CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

With regard to the effects of reading ability on free voluntary reading and the development of students' English skills, a number of important topics and related research studies will serve as the theoretical background to the current study. The discussion focuses on eight major areas (1) The meaning and components of reading (2) The importance of free voluntary reading on in-school reading (3) Language skills development (4) The effects of free voluntary reading on high-school students (5) The reading process and reading comprehension (6) The relationship between grammar and vocabulary extension (7) Reading and writing abilities (8) Concepts of reading power and related research.

Many details are given based on the results and models of many researchers who have described their concepts with regard to reading as a skill and the findings arising from their own research in this regard.

The Meaning and Component of Reading

Reading has been defined as "the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal symbols" (Harris & Sipay, 1975, p. 5). In other words, reading involves decoding written symbols and reconstructing the world the writer had in mind. However, that is difficult to do, and readers always

understand both more and less than the writer originally intended, even in their own native language.

Goodman (1971) characterized reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game. Meaning does not come from the printed letters alone, but involves an interaction between thought and language. Rather than reading each individual word, readers select the fewest, most productive cues from the printed page that are necessary to produce guesses and confirm them. They make predictions about what will come next, and check these predictions. Brooks, Goodman and Meredith (1970) emphasized that reading is an active process rather than a passive, receptive one. Following that, Smith (1973) claimed that reading is not even primarily a visual process. Non-visual information that comes from the brain is more important in reading than what appears on the printed page. Non-visual information includes all the things the reader already knows about reading, grammar, syntax, semantics, context, and the world in general.

A Key Reading Component

In "Focus on Fluency Helps Develop Reading Comprehension" Van Broekhuizen points out that fluency may well be the most neglected and least understood of the five reading components defined in the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First initiative. The others-phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension-are all essential to skilled reading. But how does fluency fit into the equation? Research shows that fluency is critical to reading comprehension and that students who do not

develop fluency may remain poor readers for the rest of their lives. Yet many students are not getting the instructional support they need to develop this crucial skill.

Fluency is the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with appropriate expression. An article on "Put Reading First" (2009) illustrated that fluency develops over an extended period of time through practice, and although fluency depends on well-developed word recognition skills, these skills by themselves do not inevitably lead to fluency. Other factors that affect fluency include the number of words a child can recognize and understand in print, the speed and accuracy with which the recognition process takes place, and the characteristics of the texts read.

When fluent readers read silently, they group words quickly, which not only helps them gain meaning from the text, but also makes it possible for them to read with expression. Expressiveness depends on the reader's ability to divide the text into meaningful chunks, like clauses and phrases. Fluent readers read aloud with ease, pausing appropriately within and at the ends of sentences and making suitable shifts in emphasis and tone. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. At the earliest stages of reading development, students' oral reading is slow and labored. These students are just learning to "break the code," painstakingly attaching sounds to letters and then blending the letter sounds into recognizable words. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding. Even when these students recognize words automatically,

their oral reading may still be expressionless, and therefore, not fluent. (Put Reading First, 2009)

The National Reading Panel encourages teachers to regularly assess student fluency. Procedures that can be used in the classroom include informal reading inventories, miscue analysis, pausing indices, running records, and reading speed calculations as proposed. (Put Reading First, 2009)

Consistent, intensive intervention efforts can improve reading fluency; effective approaches include oral guided reading and repeated reading. Use of texts with repeated core vocabulary is also helpful. Developing skilled readers is seldom easy, and the stakes are high for both students and teachers. Fluency is a key component of the reading process, with implications for comprehension as well. There is a great need for teachers to focus on this important component of reading.

Language Skills Development

The following are descriptions of some of the skills language learners develop, based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, and give recommendations of techniques and activities to use to develop these skills. Learning a new language means developing skills that allow you to process what other people say in another language and to communicate what you want to say. As part of the Lingua Links initiative, SIL has developed an extensive set of resources to help the self-directed language learner to understand and develop these skills.

The approach is based on the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines.

Principal Skills

The goal of the language learner is to achieve communicative competence. These are the principal skills involved in good communication along with recommendations of techniques and activities to use to develop them: (1) Pronounce the language properly. (2) Speak with grammatical accuracy. (3) Build your vocabulary. (4) Understand and produce longer stretches of speech, such as stories, directions, or instructions. (5) Use the language to accomplish your purposes and get things done. (6) Use words and ways of speaking appropriate for different situations. (7) Interact with other people appropriately when talking with them. (8) Understand more about what the people you talk to are like and why they behave the way they do. (Language Learning, 2002)

How to Improve Your Language Skills

Instructors suggested the eight steps to improve language skills: Step (1) Read novels, guides and news that are written in your local language in order to improve your grammar. Step (2) Get advice from language experts to help you more regarding your language. Step (3) Teach yourself how to translate your language into another language. Step (4) Practice your language daily and don't mix it with any other language. Step (5) Listen to programs and stories that are presented on your local radio and television shows. Step

(6) Enter writing and reading contests that are organized in your local language. Step (7) Learn how to translate your language into another language. Step (8) Attend traditional and cultural ceremonies in order to learn more about your local language. (How to improve your language skills, 2005)

Reading Process and Comprehension

Reading is the most effective tool for increasing literacy and one of the most powerful tools we have in language education. Rubin (1993) concluded that the reading process concerned with the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains. By using a broad or global definition of reading, we are looking upon reading as a total integrative process that includes three domains: (1) the affective, (2) the perceptual, and (3) the cognitive.

The affective domain includes the feelings and emotional learning that individuals acquire. If we have adverse feeling about certain things, these feelings will probably influence how we interpret what we read. Our feelings will also influence what we decide to read. Obviously, attitudes exert a directive and dynamic influence on our readiness to respond.

The perceptual domain is that part of the reading process that depends on an individual's background of experiences and sensory receptors, perception being defined as the meaning given to sensations or the ability to organize stimuli on a field. How we organize stimuli depends largely on our background of cumulative experiences and on our sensory receptors. If, for example, our eyes are organically defective, those perceptions involving sight

would be distorted. In the act of reading, visual perception is a most important factor. Children need to control their eyes so they move from left to right across the page. Eye movements determine a reader's reading rate and influence what the reader perceives.

The cognitive domain includes areas involving thinking, under which umbrella we would place the entire range of comprehension skills. Those who have difficulty in thinking (the manipulation of symbolic representations) would obviously have difficulty in reading. If readers have faulty perceptions, they will also have faulty concepts.

Metacognition, which involves thinking critically about thinking, refers to students' knowledge about their thinking processes and the ability to control them. When metacognition is applied to reading, readers are active learners and consumers of information. They use good monitoring strategies, whereby they establish learning goals for an instructional activity, determine the degree to which these goals are being met, and, if necessary, change the strategies they are using to attain a particular goal. In other words, good readers who have matacognitive ability know what to do, as well as how and when to do it.

The "what to do" includes such strategies as "identifying the main idea, rehearsing (repeating) information, forming associations and images, using mnemonics, organizing new material to make it easier to remember, applying test-taking techniques, outlining, and note-taking." Good readers have good reading, learning, and study skill techniques.

The "how and when" includes such strategies as "checking to see if you understand, predicting outcomes, evaluating the effectiveness of an attempt at a task, planning the next move, testing strategies, deciding how to apportion time and effort, and revising or switching to other strategies to overcome any difficulties encountered." Good readers are good thinkers.

Coady (as cited in Somnuk, 1999, p. 19) describes two types of processing: Top-down processing, in which general predictions are made about the situation and checked against incoming data, and bottom-up processing, which takes place when the incoming data is perceived first and used to make inferences about the general situation.

Kasper (1984) found that, in their native language, readers or listeners activated schema about the general situation first, checked it against the input (i.e., printed or spoken words) and then revised incorrectly activated schemata or activated more specific schemata based on the input. This might be described as interactive processing, since it makes use of the interaction between higher and lower levels of information.

In contrast, non-native speakers tend to use bottom-up processing. They use the words and sentences themselves as the basis for comprehension rather than an understanding of the overall context (Kasper, 1984).

Carrell (1984) listed ways in which a reader could miscomprehend or not comprehend because of ways that schemata interact with the text. She listed (1) no existing schema (the text assumes background knowledge that the reader does not possess), (2) naïve schema (insufficiently developed schema), (3) poor schemata (not enough cues to the appropriate schema),

(4) multiple appropriate schemata (more than one interpretation of the text possible, and the reader does not know which one to choose), and (5) schema intrusion (reader chooses an inappropriate schema).

Reading and Writing Ability

Reading Ability

A number of studies have been done on the differences between good and poor readers. The results of these studies give insight into what readers need to be able to do.

1. Good readers reading in their native language always monitor their comprehension while they are reading, using their knowledge, experience, and syntactic and semantic cues. MacKinnon and Waller (1985) report that good seventh grade readers of English correct 85% of the grammatical errors they make while they read aloud, while poor readers could correct only 42%. Clay and Imlach (1971) reported that only one quarter of poor readers could use cues between clauses and sentences. Isakson and Miller (1978) reported that good readers stopped when they found irrelevant verbs in passages but poor readers did not.

2. Poor readers do not use different strategies when they are reading for different purposes. For them, all reading is the same. Even if the purpose of reading is to find a certain piece of information, they still read all the whole passage, trying to understand unimportant parts as well as important information. (Somnuk, 1999, p. 23)

3. Poor readers do not use contexts well in reading. Potter (as cited in Somnuk, 1999, p. 23) argues that four factors are important in the use of contexts, namely decoding skills and grammatical, semantic, and background knowledge. He also divides contexts into two types: preceding and succeeding contexts. Poor readers do not make use of succeeding context. There are several reports that poor readers understand implicit meanings very poorly (Ryan, 1981). Oakhill (1984), reports that both good and poor readers are equally good at imagining the meaning of a passage using the words in the text. However, using implied cues, there were significant differences.

Writing Ability

Writing style comes from reading the research reviewed earlier and strongly suggests that we learn to write by reading. More surprisingly, we acquire writing style, the special language of writing by reading.

According to common wisdom, we learn to write by actually writing. That is not true. Smith (as cited in Krashen, 2004, p. 133) tells us why we do not learn to write by writing. He said:

> "I thought the answer [to how we learn to write] must be that we learn to write] must be that we learn to write by writing until
>
> I reflected on how little anyone writes in school, even the eager students, and how little feedback is provided…No one writes enough to learn more than a small part of what writers need to know."

Rice concluded that people encounter far more language in reading than in writing.

In terms of language acquisition, it is possible to hypothesize that language acquisition comes from input not output: from comprehension, not production. Thus other good things may result from your writing.

In conclusion, writing style does not come from actual writing experience, but from reading. Moreover, actual writing can help us solve problems and make us smarter. (Krashen, 2004)

The Relationship between Grammar and Vocabulary Extension

An article on "Grammar and vocabulary" (2009) illustrated that Tim Brown suggests that everyone has their own way of learning vocabulary. For some people, random word lists will seem to be the most appropriate approach, usually with a translation into the mother tongue. Others will favor some kind of organization, perhaps organizing their vocabulary through topic, word category or word frequency. Some learners will find it effective to use vocabulary exercises in order to acquire new vocabulary, while others will use vocabulary cards and regularly test themselves to check whether new items have been learnt. All of these methods are effective in their own right and will suit different individuals in different ways. What they often do not take account of, however, is the usefulness of the relationships between words themselves within the target language. Exploiting such relationships can be a very effective additional method of organizing and storing items of vocabulary and may help learners to learn and remember new items.

Some researchers also suggest that when you teach reading in small groups, it is helpful to have a variety of deskwork for students to complete while you work with another group. A reading response sheet asks students to respond to what they read in writing. This not only helps to reinforce reading comprehension, but helps to improve writing skills at the same time. The student should put their name the title of the book, the author's name and the date at the top of the page. If the book is long, they can also include which pages they read that day.

The students should then write two to three sentences that describe their reaction to the pages that they have read, a couple sentences about what they like about the book so far, and a couple sentences about what they do not like about the book so far. For vocabulary enrichment, students can also pick one word that they find interesting from the book, and both the word and the definition for the word. Or a more challenging activity might involve having the students write an entirely new ending to the story.

The Importance of Free Voluntary Reading and In-school Reading

Reading is the baseline skill for success in school and in life, so a goal for teachers and librarians is to get kids excited about reading books and media. Students who read are better writers. Students who cannot read or who read poorly frequently struggle to access and use technology productively and efficiently. How do we get busy or, perhaps, disinterested kids to read? Many experts advocate offering them choices in reading matter.

Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) is the key component in reading success. Stephen Krashen notes in The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research "in-school free reading programs [or voluntary reading] are consistently effective ... these readers do as well or better than students who were engaged in traditional language arts programs." Krashen further states that the longer free voluntary reading is practiced, the more consistent and positive the results.

According to Lisa Von Drasek in "Summer Reading? Good! Assigned Reading? Bad," a successful reading program should more broadly define reading to include not only books, but also magazines, songs, graphic novels, comics, nonfiction and listening to audio books.

For more evidence, read about the experience of Jonesboro, Georgia teacher Lorrie McNeill who, after 15 years of teaching reading traditionally by assigning one book as a whole-class read, last fall turned over book-reading decisions to the students in her seventh and eighth grade English classes. In May, Ms. McNeill's approach was vindicated when she received results of her students' performance on state reading tests: 15 of the 18 eighth graders exceeded requirements and scored in the highest bracket. As seventh graders the previous year, only four of the same class had reached that level.

Do we throw out traditional reading programs? Of course not, but maybe Voluntary Free Reading as a component of school reading programs could contribute to success in creating accomplished and active student readers. In South Dakota the Prairie Bud, Prairie Pasque and YARP/Teen Reads lists offer terrific ideas for giving students reading choices.

Free Voluntary Reading and Readers

Lise Kragh, a trained primary school teacher from England who has lived in Denmark for over 30 years, concluded that free voluntary reading improves reading comprehension, fluency, grammar, writing and spelling, self-confidence, vocabulary, and learners learn other things while reading. Teachers in Denmark who truly invest time and money in readers and reading for pleasure in the classroom say that it works. Unfortunately, many schools spend most of their limited budgets on course books and then say they cannot afford readers. Course books often contain, or are based on, intensive reading texts which cannot possibly match the level of all the learners in the classroom, so due to the mixed-ability situation found in most schools, they are often doomed to fail. Perhaps it would be better to invest in a library of good graded readers, teacher's handbooks and other good supplementary materials than to invest in course books which cannot possibly cater for the mixed-ability classes of today.

Some teachers say that they cannot waste time reading-they have a full curriculum to get through. They think that it could become more and more difficult to teach creatively. Surely, if learners are not motivated to learn, they won't learn, just like you can lead a horse to water-but you can't make it drink. So perhaps if you can motivate learners to read, as outlined above, this will not only improve reading skills, but also many other skills such as fluency, grammar, writing and not least self-confidence, which is exactly what you need for exams and tests.

Reading for pleasure is a personal thing. It has no place in the classroom. Research carried out over the past 20 years has proven that learners who read for pleasure get better grades than those who don't. Krashen who has been promoting and researching FVR for over 2 decades, and argues that it should be a natural and essential part of learning English. At a conference in Vladivostok, Russia in 2004, he stated the following: "Recreational reading or reading for pleasure is the major source of our reading competence, our vocabulary, and our ability to handle complex grammatical constructions. The evidence for FVR comes from co-relational studies, showing that those who read more show superior literacy development, case histories of those whose growth in literacy and language is clearly attributable to free reading, and studies of in-school recreational reading. The finding that in-school reading works best in long-term studies makes sense; it takes some time for children to find reading material of interest. Research has shown that FVR is an important part of the language classroom." (Krashen, 2004)

A class library is a library of English books or texts made directly available to students in the classroom. This is an advantage, because it saves valuable time going forward and backwards to the school library, and the teacher has more control over what is being read. An important factor in determining the success of a class library is that the students, as well as the teacher, are responsible for setting it up and running it. The more involved our students become in its creation, the more motivated they will be to use it, and

they should be encouraged to discuss which books they found most-or least-interesting.

Written exercises and activities are not a natural part of FVR. The whole idea is for learners to read at their own level, purely for pleasure, and it is important for learners to know that they are not expected to do any written or oral work afterwards but simply choose a new book and carry on reading. The reason for this is that some (especially weaker, less able learners) might be discouraged if they know that they have to do a book report when they have finished the book. However, some learners may want to do exercises or activities relating to what they have read.

The Effects of Free Voluntary Reading on School Students

The results from students who had undertaken in-school free reading programs show that when free reading and direct (traditional) instruction are compared directly, free reading is as good or better, and in long-term studies free reading is a consistent winner. In addition, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) reported the following: "There were no significant connections between the amount of explicit vocabulary instruction students had and gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary over four years." Snow et al. also found that the exclusive use of a basal reader or workbook in reading lessons was negatively correlated with gains in reading comprehension, but that the use of a workbook for homework was positively correlated with gains in reading comprehension.

However, extensive evidence from other sources showing that spelling instruction has little effect. Rice (1987) claimed to find no correlation between the amount of time children were instructed regarding spelling and their spelling performance.

Additional evidence that spelling instruction is not very effective comes from Brandenburg (1999), who reported no improvement in spelling accuracy among college students after their psychology papers were "persistently and clearly" marked for spelling errors in one semester.

Cook (1912) gave a total of 96 high school and college students a spelling test containing words that exemplified spelling rules the student had studied the previous semester.

A series of studies, dating from 1935, confirm that grammar instruction has no impact on reading and writing. Probably the most thorough is the New Zealand study by Elley, Barham, Lamb and Wyllie (1976), who found no differences in reading comprehension, writing style, writing mechanics, or vocabulary among the groups, and a follow-up done one year after the project ended. He also concluded that "it is difficult to escape the conclusion that English grammar, whether traditional or transformational, has virtually no influence on the language growth of typical secondary students." The study of complex grammatical constructions does not help reading (or writing); rather, mastery of complex grammar is a result of reading.

Concepts of Free Voluntary Reading and Related Research

Nell (1988) pleasure readers were asked to read a book of their own choice, while their heart rate, muscle activity, skill potential, and respiration rate were measured; level of arousal while reading was compared to arousal during other activities, such as relaxing with eyes shut, listening to white noise, doing mental arithmetic, and doing visualization activities, He found that during reading, arousal was increased, as compared to relaxation with eyes shut, but a clear drop in arousal was recorded in the period just after reading, which for some measures reached a level below the baseline (eyes-shut) condition.

There is ample evidence that students participating in free reading programs in school prefer free reading to traditional language arts instruction (Krashen, 2004). The same appears to be true for those reading in a second language.

McQuillan (1994) asked university-level foreign-and second-language students participating in recreational reading programs this question. "Given a choice between reading popular literature and studying grammar, which would you prefer to do?" Eighty percent (n=39) said they would prefer reading popular literature. Additional very positive reactions to free reading from foreign language students are reported by Rodrigo and Krashen (1996), Dupuy and McQuillan (1997).

The power of reading has been confirmed using "correlation" studies, which consistently show that those who read more show more literacy

development. Krashen (1988) reviewed a number of these studies in detail that relied on simple correlations. The results of such studies are reassuring and consistent with the view that reading results in language and literacy development, but of course correlation is not causality; it is quite possible that those who read better, as a result of more direct instruction in school, then go on to do more recreational reading.

More recent studies in second language acquisition make this interpretation less likely, and point to reading as the cause of literacy development.

Krashen (2004) described a number of case histories, including Malcolm X and Richard Wright, both of whom achieved very high levels of literacy, and both of whom attributed their literacy development to self-selected reading.

Studies of in-school free reading are considered the gold standard for demonstrating the effectiveness of recreational reading, because they include a comparison group that engages in traditional instruction while the experimental group does free voluntary reading. There are slightly different models of in-school free reading (sustained silent reading, self-selected reading, extensive reading) but they all have this in common: Students can read whatever they want to read (within reason) and there is little or no accountability in the form of book reports or grades.

Summary

In this chapter, the general approaches, theories, models related to the effects of free voluntary reading on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and writing ability were discussed, together with some methodologies based on previous studies. These are shaping up as the guideline for this case study. The approaches and strategies suggest an important direction for research into English language development to help students improve their language.