CHAPTER 2
THEORIES OF READING SKILLS AND KINDS OF TESTS

In chapter 2, the writer will discuss some theories related to the teaching of reading comprehension. This chapter contains the definition of reading, reading comprehension, reading skills, teaching reading comprehension, kinds of test, lesson plan, and quantitative theory.

2.1 Definition of Reading

In this section, the writer will explain the definition of reading according to some experts. This section also has two parts: reading comprehension and reading skills. Those two parts also describe the definition and some background knowledge too.

According to Alyousef (2005: 144), “Reading can be seen as an interactive process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency.” While Grabe (1991: 377) argues “Reading can be seen as an active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently, for example, guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc.”

On the other hand, Paran has an opposite view on reading. He says “Reading as an activity involving constant guesses that are later rejected or confirmed” (Paran, 1996: 25). The sentences above means students do not read all the sentences in reading but they find some cues or words to get the idea of the text.
2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Grellet (1981: 3) defines reading comprehension as “Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible”. Teachers assume that to be able to comprehend, students should do comprehension exercise in order to improve their reading skills. Students tend not to read a text for overall meaning but rather to read in a point in the text at which a cue word in a question suggests the answer may be found (Mackay, 1979).

In Harrison and Dolan as cited in Mackay (1979: 21), the other way to develop reading comprehension is through organized small group discussion of texts. The aim of the activities is to give support to the students to do close reading in a noncompetitive atmosphere. Usually the group discussion contains six or eight students. The number of the students is enough to give the member opportunity to participate.

Harrison and Dolan (1979: 112) state that reading is not only a single skill but a set of related skills. These include:

1. Word recognition and mastery of vocabulary.
2. The ability to see in the material the structures of the sentences, paragraphs, and longer passages that form the whole units.
3. The intelligence to follow the thought development in the result of presenting and making any relevant deductions, inferences, or critical assessments.
4. The ability to concentrate on the reading task.

2.1.2 Reading Skills
Reading involves a variety of skills. In her research, the writer will only use and describe five of them. They are skimming, scanning, references, summarizing, and identifying the main ideas and supporting details. The reason why the writer only uses and describes those skills is because she finds out that only those skills are mostly appeared in the students’ book.

2.1.2.1 Skimming

The writer presents some definitions of skimming from some sources. According to Brown (2001: 308), “Skimming consists of quickly running one’s eyes across a whole text (such as an essay, article, or chapter) for its gist. It gives readers the advantages of being able to predict the purpose of the passage, the main topic, or message, and possibly some of the developing or supporting ideas.”

When skimming, we go through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. Therefore, skimming is a more thorough activity which requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading competence.

In the article from an educational website p. 32, skimming is one of the strategies to get the main idea of a paragraph, page, or article and a few details (http://www.hpcdsb.edu.on.ca/curriculum/literacy/think_literacy_teacher_resource/Think%20Literacy%20Reading%20Strategies.pdf). John Langan in his book Reading and Study English describes the steps to follow in the skimming for the main ideas as followed:

1. Find definitions. They are often signaled by special type, especially italics.
2. Locate enumerations. It does not help to locate a numbered series of items if you do not know what label the series fits under.

3. Look for relationships between headings and subheadings. Such relationships are often the key to basic enumerations.

4. Look for emphasis words and main ideas. Look for points marked by emphasis words and for main ideas in what seem to be key paragraphs.

(1992: 394)

2.1.2.2 Scanning

Here are some scanning definitions from various sources. Brown (2001: 308) states, “Scanning is a quickly searching for some particular piece of information in a text. Scanning exercises may ask students to look for names or dates, to find a definition of a key concept, or to list a certain number of supporting details. The purpose of scanning is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text.”

We only try to locate specific information in scanning. We just let our eyes scan the text until we find the information we are looking for, such as a name, a date, or a less specific piece of information. Therefore, scanning is far more limited since it only means retrieving what information is relevant to our purpose (Grellet, 1981: 19).

From an educational website p. 32, the steps to do scanning are as followed:

1. Knowing your text well is important. Make a prediction about where in a chapter you might find the word, name, fact, or date.
2. Note how the information is arranged on a page. Is information arranged alphabetically or numerically?

3. Move your eyes vertically or diagonally down the page, letting them dart quickly from side to side and keeping in mind the exact type of information that you want.

4. Aim for 100% accuracy.

(http://www.hpcdsb.edu.on.ca/curriculum/literacy/think_literacy_teacher_resource/Think%20Literacy%20Reading%20Stru.pdf)

2.1.2.3 Reference

Mackay in his book How to Teach English (1979) states

This skill has been left untaught and unquestioned in comprehension exercises. In order to understand a text, it is important for students to know what words like “this”, “these”, “those”, “it”, and “them” refer to. These words are most frequently used in order to refer back to a word, phrase, clause, sentence, or longer text appeared earlier. Frequently they are marked by “summary words”, e.g., “this type”, “that fact”, “these cases”, or “those factors”. Occasionally, even a native speaker is forced to stop to identify the referent (p. 125).

Ramsay in his book Basic Skills for Academic Reading (1986) divides reference into two: pronoun reference within a sentence and pronoun reference between sentences. The explanation is as followed:

1. Pronoun reference within a sentence.

   Writers often use pronouns when they do not want to use the same noun more than one time in a sentence.

   e.g.: John told Marsha he wanted to talk to her.

   (He refers to John; her refers to Marsha)
2. Pronoun reference between sentences.

Sometimes writers use a pronoun in one sentence to refer to a noun in a different sentence.

e.g.: More and more libraries are offering special services for their patrons. *These* include entertainment facilities, community activities, and facilities for blind readers.

(*These* refers to special services)

( pp. 63-67)

2.1.2.4 Summarizing

According to Duke and Pearson (2002) as cited in http://www.perfectionlearning.com/fors/fors.whitepaper.pdf, summarizing is a difficult task because students should read the text, identify important and unimportant idea, and combine ideas to create a new text that is the same with the original. From the same source, we get the two strategies of summarizing.

1. After reading, students choose from a list of sentence the one that best summarize the text.

2. Students make a hand note to help them identify the most important details.

3. Students use the information from the hand note to write a short summary of the text.

According to Barnes, Brown, and Burgdorf (1980), “The purpose of summarizing is to help students condense written information and present its substance in their own words, concisely and without distortion. Information is being summarized in order to make it easier to handle and understand (pp. 9-10).”
They also say that summarizing is an important skill in every study area. A scientist must summarize his or her observations carefully. A writer should summarize his or her experiences to make a good writing. While students must summarize what they are reading or learning in order to better understand and remember it when reading and learning new material (Barnes, Brown, and Burgdorf, 1980: pp. 9-10).

2.1.2.5 Identifying the main ideas and supporting details

According to Anderson (2003: 86), “Every paragraph has a main idea, or topic, that tells us what the paragraph will be about. Often, you will find the main idea talked about in the first or second sentence of a paragraph. Supporting ideas usually follow the main idea. Sentences containing supporting ideas explain or give us more information about the main idea.”

According to Barnes, Brown, and Burgdorf (1980), “The purpose of identifying the main idea is to help students find the thesis or core idea of the paragraph. The main idea is the most important element presented in a paragraph. It is the foundation upon which all the other sentences are built (pp. 9-10).”

Hennings in her book Reading with Meaning (1999: 66) states sometimes the writers state their main idea somewhere in the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a paragraph. At others time, they include a sentence in which they almost state the main idea but they still give a clear clue about it.

2.2 Teaching Reading Comprehension
In this section, the writer discusses deeper about teaching reading comprehension according to some experts. Three experts share their ideas about reading comprehension. As explained by Alyousef (2005: 149),

Contemporary reading tasks, unlike the traditional materials, involve three-phase procedures: pre-, while-, and post-reading stages. The pre-reading stage helps in activating the relevant schema. Most teachers tend to neglect this stage because there is not enough time. In fact, this activity motivates students before the actual reading takes place. The aim of while-reading stage is to develop students’ ability in dealing with texts by developing their linguistic and schematic knowledge.


In Gabb (2000) as cited in Alyousef (2005: 150), she identifies some difficulties the students have in facing reading texts. They are limited vocabularies and lack of background knowledge. The key aspect to achieve fluency in reading is the expansion of vocabulary through the use of word play, puzzles, etc.

2.3 Eclectic Techniques

The word ‘eclectic’ means not following one style or set of ideas but choosing from or using a wide variety (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). Eclectic techniques mean the writer not only use one technique but also use a wide variety of techniques. The techniques are taken from the book *New Ways in Teaching Reading* by Richard R. Day. The techniques implemented are:

1. Choosing a different title (p. 109)
2. Teacher’s time out (p. 54)
2.4 Kinds of Tests

There are four kinds of tests as explained by Hughes (1989:9-14). They are proficiency tests, achievement tests, diagnostic tests, and placement tests—although the categories of the test and the names given vary according to the preferences of different writers. Harrison in his book A Language Testing Handbook (1983) states that tests are given to the students by purpose: why is a test needed at a particular level in the students’ learning and what use will be made of the result.

2.4.1 Proficiency Tests

Hughes states, “These tests are designed to measure people’s ability in a language regardless of any training they may have had in that language. The content of a proficiency test is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language order to be considered proficient.” (1989: 9). The function of these tests is to show whether candidates have reached a certain standard with respect to certain specified abilities.

Harrison (1983) states “The aim of a proficiency test is to assess the student’s ability to apply in actual situations what he has learnt. This type of test is not usually
related to any particular course because it is concerned with the student’s current
standing in relation to his future needs. In view of this future orientation, a
proficiency test is the most suitable vehicle for assessing English for Specific
Purpose (ESP)” (pp. 7-8).

Harrison also states two main characteristics of proficiency tests. The first is
they relate to the material that has been learnt by students. The second is they have to
be based on the specification of language that is going to be needed by the students

2.4.2 Achievement Tests

“This tests are directly related to language courses, their purpose being to
establish how successful individual students, groups of students, or the courses
themselves have been in achieving objectives” (Hughes, 1989: 10).

They are two kinds of achievement tests as stated by Hughes (1989: 10-12):
1. Final achievement tests

Final achievement tests are those administrated at the end of a course of
study. The content of these tests must be related to the courses with which they are
concerned, but the nature of this relationship is a matter of disagreement amongst
language testers. The content of a final achievement test should be based directly on
a detailed course syllabus or on the books and other materials used. This has been
referred to the ‘syllabus-content approach’.

2. Progress achievement tests
Progress achievement tests are intended to measure the progress that students are making. One way of measuring progress would be repeatedly to administer final achievement tests, the increasing scores indicating the progress made.

“An achievement test (also called an attainment or summative test) looks back over a long period of learning than the diagnostic test, for example a year’s work, or a whole course, or even a variety of different courses” (Harrison, 1983: 7).

Designing and setting an achievement test is bigger than the work for diagnostic test. It is because the students’ result is treated as a qualification which has a particular value in relation to the results of other students. This kind of test involves more detailed preparation and covers a wider range of material (Harrison, 1983: 64). The writer uses this kind of test—progress achievement test—in her research in order to find out the students’ pre-test and post test.

### 2.4.3 Diagnostic Tests

Hughes (1989: 13) states, “Diagnostic tests are used to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses.” She also says that lacking of good diagnostic tests is unfortunate. They could be useful for individualized instruction or self-instruction, students would be shown where gaps exist in their command of the language, and could be directed to sources of information, exemplification and practice.

According to Harrison (1983: 6), “A diagnostic test (sometimes called a formative or progress test) checks on students’ progress in learning particular elements of the course. It is used at the end of a unit in the course book or after a lesson designed to teach one particular point.”
The content of diagnostic test is more specific because it is referring back to recent class work. It is supposed to have positive results for the students by encouraging and showing them what they need to improve, and it should be based on examples of the material which has been used in class (Harrison, 1983: 49).

2.4.4 Placement Tests

The aim of placement tests is to provide information which help to place students at the stage or in the part of the teaching program which is the most appropriate to their abilities. They are also used to put students to classes at different levels (Hughes, 1989: 14).

Harrison (1983) says “A placement test is designed to sort new students into teaching groups, so that they can start a course at approximately the same level as the other students in the class (p. 4).”

However, the contents of a placement test should be general referring forward to the course the student is going to take, and the use of a variety of tests, including an interview. It can be added that the tests should cover the students’ scores so that they can be sorted into class group (Harrison, 1983: 24).

2.5 Lesson Plan

Harmer (1998) states three purposes of a lesson plan: it allows teachers to think about the ideas for tomorrow’s and next week’s lessons. It also helps to remain teachers what they intended to do. The last is it gives students confidence because they know that the teacher has thought about the lesson—being professional—and the teacher are care to them (p. 121).
A lesson plan should be coherence. It means that the students can see a logical pattern to the lesson. Even there are three separate activities, there has to be some connection between them. He also says that the ideal compromise is to plan a lesson that has an internal coherence but still allows the students to do different things (Harmer, 1998: 122).

There is no ‘correct’ format for a lesson plan. The most important thing is a lesson plan should be useful for the teacher and, of course, the students. Some teachers usually write their lesson plans on cards. Others prefer handwritten sheets from a notepad and others will type it out on a word processor (Harmer, 1998: 125).


Because there is no ‘correct’ format for a lesson plan, the writer decides to combine the two format of a lesson plan made by Harmer and Scrivener. The writer’s lesson plan contains the date, topic, time, general aids, pre-reading activity, while reading activity, and post-reading activity—which is divided into two: individual activity and group activity. All of the activities (pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading) are completed with the general instructions from the teacher. Below is an example of a lesson plan by Jeremy Harmer (Harmer, 1998: 171):
### LESSON PLAN

**Description of Class**
Elementary/ lower intermediate: 20 students
Difficult to make them take part in speaking activities and things like that.
They can be very bad tempered especially if they have been out the night before
(because it is a morning class).

**Aims**
To teach comparatives
Fluency practice
Writing practice (if time)

**Procedure**
1. T tells story about a terrible journey – plane.
   
   5”

2. SS in groups. T tells them to discuss transport. Which do they prefer? Which
do they dislike? SS report back to class.
   
   5”

3. T gets SS to look at article title. Asks them what it’s going to be about. SS read
article. Were they correct?
   
   5”

4. SS do ex 5 on page 24.
   
   5”

5. SS do ex 6 & 7.
   Problems?
   Sounds: /t∫/ cheaper
   Stress: comfortable, convenient/ important
   
   10”

6. T models sentence ‘Trains are cheaper than planes’. Choral & individual
repetition.
   Controlled practice of following sentences:
   Trains are better than planes.
   Trains are safer than planes.
   Trains are more comfortable than planes.
   And then reversed, e.g. planes are more expensive than trains.
   Problems? Sentence stress: 3-hit rhythm (weak ‘are’, ‘-er’ and ‘than’).
   Example: Trains are cheaper than planes.
   
   10”

7. T elicits vocabulary to describe furniture.
   T tells SS they are in a furniture store. Have to decide on which sofa to buy
(see attached role cards).
   SS role-play in pairs.
   
   15”

8. (if time) Pairs write imaginary fax to their partner with information and advice
about sofa purchase.
   
   10”

**Comments**
The students may not be prepared to talk about transport or role-play the furniture store.
T will encourage them.
Some SS may know comparatives. If so T will miss out controlled practice stage.

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Table 2.1: Lesson Plan by Jeremy Harmer

2.6 **Theory of Correlative Analysis.**
In this section, the writer used two formulas to find out the progress of the students and the correlation between the pre-test and posttest. They were the Wilcoxon signed rank test and Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient.

2.6.1 The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

The writer used the theory of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test because she wanted to find out the progress of students’ reading scores after students were taught the techniques. She chose this theory because she thought that it was suitable than other theories.

There were two kinds of Wilcoxon signed rank test: the Wilcoxon signed rank test for small samples and the Wilcoxon signed rank test for large samples (paired) (Kvanly, Pavur, and Keeling, 2003: 890). For the sake of efficiency, the writer only focused on the Wilcoxon signed rank for the large samples (paired). It was because the amount of the writer’s samples was 36.

According to Kvanly, Pavur, and Keeling (2003), “For samples consisting of $n > 15$ pairs, a large-sample approximation to the Wilcoxon test statistic can be used. When using a large-sample procedure, we can define a test using either $T_+$ or $T_-$. If the population differences are centered at zero (that is, $H_0$ is true), then $T_+$ is approximately a normal random variable with mean

$$
\mu_{T_+} = \frac{n(n+1)}{4}
$$

And standard deviation

$$
\sigma_{T_+} = \sqrt{\frac{n(n+1)(2n+1)}{4}}
$$
The corresponding test statistic is

\[ Z = \frac{T^- - \mu_T}{\sigma_T} \]

(p. 890)

### 2.6.2 Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient

The writer used the theory Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient because she wanted to find out the correlation between the students’ pre-test scores and post test scores. This theory was suitable with the writer’s research because of its simplicity.

McClave and Sincich, in the book statistic ninth edition, (2003) described the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient as followed:

Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, usually symbolized with \( r_s \), provides a measure of correlation between ranks. The value of \( r_s \) always falls between -1 and +1, with +1 indicating perfect positive correlation and -1 indicating perfect negative correlation. The closer \( r_s \) falls to +1 or -1, the greater the correlation between the ranks. Conversely, the nearer \( r_s \) is to 0, the less the correlation (pp. 777-778).

The formula is

\[ r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)} \]

where

\( d_i = R_x - R_y \) (difference in the ranks on the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) test)