whole class and 2.5% gave them as homework. All the respondents answer this question. It showed that 100% of the teachers used this strategy in testing reading comprehension.

3.1.9 Purpose of asking the students to make inferences

The next item included in the questionnaire was "Why do you ask questions about making inferences to the students?" Here, I tried to find out why the English teachers used this item in the classroom. The following figure displays the data.

Figure No. 5

Purpose of asking the students to make inferences



- To check their high level understanding
- To make predictions
- To identify authors purpose
- To figure something out that the reading passage does not explicitly state
- Unknown

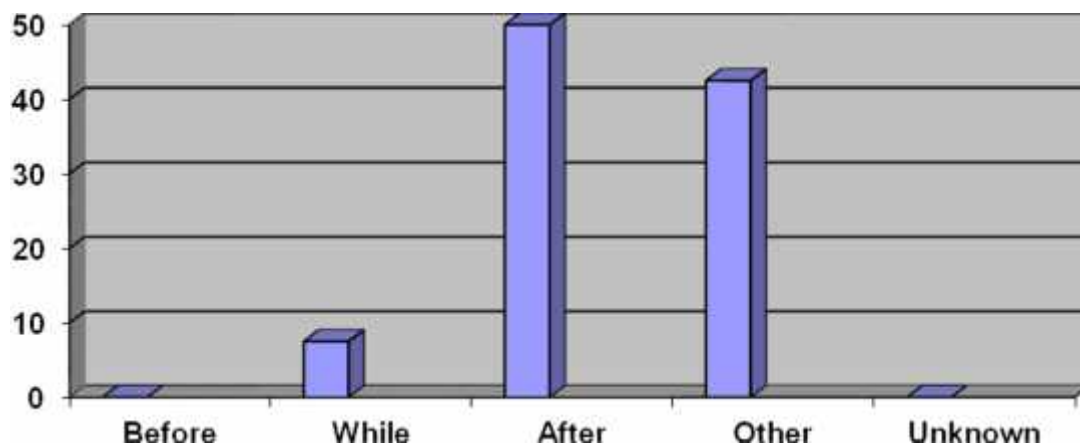
As the above figure shows, 3% of the teachers were unknown about this strategy. Apart from these, 37% used this strategy to check students' high level understanding and to make prediction, 13% used it to identify authors' purpose and 10% used it to figure something out that the reading passage does not explicitly state. In conclusion, it can be said that majority of the teachers used this strategy while testing reading comprehension.

3.1.10 Time asked to summarize the text

Item number ten in the questionnaire was "When do you ask them to summarize the text?" In this section, I tried to find whether the teachers take care of this item or not. The following figure shows the data.

Figure No. 6

Time asked to summarize the text



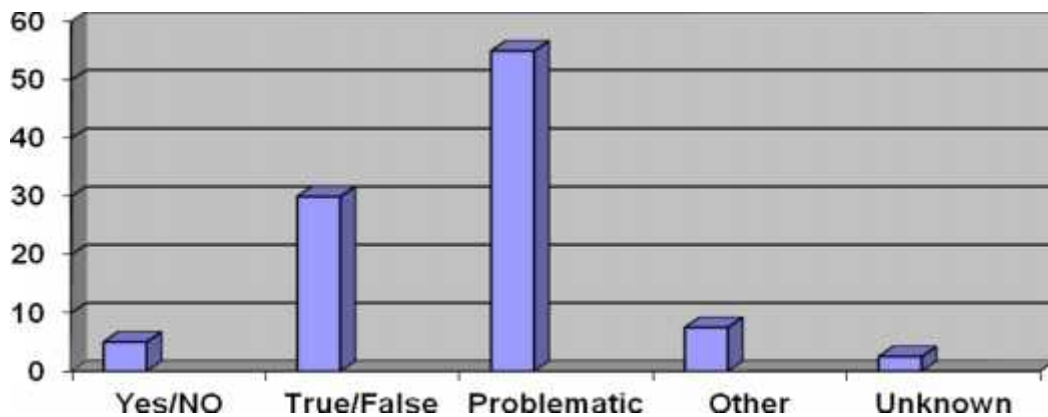
From the above figure, it can be concluded that all the teachers asked their students to summarize after teaching. In the same way, 42.5% used this strategy after practicing all the questions that follow and precede the text. It shows that summarizing is also another necessary strategy while testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.11 Kinds of questions asked to distinguish between fact and opinion

Similarly, item number eleven incorporated the question "What kind of questions do you ask to distinguish between fact and opinion?" Under this, I tried to explore the test items asked by the teachers to distinguish between fact and opinion. The following diagram reflects the obtained data.

Figure No. 7

Kinds of questions asked to distinguish between fact and opinion



The

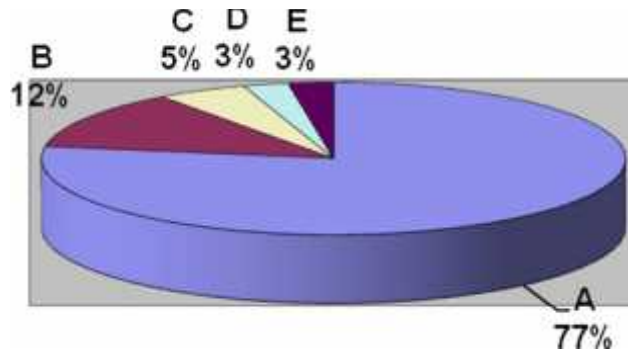
data in figure seven reveals that 2.5% of the teachers did not apply this strategy in practice. It shows that 55% applied this strategy by asking students problematic questions which need the students' opinion. Moreover, 30% applied this strategy by asking true/false questions that need reason, 7.5 % suggested their given techniques and 5% asked yes/no questions to use the strategy to distinguish between fact and opinion for testing reading comprehension.

3.1.12 Questions asked to find out the purpose of writing the particular paragraph/text

The twelfth item in the questionnaire included the question "What type of questions do you use for asking the students about the purpose of writing the particular paragraph/text?" Here, I tried to find out whether the teachers used this strategy or not. The following figure displays the data.

Figure No. 8

Questions asked to find out the purpose of writing the particular paragraph/text



- a. Why question
- b. Yes/No question
- c. How question
- d. Others
- e. Unknown

From the above figure, it can be summarized that 77% teachers asked why question for testing the purpose of writing the particular paragraph. In the same way, 12% asked yes/ no question, 5% asked how question, 3% suggested their own techniques while 3% teachers are unknown about this strategy. Hence, they did not fill the blanks in the question.

3.1.13 Frequency of asking the students about figurative language

Item number thirteen in the questionnaire was "How often do you ask the students questions about similes, metaphors and idioms?" Here, I tried to explore how far the teachers used this strategy. The following data table reflects the data.

Table No. 5

Frequency of asking the students about figurative language

Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage
In all texts	3	7.5
Only in the text which contains figurative language	37	92.5
Only where there will be questions before and after the text	0	0
Others	0	0
Unknown	0	0

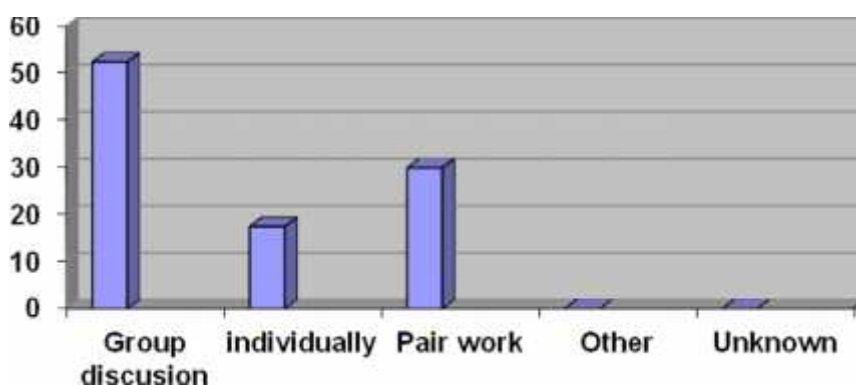
The above table displays that 92.5% teachers tested figurative language in the texts which contain figurative language and 7.5% teachers tested it in all texts. As a whole, 100% of the teachers used this test strategy in their teaching.

3.1.14 Strategy applied to conduct class work to check your students' understanding

"Which strategy do you apply while conducting class work to check your students' understanding?" was one of the strategies included in testing reading comprehension text. I tried to identify how far the English teachers used this strategy in the classroom. The data obtained from the teachers can be presented as below.

Figure No. 9

Strategy applied to conduct class work to check students' understanding



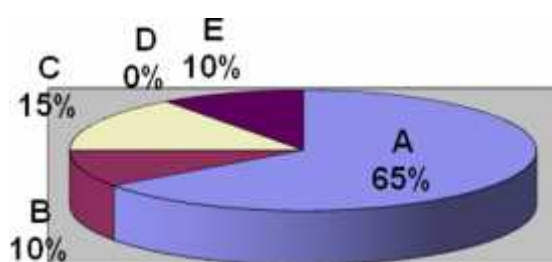
The above figure displays that 52.5% teachers tested the students' understanding by conducting group discussion, 30% conducted pair work and 17.5% explored solution individually. It shows that all the teachers were familiar with this strategy.

3.1.15 Strategy applied to attract students' attention to the class activities

Similarly, the next item in the questionnaire was "Which strategy do you apply to attract your students' attention to the class activities?" Here, I tried to inquire about the strategy used by the teachers to attract the students' attention to the class activities. The following figure reveals the obtained data.

Figure No. 10

Strategy applied to attract students' attention to the class activities



- a. Asking yes/no question
- b. Drilling vocabularies
- c. Drilling questions and answers that follow and precede the text
- d. Making them quiet
- e. Unknown

The above figure displays the data that 10% of the teachers were not familiar with this strategy. Among 90% teachers, 65% attracted students' attention to the class activity by asking yes/no question, 15% drill question and answer that follow and precede the text and 40% drill vocabularies given into the reading comprehension text. It proved that this strategy has important role while testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.16 Information expected after skimming

The next strategy incorporated in this questionnaire was "What sort of information do you ask to explore after skimming?" Under this, I tried to identify what kind of information the teacher expected from the students by skimming. The following table reflects the data.

Table No. 6
Information expected after skimming

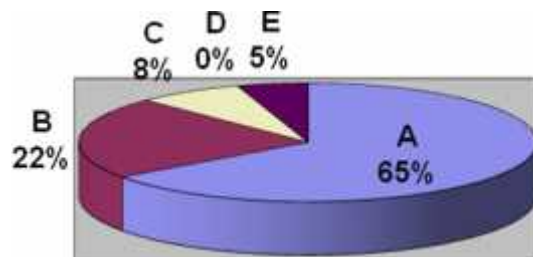
Response	No. of teachers	Percentage
Check speed reading only	5	12.5
Check how fast their eyes move	2	5
Discover the main idea or gist of the text	28	70
Find out a particular piece of information	5	12.5
Unknown	0	0

The above table displays that skimming strategy while testing reading comprehension text is used by all the teachers of school level. It proved that 70% of them used it to discover the main idea or gist of the text, 12% used it to check speed reading and to find out a particular piece of information and 5% used it to check how fast their eyes move. It can be concluded that this strategy also has its' own importance in tested reading comprehension.

3.1.17 Information expected after scanning

The next item included in the questionnaire was "What kind of information do you expect when you ask your students to scan?" I tried to find out whether the high number of teachers used this strategy or not. The following figure reveals the obtained data.

Figure No. 11
Information expected after scanning



- a. Finding out a particular piece of information
- b. Discovering the gist of the text
- c. Checking how fast they can read
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

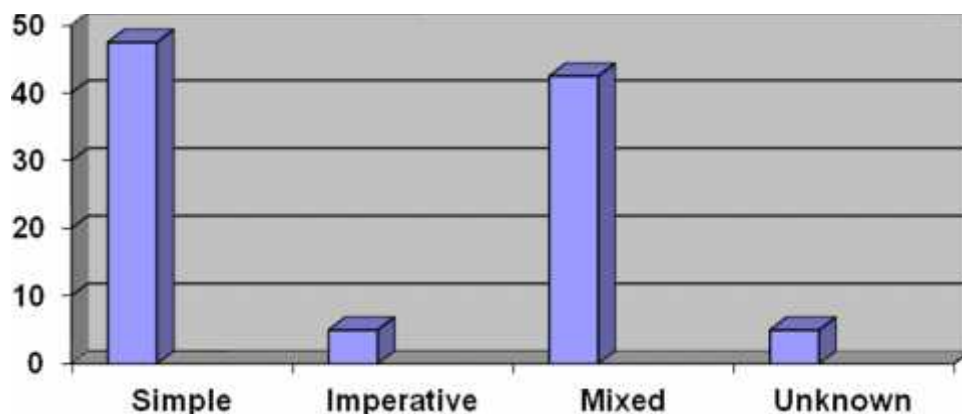
From the above figure, it can be summarized that 5% teachers were unknown about scanning strategy, 65% used scanning for finding out a particular price of information, 22% used this to discover the gist of the text and 8% used it for checking how fast they can read. Here, it is proved that this strategy was applied by the teachers while testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.18 Types of text used to check the students' understanding of relations within the sentences

The eighteenth item included in the question was "What kind of text do you use to check the students' understanding of relations within the sentences?" Here, I tried to find out what the teachers do for this. The following figure displays the obtained data.

Figure No. 12

Types of text used to check the students' understanding of relations within the sentences



The above diagram displays the data that 47.5% teachers checked the students' understanding of relations within the sentence using simple sentence, 42.5% used sentence with relatives, embedded clauses and complex sentence and 5% used imperative sentence. On the other hand, 5% teachers did not apply this strategy in testing reading comprehension.

3.1.19 Way of testing short question answers

To elicit the response whether the English teachers of school level test short question answers given in the text or not, I prepared the questionnaire "How do you test short question answers given in the activities?" Under this, I tried to find out how they check them. The following table reflects the obtained data.

Table No. 7

Way of testing short question answers

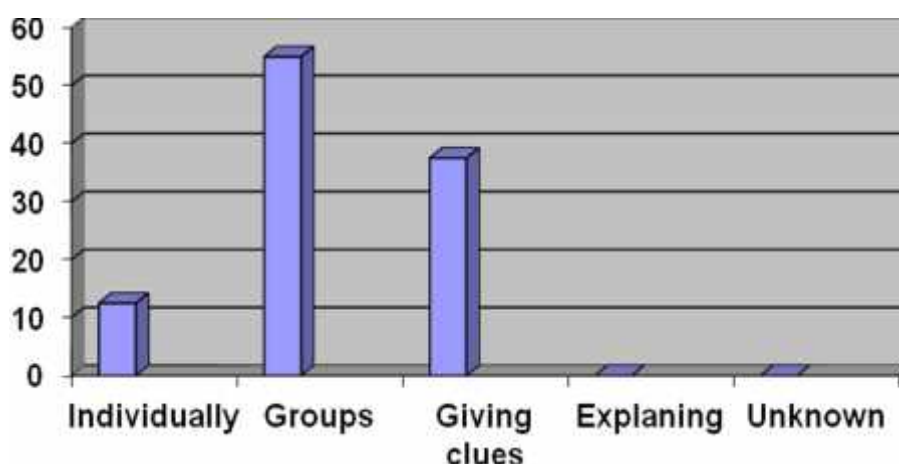
Response	No. of students	Percentage
Conducting group work	12	12.5
Conducting pair work	6	55
Conducting individual work	22	32.5
Providing answers yourself and asking them to recite	0	0
Unknown	0	0

From the above table, it can be concluded that 100% teachers applied the strategy. Among them, 55% conducted individual work, 30% conducted group work and 15% conducted individual work to fulfill this strategy of testing reading comprehension.

3.1.20 Way of testing matching items

The probable testing strategy included in the twentieth item in the questionnaire was "How do you test matching items given in the activities?" Here, I tried to identify how far the English teachers of school level gave attention to this item while testing reading comprehension. The following diagram reveals the obtained data.

Figure No. 13
Way of testing matching items



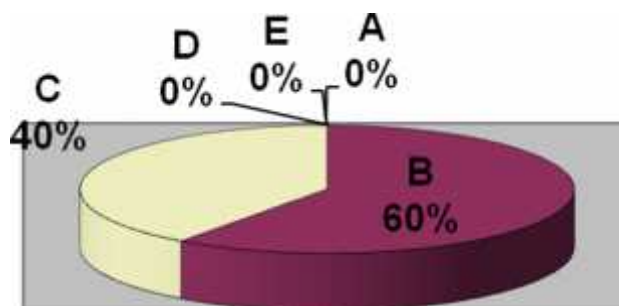
The above figure shows that 55% teacher tested matching items forming groups, 37.5% tested giving clues and 12.5% checked asking students do individually. Most of the teachers were unfamiliar with this strategy of testing reading comprehension text.

3.1.21 Strategy applied to test creative and long answer questions

Item number twenty one included in the question was "Which strategy do you apply to test creative and long answer questions?" In this section, I tried to explore the strategies adopted by the teachers for it. The following figure reflects the data.

Figure No. 14

Strategy applied to test creative and long answer questions



- A. Explaining answers in detail by you first
- B. Providing clues and asking them to make the final answers
- C. Asking them to write using their own ideas
- D. Unknown

The above figure shows that 60% teachers tested creative and long answer question in reading comprehension text by providing students clues and asking them to make the final answers. Similarly, 40% of them tested it by asking them to write using their own ideas.

3.1.22 Skill of language focused on more while testing reading comprehension text

The twenty-second question was "Which skill of language do you focus on more while testing reading comprehension text?" Here, I tried to identify the skill that the teacher expected to be developed after testing reading comprehension. The following table shows the obtained data.

Table No. 8

Skill of language focused on more while testing reading comprehension text

Response	No. of Teacher	Percentage
Listening	0	0
Speaking	2	5
Reading	5	12.5
Writing	0	0
In an integrated way	33	82.5
Unknown	0	0

The above table reveals that while testing reading comprehension text 82.5% teachers focused on writing, 12.5% focused on reading and 2.6% focused on speaking. So, it can be seen that teachers were very much familiar with this strategy.

3.1.23 Way of testing reading comprehension in the three stages of teaching

Item number twenty-three was prepared for the teachers to ask them how they tested reading comprehension in the given stages in the questionnaire. The question was "How do you test reading comprehension in the following stages?" Under this, I tried to identify their strategies for it. It was an open ended question. I have collected their responses together. The following lists reflect their responses.

a. Pre-teaching

- Sign post questions and vocabulary teaching
- Drawing attention
- Asking text related questions
- Asking about title and writer
- Drawing attention by showing real object
- Make them familiar with context/ vocabulary
- Ask them to make prediction about the text

b. While-teaching

- Asking them to read and make notes
- Discussing about sign post questions and others
- Describing the character and theme of the topics
- Cross questioning
- Asking short question answer
- Finding word meaning
- Detail explanation of the text
- Asking students to read the text and discuss the vocabulary and content
- Read the text correctly by the teacher
- Let the students ask questions
- Asking main idea or gist
- Asking them to solve the questions in the activity

c. Post-teaching

- Free writing and checking up their opinion
- Giving homework
- Evaluating them using question in the activity
- Asking them to make notes and summary
- Post reading questions solution ask them to do the exercise that follows
- Giving class work
- Asking them to report orally

3.1.24 Opinion expressed on testing reading comprehension

The second last question was "Do you think testing reading comprehension is different to testing other aspects of language? Why? Why not?" It was the second open ended question. Their responses are gathered together below. This item in the questionnaire inquired whether the teachers thought testing comprehension different to testing other aspects of language or not. Here, I tried to find out their opinion about it. Everyone accepted that testing reading comprehension text is different from others. The following points reflect their responses.

- It tests students' comprehensive power only while other aspects of language tests different skills.
- It tests how far the students understood the subject matter and implied meaning.
- It integrates the other skills and aspects of language.
- Concrete testing item or measurement cannot be developed.
- Students acknowledge vocabularies and grammar.
- It needs a lot of effort from the side of the students.
- It needs creative thinking and judgmental ability.

3.1.25 Problems faced while testing reading comprehension text

"Point out any three main problems while testing reading comprehension text." was the last question in the questionnaire. The question item asked to point out any main problems while testing reading comprehension text. By asking this question, I tried to explore the difficulties that the teachers were facing while testing reading comprehension text. It was the third open ended question in the questionnaire. The following lists present their responses.

- Testing unseen passage is difficult.
- Technical and jargon words
- Poor reading comprehensive power on students
- Integration of other skills with reading
- Lack of proper test designing
- Teacher's guidance needed
- Difficulty in handling the shy students
- Messy content
- Lack of proper teaching materials
- Problem to give contextual meaning
- Difficulty in judging the answers
- Different level of students
- Time consuming

3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Responses on the basis of Reading Comprehension Test Strategies

All the items included in the questionnaire are regrouped into thirteen categories as reading comprehension test strategies. They have been classified earlier into thirteen categories. The following table represents all the questions in the questionnaire. I have prepared more than one question for some of the strategies given below. So, the following table is the amalgamation of them into one. They are given one by one below.

Table No.9

Teachers' responses on the basis of reading comprehension test strategies

S.N	Strategies	Teachers' Responses in Percentage						
		A	B	C	D	E	F	Unknown
1	Finding The Main Idea	40	47.5	5	0	0	0	7.5
2	Recalling Facts and Details	67	10	15	3	0	0	5
3	Understanding Sequence	0	7.5	7.5	55	17.5	10	2.5
4	Recognizing Cause and Effect	17.5	16.5	12.5	0	0	2.5	0
5	Making Predictions	52	18	25	5	0	0	0
6	Find Word Meaning in Context	27.5	30	22.5	20	0	0	0
7	Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion	5	30	55	7.5	0	0	2.5
8	Identifying Author's Purpose	77.5	12.5	5	2.5	0	0	2.5
9	Making Inferences	37	37	13	10	0	0	3
10	Interpreting Figurative Language	7.5	92.5	0	0	0	0	0
11	Summarizing	0	7.5	50	42.5	0	0	0
12	Skimming and Scanning	39	13	39	6	0	0	3
13	Understanding Relation within the Sentence	47.5	5	42.5	0	0	0	5

Thirteen strategies are included under reading comprehension test strategies. Among them, all the respondents i.e. 100% teachers were very much familiar and used the following strategy completely.

- Recognizing cause and effect
- Making predictions
- Find word meaning in context
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion
- Interpreting figurative language and
- Summarizing

Besides, 7.5% teachers which were selected as the sample population did not apply the strategy called finding the main idea. Similarly, 5% were unknown about recalling facts and details, 2.5% did not use understanding sequence, 2.5% were not able to answer about identifying authors purpose, 2.5% did not reply on making inferences and 5% were unknown about scanning and understanding relations within the sentence. So, it can be said that the strategies which were selected for testing reading comprehension in my study were proved useful strategies for the purpose of testing in language teaching. I did not see that majority of the teachers were unfamiliar with any one of the strategies given above. Which is why, I concluded that the strategies which I listed above are strategies used by school level English teachers for testing reading comprehension text.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter encompasses finding and recommendations of the study. Findings are the generalizations made on the basis of the analysis of the systematically collected data. In this research, findings of the study were derived from analysis and interpretation of the data and appropriate recommendations and pedagogical implications are suggested.

4.1 Findings

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

1. The most frequently and strongly used strategies i.e. 100% informants always used in testing reading comprehension text are as follows.
 - a. Recognizing cause and effect (i. e. 100% used it)
 - b. Making predictions (i. e. 100% used it)
 - c. Find word meaning in context(i. e. 100% used it)
 - d. Distinguishing between fact and opinion (i. e. 100% used it)
 - e. Interpreting figurative language (i. e. 100% used it)
 - f. Summarizing (i. e. 100% used it) and
 - g. Skimming (i. e. 100% used it)

2. The strategies which were unfamiliar with some teachers and less frequently used in testing reading comprehension text are as follows:
 - a. Finding the main idea (i.e. 7.5% did not use it)
 - b. Recalling facts and details (i.e. 5% did not use it)
 - c. Understanding sequence (i.e. 2.5% did not use it)
 - d. Identifying author's purpose(i.e.2.5% did not use it)
 - e. Making inferences (i.e. 2.5% did not use it)

- f. Scanning(i.e. 5% did not use it) and
- g. Understanding relations within the sentence (i.e. 5% did not use it)

3. Testing Reading Comprehension has the following good and bad sides. I had given some open-ended questions to the teachers for this. The following points are collected together from their responses.

- It tests students' comprehensive power only while other aspects of language test different skills.
- It tests how far the students understood the subject matter and implied meaning.
- It integrates the other skills and aspects of language.
- Concrete testing item or measurement cannot be developed.
- Students acknowledge vocabularies and grammar.
- It needs a lot of effort from the side of the students.
- It needs creative thinking and judgmental ability.

4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study the following recommendations and pedagogical suggestions have been made:

I The English teachers should use student-centered techniques to teach reading comprehension. Similarly, the teaching of reading comprehension should be skill-oriented rather than knowledge-oriented. The student should be encouraged to be able to read in different situations. They should not be encouraged to memorize the information of the reading text. So, the teachers, course designers, methodologists and examiners should use appropriate methods and techniques in place of the oldest methods and techniques for teaching and testing of reading comprehension texts.

- ii. The teacher training programs, work-shops, seminars and teacher gathering should be conducted regularly for sensitizing the teachers' knowledge of testing strategies.
- iii. In testing reading comprehension, teachers should be familiar with different strategies that are useful for it.
- iv. Different testing strategies should be borne in mind while teaching and testing reading comprehension text so that all types of learners can be facilitated to the subject-matter.
- v. Testing reading comprehension is different from testing other aspects of language because it integrates varieties of skills and techniques. Which is why, a language teacher should be knowledgeable with the different strategies of testing reading comprehension.
- vi. To find out the main idea of the reading comprehension text, the English teachers should know how to prepare objective questions to the students.
- vii. The teachers should ask the students to present orally in the class to check up whether they have understood the text in a sequence or not.
- viii. The English teachers should ask sign post questions to check whether the students can make prediction or not.
- ix. The teachers should have the knowledge of figurative language to make the students familiar with the culture mentioned in the text and to relate it to their own culture.
- xi. The teachers should be trained in how to conduct classwork for effective teaching and learning so that they can test their students in the classroom.

xii. Students should be asked to do as many activities as they can in the classroom. For this, the teachers should create interest to them by any means of motivation.

xiii. All the concerned personnel and authorities should take immediate action to implement the findings to make testing reading comprehension more effective.

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Appendix

Questionnaires for Teachers

Dear Sir/Madam,

This research entitled "Reading Comprehension Test Strategies Adopted by English Teachers of school Level" is being conducted as a partial fulfillment for M. Ed. second year TU, Kirtipur under the guidance of Mrs. Hima Rawal. So, I humbly request you to answer the questionnaires truthfully as far as possible. The information provided to me will be utilized for academic purpose only and they will be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your kind information and warm cooperation.

Rana Bahadur Neupane Chhetri

Teacher's Name:

School:

Level:.....

Tick () the right alternative in the box if given and answers the questions wherever necessary.

4. How do you start teaching reading comprehension text?

a. Dealing with vocabularies

b. Familiarizing the students with sign post questions

c. Explaining the text line by line

d. If any others, then suggest.

.....
.....

5. What kind of questions do you use to find out the main idea of the text?

A. Subjective questions

B. Objective questions

C. Vocabularies

D. Summarizing

- E. Making notes
- F. If any other, then suggest

.....

6. What type of questions do you prepare to ask the students to recall facts and details?

- A. Short question answer
- B. Long question answer
- C. Objective type of question
- D. Free writing
- E. Guided writing
- F. If any other, then suggest.

.....

7. How do you test whether the students have understood the text in a sequence or not?

- A. Asking them to make a flow chart
- B. Asking them to make notes
- C. Completing information in diagram
- D. Asking them to present in the class orally turn by turn
- E. Asking them to write summary
- F.

8. What sort of Wh-questions do you use to ask about recognizing cause and effect?

- A. What question
- B. Why question
- C. How question
- D. Where question
- E. Who question
- F. If in an integrated way what are they?

.....

9. What kind of test items do you use to ask the students to make prediction?

- A. Sign post questions

- B. Explain background information by you
 - C. Ask them to observe the illustrations given in the text
 - D. If any other, then suggest.
-

10. How do you ask questions about vocabularies given in the text?

- a. Finding word meaning in context
- b. Matching word and meaning
- c. Providing synonyms and antonyms
- d. Using them in sentences of their own

11. Which strategy do you apply to answer sign post question?

- a. Providing answer yourself first
 - b. Discussing them in pairs/groups/the whole class
 - c. Giving them as homework
 - d. If any others, then suggest.
-

12. Why do you ask questions about making inferences to the students?

- a. To check their high level understanding
- b. To make predictions
- c. To identify authors purpose
- d. To figure something out that the reading passage does not explicitly state

13. When do you ask them to summarize the text?

- A. Before teaching
- B. While teaching
- C. After teaching
- D. After practicing all the questions that precede and follow the text

14. What kind of questions do you ask to distinguish between fact and opinion?

- A. Yes/No question
- B. True/False questions that need reasons
- C. Problematic questions which need the students' opinion
- D. If any other, then suggest.

.....
15. What type of questions do you use for asking the students about the purpose of writing the particular paragraph/text?

- A. Why question
- B. Yes/No question
- C. How question
- D. If any other, then suggest.

.....
16. How often do you ask the students questions about similes, metaphors and idioms?

- A. In all texts
- B. Only in the text which contains figurative language
- C. Only where there will be questions before and after the text
- D. If any other, then suggest.

.....
17. Which strategy do you apply while conducting class work to check your students' understands?

- a. Group discussion
- b. Finding solutions individually
- c. Pair work
- d.

18. Which strategy do you apply to attract your students' attention to the class activities?

- a. Asking yes/no question
- b. Drilling vocabularies
- c. Drilling questions and answers that follow and precede the text
- d. Making them quiet

19. What sort of information do you ask to explore after skimming?

- A. check speed reading only
- B. check how fast their eyes move
- C. Discover the main idea or gist of the text

D. Find out a particular piece of information

20. What kind of information do you expect when you ask your students to scan?

A. finding out a particular piece of information

B. Discovering the gist of the text

C. Checking how fast they can read

D. If any other, then suggest.

.....

21. What kind of text do you use to check the students' understanding of relations within the sentences?

A. Simple sentence

B. Imperative sentence

C. Sentences with relatives, embedded clauses and complex structures

22. How do you test short question answers given in the activities?

a. Conducting group work

b. Conducting pair work

c. Conducting individual work

d. Providing answers yourself and asking them to recite

23. How do you test matching items given in the activities?

a. Asking students do individually

b. Forming groups so that they can discuss and find answers

c. Giving clues to them

d. Explaining them

24. Which strategy do you apply to test creative and long answer questions?

A. Explaining answers in detail by you first

B. Providing clues and asking them to make the final answers

C. Asking them to write using their own ideas

22. Which skill of language do you focus on more while testing reading comprehension text?

a. Listening

b. Speaking

c. Reading

d. Writing

e. In an integrated way

23. How do you test reading comprehension in the following stages?

a. Pre-teaching

.....

b. While-teaching

.....

c. Post-teaching

.....

24. Do you think testing reading comprehension is different to testing other aspects of language? Why? Why not?

.....

.....

.....

25. Point out any three main problems while testing reading comprehension text.

a.....

b.

c.

Thank You!