

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews the literature in 3 major areas: (1) Theoretical background, (2) Models of reading process, and (3) Relevant research

#### **2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Reading is a process of reconstructing the meaning of the written language which involved the cognitive reading strategies (thinking), metacognitive reading strategies (thinking about your thinking) and compensating reading strategies. When reading, readers focus on comprehension of the text and use strategies to decode the meaning.

Reading may be defined as an active process of using the reader's background knowledge and experiences and linguistic knowledge to comprehend the written text. In the last decades, the theory of ESL reading that views reading as an 'interactive process' has been substituted for those considering reading as a passive model of 'bottom-up'. Reading is best described as the interaction that occurs between the readers and the text as decoding the encoded passages of the writers (Anderson 1999; Carrell, Devine, & Esley, 1998).

As reading is not a passive activity, readers use a variety of strategies to construct the meaning of the written language; for example, prediction, problem solving, decoding or guessing vocabulary from context, evaluating what they have read, taking notes and so on. There is no single set of processing strategies that leads to success (N.J. Anderson (1991) cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 71). Likewise, not all readers deploy the same strategies while reading. Fluent readers know how to verify their strategies and when to vary from one strategy to one another. High-ability readers are skillful in using reading strategies and they are not only use a narrow set of strategies but a wide range ones (Anderson, 1999, p.71, 82).

Aebersold and Field (1997, p. 16) described reading strategies that fluent readers use as recognizing words quickly, using text features, using titles to infer what information might follow, using world knowledge, analyzing unfamiliar words, identifying the grammatical functions of words, reading for meaning by focusing on construction meaning, guessing the meaning of the text, evaluating guesses and trying new guesses, monitoring comprehension and keeping the purpose of reading the text in mind, adjusting strategies to the purpose of reading, identifying or inferring main ideas,

tolerating ambiguity in a text, paraphrasing, using context to build meaning to aid comprehension, continuing reading even when unsuccessful and so on.

Chamot and O'Malley's study (as cited in Pratin Pimsarn, 2006, p. 79) classified reading strategies into 3 types: cognitive, meta-cognitive and social and affective. The cognitive-based strategies are those mainly used to attain a specific cognitive task during the reading phase, such as making inferences and analyzing word parts. Meta-cognitive strategies are those used to regulate the cognitive process and social-affective strategies are used for interaction cooperatively with other strategies during reading.

According to Skehan (1993); Brown (1994); Chamot and O'Malley (1994), metacognitive strategies refer to the strategies that function to monitor or regulate cognitive strategies as thinking about learning process, planning for learning, self-monitoring while reading, and self-evaluation after completing learning activity. Rubin (1987) defined cognitive Strategies as a term for operations used in problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or combination of learning materials (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 536). Cognitive strategies are viewed as mental processes involved with procedure of processing information that enhances comprehension, learning and retention of information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1999, p. 1). Cognitive strategies listed by Chamot (1987) include 'repetition', 'note-taking', and 'elaboration' (relating new concepts to other information in memory). Cognitive strategies such as these are limited in application to the particular type of task in learning activities (Ellis, 1994, p. 536). According to Livingston (1997) (as cited in Watinee Janarge, 2008, p. 8), metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies can overlap in the same strategy, such as questioning. It could be regarded as either a cognitive or a metacognitive strategy depending on the purposes. For example, if we use self-questioning as a mean to obtain information while reading, this strategy is regarded as cognitive one. Given that if we use a question for self-monitoring what we have read, it is regarded as metacognitive one. Thus, metacognitive strategies are developed to use in reading strategies studies.

According to Anderson, there are two factors affect reading comprehension; first, the development of models of the reading comprehension process and second, the role of metacognitive awareness during reading. He defines cognition as thinking and metacognition as thinking about one's thinking. It is believed that readers must be able to monitor their comprehension process and be aware of what strategies should lead to comprehension (Anderson, 1999, p. 38). Thus, he developed a reading strategies checklist which consists of

24 strategies categorized into 3 groups: cognitive reading strategies (thinking), metacognitive reading strategies (planning or thinking about your thinking), and compensating reading strategies for reading instruction. Based on his research, reading strategies awareness is beneficial for students for their reading skills improvement (Anderson, 1999, p. 82).

The opinion of Eskey (1986) (as cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 38) is that comprehension is always controlled by readers' needs and purposes, and more importantly, relies on their background knowledge. Allen (2002, pp. 95-96) pointed out that background knowledge or experience is crucial for understanding what the author is implying and to understand what the author is telling about the topic, or what is the main idea of the passage.

Schema theory suggests that our background knowledge and expectations about the world influence our ability to comprehend new information. According to schema theory, an interaction between the reader's schemata background and the text leads to reading comprehension. It might be said that, "reading comprehension is an interactive process between the reader or the text, in that the reader is required to fit the clues provided in the text to his or her own background knowledge" (Nunan, 1999, p. 257).

Thus, schemata play an important role in reading comprehension as a key to meaning reconstruction. As a consequence, the textual difficulty problem can occur when the reader and the writer do not have certain things in common. In fact, there are no exact identical experiences of two persons (Nuttal, 2005, p. 6). The more the writer and the reader share the schema in common, the easier the communication. Readers whose language and cultural background differ from the writers can expect difficulties in reading. On the contrary, those who share similar schemata with the writer will be thinking along with the writer and use their experience to solve the problem. They will have less difficulty to interpret the text; however, they might infer more than the fact given in the text (pp. 8-13).

It has been suggested in transfer hypothesis that good readers in a first language will be able to transfer their skills to a second language. Nonetheless, it has been found that limited linguistic proficiency appears to be a 'short-circuit' which prevents the transfer of L1 reading skills to another language for those in low proficiency level (Nunan, 1999, p. 258).

In addition, it has been suggested that readers should develop own reading skills such as determining meaning from context clues or from word parts and determining stated or implied main ideas in order to be efficient. Authors use context clues to define words and to help the reader to understand the text. There are six types of context clues:

definition, restatement or synonym, example, details or explanation, comparison, and contrast. Good readers have a general knowledge of prefixes, suffixes and root words to determine meaning from word parts (Allen, 2002, p. 11). Determining the correct main idea or topic sentence is essential for reading comprehension. To be able to making inferences, the reader has to understand the main idea of the passage. In addition, the reader must use some background experience or knowledge to understand what the author is implying and try to not infer beyond what can be true from the given information (pp. 95-96).

In conclusion, reading is an active process of interaction between the readers and the text. Reading strategies refer to the actions or means used by reader to facilitate the comprehension or tackle text difficulty. Background knowledge is crucial in reading as readers use their language knowledge combined with world knowledge to generate the meaning of new information. Good readers are those who not only are aware of reading strategies but can verify and orchestrate them (Anderson, 1999, p. 72). Skillful readers engage in deliberate activities that involve planful thinking, flexible strategies, and periodic self-monitoring (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). According to Anderson (1999, p. 1), reading skills such as understanding main ideas, making inferences, predicting outcomes, guessing vocabulary from context and so on, can be achieved by reading strategies utilization.

## 2.2 MODELS OF READING PROCESS

**Bottom –up model:** Readers build meanings as they draw on the individual letters and words they read. The information is processed from letter features to letters to words to meaning. Bottom-up models emphasize the ‘lower-level’ reading process (Segalowitz, Poulsen, & Komoda, 1991, as cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 2).

**Top-down model:** Top-down models are considered as a ‘higher-level’ reading process, involved with prediction by using the reader’s world knowledge or experience. Comprehension is facilitated when a reader’s background knowledge is activated. (Segalowitz, Poulsen, & Komoda, 1991, as cited in Anderson, 1999, p.3)

**Interactive model:** Over the last decade, the interactive model has been considered as the most comprehensive description of reading process. The interactive model falls into two conceptions of interactive approaches. The first conception relates to the interaction that occurs between the reader and the text. The second one relates to the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes (Grabe, 1991, as cited in Anderson,

1990, p. 3). Bottom-up and top-down processing is in relevance in schema theory (Nunan, 1999, p. 257). According to Murtagh (1989) and Grabe (1991) (as cited in Anderson, 1999 p. 3, 39), good readers are those who can efficiently integrate both bottom-up and top-down processes.

### **2.3 RELEVANT RESEARCH**

Several studies have been conducted to determine what means is most effective in reading comprehension, what factors affect constructing the meaning of the text and whether there is a difference in the strategies used by high-ability readers and low-ability readers.

A comparative study on the reading comprehension strategies used by ESP students at Mahidol University conducted by Songsri Soranastaporn (1999) has shown that the good readers tended to use effective reading strategies more widely and more often than the poor readers (Pratin Pimsarn, 2006, p. 78).

Wright & Brown (2006) conducted a study of reading in a modern foreign language: exploring the potential benefits of reading strategy instruction used by UK grade 11 and 12 students who studied French and Spanish as the second language. The initial reading strategies survey revealed that the students tended to use strategies which involved bottom-up processing before they were trained to use top-down reading strategies. After the intervention, almost all subjects reported that they found the strategies in top-down processes were very efficient in assisting reading comprehension and they intended to continue using the strategies they had learned in their future reading.

McNeil's study (as cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 12) pointed out that efficient readers approach reading tasks in a more active, strategic, and flexible fashion than poor readers. Lacking prediction and monitoring strategies, poor readers are passively performing. They do not ask themselves questions, identify a goal, or check the extent to which answers have been confirmed.

The finding in a transfer hypothesis study conducted by Hudson indicated that the schema application treatment was more effective for ESL readers at beginning levels of proficiency, whereas a vocabulary method which provides essential vocabulary and read-test methods which allow all readers to adjust their interpretation of the text were more effective for readers at intermediate and advanced (Nunan, 1999, p. 259).

According to Alderson (1984) (as cited in Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), reading difficulties are closely related with readers' level of proficiency in the target language rather than their native reading ability.

One of the best known studies of Steffensen (1981) (as cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 259) compares the comprehension of readers from two different cultural backgrounds, one group from North America and another from India. All subjects were required to read two passages, one describing a North American wedding, and one describing an Indian wedding. It was shown that the cultural knowledge highly influenced the reading comprehension. The North American subjects performed better on the passage describing the North American wedding while the Indian subjects did better on the passage describing the wedding in their own culture. Goodman characterized reading as 'a psycholinguistic guessing game' in which the readers construct the meaning of the passage by using the graphical, syntactic and semantic information (Carrell, Devine, & Esley, 1998, p.2). Goodman (1967) (as cited in Underwood & Batt, 1996, p. 78) pointed out that advanced readers are using minimal graphical information but instead making predictions from syntactic and semantic systems of the language. Most of Goodman's studies identified that good readers used the context clues rather than the graphic and graphophonemic cues to decode the meaning (Carrell, Devine, & Esley, 1998, p. 22).

It was stated in Alderson, 1984; Carrell, 1991; Clarke, 1979; Cziko, 1978 (as cited in Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), that there is strong positive relation between students' metacognitive awareness of reading processes and their ability in academic reading and excelling. It has been suggested that good L2 readers can compensate for their lack proficiency by increasing awareness of reading strategies and learning to utilize these strategies while reading to increase understanding.