

## CHAPTER II

### FRAME OF THEORY

#### A. Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading is a process which requires concentration and insists in the comprehension or understanding of each word individually. Reinking and Scheiner (1985:5) argue: "Reading is an active cognitive process of interacting with printed material tools and monitoring comprehension to establish meaning." Whereas Reinking and Scheiner stressed on the active cognitive process of interacting, Christine Nuttal (1982) explains reading "as the meaningful interpretation of printed or writer verbal symbol."

Therefore, reading is the combination of word recognition, and intellect, and emotion interrelated with prior knowledge to understand the message communicated. Burton (1982:53) explains what comprehension is. This word is derived from to comprehend means to grasp with the mind, take in. According to him comprehension is understood in depth. It is grasping, a taking in, of the material which we are required to deal.

According to Pett (1982:18) the activity of comprehension includes:

"visual mechanical skill of recognition, an ability to relate letters or group of letters to their sound correlates, remembering the meaning of individual words. Integrating grammatical and semantic clues, and relating this to the reader's own general knowledge of the subject being read."

Shawn (1986:518) argues that the purpose of reading comprehension is as follows; "to gain and understand accurate information and ideas; to recognize

organization and style; to interpret what is read in terms of personal experience; to analyze and evaluate.”

Reading is an extraordinary achievement when one considers the number of levels and components that must be mastered. Consider what it takes to read a simple story. The words contain graphemes, phonemes, and morphemes. Sentences have syntactic composition, propositions, and stylistic features. Deep comprehension of the sentences requires the construction of referents of nouns, a discourse focus, presuppositions, and plausible inferences. The reader needs to distinguish given versus new information in the text and implicitly acknowledge what is shared among most readers in a community (called the *common ground*). At more global levels, the reader needs to identify the genre, rhetorical structure, plot, perspective of different characters, narrator, theme, story point, and sometimes the attitude of the author. The coding, interpretation, and construction of all of these levels are effortlessly achieved at a rate of 250 to 400 words per minute by a proficient adult reader.

Comprehension is not always effortless and fast, of course. When beginning readers struggle over individual words, reading is slowed to a near halt and deeper levels of comprehension are seriously compromised. This happens when proficient adult readers struggle with technical expository text on unfamiliar arcane topics, such as a mortgage on a house or the schematics of computer's operating system. Cognitive strategies are particularly important when there is a breakdown at any level of comprehension. A successful reader implements deliberate, conscious, effortful, time consuming strategies to repair or circumvent

a reading component that is not intact. Reading teachers and programs explicitly teach such reading strategies to handle the challenges of reading obstacles.

Comprehension is invisible. Its definition, its process, and its product continue to be elusive. Cognitive psychologists, English literature professors, and reading methods professors debate these issues, resulting in a confusion of materials and methods for college developmental reading instructors. Cognitive psychologists argue that comprehension is the result of innate intelligence; a student is just born "smart." This view is related to Thorndike's statement that comprehension is the manipulation of memories (Thorndike, 1917).

Professors in college English departments perceive comprehension along the lines of literary analysis. Their major debate is the source of interpretation. At one end of the continuum are those who feel the analysis should focus on the writer (objective). At the other extreme are the professors who believe the comprehension of the piece of literature lies in how the reader feels about the text (subjective).

Reading methods professors have seen reading comprehension from other points of view that run along a continuum from a synthetic skills approach (built on the theory of phonics) to a holistic approach. Louise Rosenblatt (1938), an English literature professor, became frustrated with this polarity of theories and contended that comprehension of literature is constructed from a dialogue between writer and reader (constructive).

Vygotsky (1978), a linguistics professor, expanded this idea of construction of meaning to include the input of others and the environment (social

construction). The result is the class discussion in which the students and professor learn about the writer's background, style, and attitudes in order to interpret the selection in light of what the message contributes to the participants today. For example, students may read James Baldwin's story "Tell Me How Long the Train Has Been Gone" (1967). The experiences of the main character, a boy named Leo, reveal Baldwin's attitudes toward prejudice and segregation as felt during an era of political contention over civil rights laws and the Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education Supreme Court decision declaring "separate is not equal." Therefore, how the reader constructs meaning of the story is critical.

The whole language approach integrates learning in a unit of study in which the student experiences many relevant subjects. For example, many elementary school teachers develop a popular unit around the Laura Ingalls Wilder novels about life on the prairie. The unit includes the geography, history, culture, and science of the era and of the location along with the reading of the popular novels. Thus, comprehension is enhanced with background knowledge the students did not have available as prior knowledge.

Caverly and Peterson (1996) promote a similar whole language approach to expository text for college developmental readers. They guide students through a task with authentic text chapters so the students become aware of the nature of the task and gain control of it. The instructors draw the learners into the task with the students' own personal experiences in a social setting in which students learn from each other. Caverly and Peterson scaffold the task with informative resources including the Internet until they gradually release the students to full

responsibility for the task. They ask students to use word processing to keep a journal in which they write about their prior knowledge before they read, write about their new knowledge after they read, and add a post-journal entry about their developing understanding after they interact with the material and with others. The students also use an outlining software program to learn text structure. Additionally, they communicate through e-mail with students at a college in another state about their sustained silent reading.

College instructors of developmental reading comprehension face a challenge from these three groups cognitive psychologists, professors of literary analysis, and teacher educators. What is best for these pre-college level readers?

Most colleges use norm referenced, standardized, multiple-choice reading comprehension tests to place students in a remedial or developmental level class. In order to make a college level score, they need more background knowledge and more logical analytical skills than other students taking the same test. However, they cannot tap into prior knowledge that does not exist. It is almost impossible for students to make textually and scriptally implicit (inferential) decisions when they don't know about the content and don't know the meanings of the words. Consequently, these students need knowledge of content and of strategies. An illustration of this problem is found in the following lines from the lyrics of "Deuce & A Quarter" by New Power Generation (2002): In my deuce and a quarter feelin' funky funky fine... And money talk, pusher walk and sleepin' on the politics... A havin' it, grabbin' it, tastin' it...And when U step off, I finally rub your face in it...So we revert 2 committin' dope, many brothers get hurt By

another brother who don't like salt in his dirt Trying to answer the following questions about this passage reveals the confusion of not having enough prior knowledge: a) What is the subject? b) What is the main idea? c) According to the author, what is it the problem? d) What is "salt in his dirt?" e) What is a "deuce and a quarter?" f) What is it like to feel "funky fine?" g) Does the author suggest that politics will help solve the problem?

Reading instructors probe to activate prior knowledge so that the readers will relate the new information to what they already know. However, activating prior knowledge is often not enough for college remedial and developmental level readers because they lack the specified area of background information. In addition, students often do not recognize the vocabulary even though they can sound out the words. Fisher (2001) noted that teachers who initiated a broad change in instruction in an attempt to improve standardized test scores decided they had to include vocabulary instruction because the students scored lower on vocabulary than on any other area of the tests. In other words, they lacked the background knowledge to think and respond to the test items.

## **B. Definition of Narrative**

One problem we may face in the definition of *narrative* is that we all seem to know what stories and narrative are, so one wonders whether one should define it at all. Another problem is that many scholars have a tendency to be circular in their definitions of the word, or of terms which make use of the word *narrative*. Quite frequently, the word to be defined is included in the definition itself. Here are some examples,

- Seymour Chatman (1978: 31) defines *narrative* as a structure which is made up of narrative statements.
- Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 2) defines *narrative fiction* as ‘the narration of a succession of fictional events’.
- Mieke Bal (1985: 3) defines *narrative* as a corpus which should consist ‘of all narrative texts and only those texts which are narrative’ (my emphasis).

Here are further examples of circular definitions from Bal's book:

- The definition of *narrative text* as a text in which an agent relates a narrative (1985: 5).
- The definition of *narrative theory* as a ‘theory [which] makes describable only the narrative aspects of a text and not all the characteristics of a narrative text’ (1985: 9; my emphases).
- The definition of *narratology* is defined by her as a ‘theory of narrative texts’ (1985: 3; my emphases).

Although such circularity is difficult to avoid, one must somehow arrive at a greater degree of clarity as to what a *narrative* is before one can proceed further in its study.

Anderson, M and Anderson, K (1998) state that narrative text is a text that tells a story and, in doing so, entertains the audience. The communicative purpose of a narrative, other than providing entertainment, can be to make the audience think about an issue, teach them a lesson, or excite their emotions. Narratives text can be presented as written texts. Written narratives often take the form of novels. The story is usually told by a narrator. According to Anderson, M and Anderson, K (1998) stated that narrative text divided into five events, they are:

a. Orientation

In this paragraph the narrator tells the audience *who* is in the story, *when* it is happening, *where* it is happening and *what* is going on

b. Complication

This is the part of the story where the narrator tells about something that will begin a chain of events. These events will affect one or more of the characters. The complication is the trigger.

c. Sequence of events

This is where the narrator tells how the characters react to the complication. It includes their feelings and what they do. The events can be told in chronological order (the order in which they happen) or with flashbacks. The audience is given the narrator's point of view.

d. Resolution

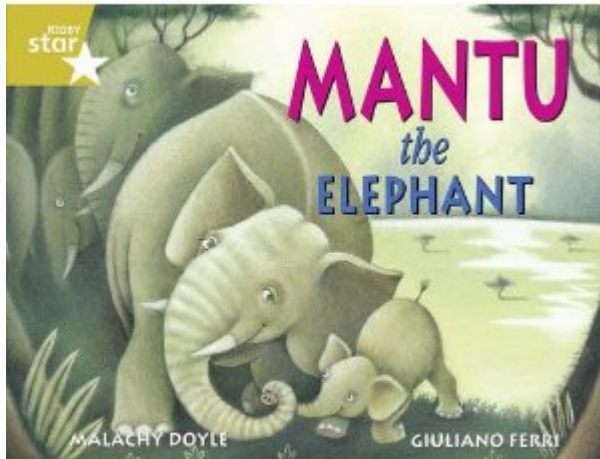
In this part of narrative the complication is sorted out or the problem is solved

e. Code

The narrator includes a code if there is a moral or message to be learned from the story



Here is the example of narrative text



### Mantu's Little Elephant

Little Mantu lived in a village deep in the jungle where elephants helped the men with their work. These elephants were so big and strong. They could lift up the heaviest logs with their trunks and toss them high in the air. **(Orientation)**

Now, Mantu had an elephant of his very own. His name was Opic. He was just a baby and Mantu loved him very much. Mantu whispered to Opic's ear that somebody he would become the biggest, strongest and bravest elephant in the jungle. The other elephants heard this. They began to laugh and made rude noises with their trunks, "We're so big and tall, but you're so small. You're nothing at all." Said one of the big elephants. **(Complication)**

Mantu looked up at the huge elephant with a mischievous glint in his eye. "You're so tall and can see faraway. We can see what is happening down here in the jungle. In fact, we would be the first to see any slithering snakes that may be a danger." After hearing the word snakes, the elephants screeched and off. They went thundering in fright. **(Complication)**

"Did I say there were snakes?" giggled Mantu. "No, I don't think so," smiled Opic. Mantu then climbed upon his little friend's back and went home to the village to tell everyone about the foolish elephants. **(Resolution)**

(Adapted from: 50 Bedtime stories, 2002)

Reading can be defined as learning to pronounce words, learning to identify words and learning to get the meaning from the text. When we are talking about reading, we may also talk about the material that we read.

Materials are main sources in teaching learning process because the materials determine the failure or the success of teaching and learning process. The ninth grade students learn narrative texts when they are in the eighth grade students. To know the student's ability in comprehending narrative texts, the writer will make reading test is written test for the ninth grade students in form of multiple-choice items. The number of test items are 20 items. Every item covers four options (A, B, C, and D). In comprehending narrative text the student's right and wrong answers in comprehending orientation, complication, and resolution. To see how far they understand it. The next, writer will also investigate the possible difficulties faced by the eighth grade students of SMPN 14 Pontianak.