

Chapter II

Literature review

The scope of the literature review includes the following items:

1. Reading skills of general English and business English:
 - 1.1 Reading comprehension skills
 - 1.2 General English and Business English
2. Factors affecting students' reading ability
3. Research dealing with reading comprehension problems, and factors affecting the students' reading achievement and/or failure

1. Reading skills of General English and Business English

1.1 Reading comprehension skills

People use the term “reading” and “reading comprehension” in different ways.

By this I mean the researchers define the words “reading” and “reading comprehension” in their own views. Wallace (1993) states that reading means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. Goodman (1971) views that “reading is a psycholinguistic game which the reader must infer meanings, decide what to retain and not to retain, and move on”. Nuttall (1996) states that reading is the way the reader gets a message from a text. In summary, it appears that the definition of Wallace, Goodman, and Nuttall

involves comprehension. Others, namely, Widdowson, Grellet, and Barnett also agree that reading in the real sense, is comprehension. Widdowson (1979) states that reading is the process of combining textual information with the information a reader brings to a text. Grellet (1994) gives the definition of reading comprehension as the ability to extract the required information from a text as efficiently as possible. According to Barnett (1989), "Reading comprehension truly depends on the reader's expectations as defined by his or her content and formal schemata, linguistic proficiency, first language reading skill, reading strategies, and interest and purpose in reading the text." In case the English text is not easy for the students to read and understand, researchers have divided reading comprehension into levels. Reading comprehension levels are stages in which readers improve their reading abilities from a simple level to a complicated one. Vacca (1996) has divided reading comprehension into three main levels to classify reader's ability in reading as the following table:

Levels of Comprehension

Literal comprehension (Reading the lines)	Getting information explicitly from the text.
Interpretive comprehension (Reading between the lines)	Putting together information, perceiving relationships, and making inferences.
Applied comprehension (Reading beyond the lines)	Using information to express opinions and form new ideas.

Also, Alvermann & Phelps (1998) classify levels of comprehension into literal, interpretive, and applied. They have clarified that the literal level consists of specific facts and

concepts that are explicitly stated. The interpretive level requires “reading between the lines” or drawing inferences about ideas that the author implies. The applied level represents comprehension that extends beyond the text, to form new ideas or use ideas from the text in different contexts. According to Richards et al (1993), there are four levels of reading comprehension: literal, inferential, critical, and appreciative comprehension. The literal level is the level in which readers get information explicitly from the text. The inferential or interpretive level is the level in which readers need to extract implicit meanings. When readers compare/contrast or when they evaluate the information in a text, they are at critical level. The appreciative level refers to the level in which readers’ emotions interact with the text.

Each reading comprehension level requires mastering different reading subskills which are widely recognized as essential skills for basic to advanced comprehension. Langan (1992) divides the reading skills into ten subskills, the first five subskills are under the more literal levels of comprehension. They are guessing vocabulary in context, recognizing main ideas, identifying supporting details, understanding transitions, and understanding patterns of organization. The remaining five skills cover the more advanced critical levels of comprehension, namely, distinguishing facts from opinions, making inferences, identifying purpose and tone, detecting propaganda, and evaluating arguments. Meagher (1997) states that basic reading skills include defining unfamiliar words, determining main ideas and major supporting details. In terms of inferential and interpretive skills, they involve figuring out an author’s implied meanings, intention, and attitudes. According to Nuttall (1996) there are three important reading subskills for students to master in order to be efficient readers: understanding sentence syntax, recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices, and recognizing and interpreting discourse

markers (words used to indicate relationships between words in a sentence and relationships between sentences in a paragraph or even between paragraphs). This idea is supported by Hughes (1996) who states that reading subskills are, identifying referents of pronouns, using context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, understanding relations between parts of text by recognizing indicators in discourse (the way the message in a text are organized to convey the message). In addition French (1984) expresses his idea that the students grasp what a writer says by analyzing the text to find main ideas, to note details, and to make inferences.

In summary, the reading subskills in English which are in each reading comprehension level can be grouped into two main parts: literal comprehension, which is the most basic level of understanding, and critical comprehension. Literal comprehension involves understanding vocabulary in context, recognizing main ideas, identifying key supporting details, understanding transitions, and understanding patterns of organization, whereas critical comprehension is distinguishing facts from opinions, making inferences, identifying purpose and tone, detecting propaganda, and evaluating arguments.

In this study, the researcher looks at students' reading ability from both levels: from a literal comprehension level (guessing the words from context, recognizing general business vocabulary for that level, determining main ideas, identifying factual details) and a critical comprehension level (inferring information from textual clues).

1.2 General English and Business English

What follows is the similarity and the difference between business English and general English. General English is the language which people use to communicate with public and Business English is used to communicate with public including among businesses (Pickett, 1986 cited in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). Besides, many learning tasks and activities of General English are the same as on a Business English

course, especially for teaching structures, vocabulary, and social English (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). According to Whitehead & Whitehead (1993), "To succeed in business it is essential to read widely by using certain skills like scanning, skimming, rapid reading, predicting, and inferring to assist while reading." This has shown that no matter the English text which the reader reads is for General English, Academic English, or Business English, the reading subskills employed to read it are not different. This can be confirmed by Weir (1993) who states "Do not worry if you do not teach English for academic purposes, a similar approach should be adopted in analyzing all target situation reading needs."

However, there are a few differences between Business English and General English. According to Holme (1996), "The General English syllabus is based on a conception of the kind of reality that the student has to deal with in English." In Business English, set courses will have fixed objectives and syllabus (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). Robinson (1991) states that business English is a subset of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Business English courses and materials can serve both the occupational user of English and the students of business. According to Ellis & Johnson (1994), "Business English differs from other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content (relating to a particular job area or industry), and general content (relating to general ability to communicate more effectively in terms of business situations)." Moreover, Business English reading is different from general English reading in that many of the written text types in business English are specific to the business world; for example invoices, quotations, business letters, company reports, memos, and telexes (Robinson, 1991).

The following business reading skills checklist is drawn from Ellis M. and Johnson C. (1994):

DOCUMENT	SKILLS or STRATEGIES
1. Telexes, letters, faxes, memos, and short reports	Reading for details
2. Professional journals and textbooks	Reading quickly for general information
3. Language reports; contracts and legal documents; technical specifications and manuals	Scanning for specific points
4. Articles from journals, newspapers, and job advertisements	Inferring meanings from context

Reading for details or intensive reading refers to the skill used to read and understand all the sentences and words in business documents, and also to read shorter texts to extract specific information.

Reading quickly for general information or skimming is the skill used to determine the author's main ideas in writing business journals and textbooks. It involves reading as quickly as possible to get the gist of a text or part of a text.

The third reading skill appears in the table is scanning for specific points which is common in real world reading. Scanning involves reading a text or part of a text rapidly in order to find specific information. After locating this information, the reader reads carefully the sentences surrounding it to decide whether it answers his/her need. This skill can be used to identify factual details from context.

The last reading skill required in reading business English texts is inferring meaning. "Inference from context is a structural approach which may not deliver enough meaning for the reader's purpose (Nuttall, 1996). Readers sometimes do not know how to infer because they have misunderstood one or more words in a text (Barnett, 1989). This skill is beneficial for readers in recognizing general business vocabulary and guessing unfamiliar words from context. Readers can also use this skill to identify the tone and writer's purpose in writing business article, and letters."

Reading subskills which are used in reading business English texts are as important as those used in reading General English texts. The large number of business English texts seems to differ very little from coursebooks for General English. For example, a study by Robinson (1991) indicates that "The features of business English textbooks are similar to those in General English because of the standard structure, the common core as well as the work-related vocabulary, and all the skills appear in general English coursebooks." Aside from coursebooks materials used in the classroom, teaching aids have an important role in learning English.

Ellis & Johnson (1994) point out that in case the materials (print, audio, video) for Business English which brought from the shelf for Business English do not meet the specific needs of readers, teachers may develop materials for a specific course.

In contrast, materials development for general English by the teacher is not required because there is now a wide choice of off-the-shelf materials for general English teaching at all levels.

In terms of methodology, many learning tasks and activities in business English course are similar to those in General English courses, especially for teaching structures, vocabulary, and social English. According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), some of

the reading skills to be learned in business English are the same as those in general English. They are skimming for content and meaning; scanning for specifics; predicting, inferring and guessing; identifying main ideas, supporting ideas and examples and so on.

In summary the reading skills employed in English for General Purposes and Business English are not different. Only the purposes for reading the text and the text types which are considered to be different. General English text types are concerned with the real situation which students encounter in their daily lives. Business text types are specific to the business world and often a mix of specific content and general content. However, no matter if the texts are General English or Business English, the student needs to master the reading subskills in order to understand their context. The researcher decided to study the reading subskills, guessing meaning of unfamiliar words, recognizing general business vocabulary, determining main ideas, identifying factual details because they are basic reading skill needed for students to read and understand the text. Inferring information is the reading skill in interpretive comprehension level which the students have to find the implied meaning in the text with the help of their background knowledge. Due to different culture of each country, people need to infer how other people feel in order to communicate with one another successfully.

2. Factors affecting students' reading abilities

As a part of related review, factors affecting students' reading abilities are divided into five main headings. They are 1) students, 2) teachers, 3) teaching techniques, 4) environments, and 5) teaching aids. These factors are taken from previous research by Nunan (1998), Nuttall (1996), Wallace (1993), Alvermann & Phelps (1998), Littlewood (1994), Collins (1998), Cohen (1990), Robinson (1991), Brown (1994), and Dudley et al

(1998). There may be more factors affecting students' failure in reading the English texts; but in this study, five possible factors are emphasized.

2.1 Students

Students themselves are considered as one of the factors causing students' difficulties in reading business English texts. Students themselves can be classified into 1) interest, motivation, attitude, (2) reading purpose, (3) reading strategies, and 4) learning styles.

1. Interest, motivation, and attitude:

Barnett (1989) states that "Learners' interest in a text and their purposes for reading it from most of the motivation they have for reading the text. Unfortunately, most foreign language reading is determined by teachers. It may be practical to allow students to select some of their own reading materials." Self-selected reading in which the student choose topics they have some knowledge of and interest in can motivate students to read (Krashen, 1988). Dubin (1986) states that the relevance of a reading topic and its interest for the reader are important in encouraging him or her to read the text. Nuttall (1996) claims that students who read in order to get something from the writing: facts, ideas, or enjoyment have high motivation in learning to read. Teachers can increase student motivation in reading by making foreign language reading interesting in itself.

In summary, interest, motivation, and attitude stimulate students to determine how much energy they will devote to the English courses. Students who want to know more about the topic have high motivation and good attitudes, find themselves more successful than the students who lack interest, have poor motivation, and a bad attitude.

2. Purpose of reading

The purpose of reading determines how students are going to cope with the particular text. Students may have a purpose to read a text for pleasure, find a specific information, understand content, or solve a problem. Students may also have a purpose to do well on the test or in a class discussion. Different purposes lead students to have different learning strategies and styles.

According to Whitehead and Whitehead (1993), “When people read for business purposes, it is almost always a practical activity, designed to be of some use to them in the advancement of their careers or their businesses.” Nuttall (1996) states that “It is impossible for teachers to familiarize students with every text they will ever want to read. Instead teachers must give them techniques for approaching a variety of texts.”

In summary, the way readers tackle the task of reading is strongly influenced by their purpose in reading. The important thing which can help the English text interesting is to draw student attention the sort of purposes they need outside the classroom and to help them realize that reading is not just a linguistic exercise, but is involved with the getting of meaning out of a text for some purpose.

3. Reading strategies

Cohen (1990) states that the “strategies” is mental process, action, technique, or tactic which readers select intentionally in order to comprehend what they are reading. Wallace (1993) states that, “Strategies involve ways of processing text which will vary with the nature of the text, the reader’s purpose, and the context of situation.” According to Carrell (1998, on-line serial), “Strategies” are “skills under consideration” and the “skills” refers to “information-processing techniques that are automatic and

applied unconsciously at all levels of reading comprehension.” Readers need to use reading strategies to enhance their reading skills for comprehending meanings of texts. Some of reading strategies are skimming, scanning, focusing on major content, ongoing summaries, guessing, inferring meaning, taking note, and making prediction (Cohen, 1990 and McCarthy, 1992).

It is important to remind students to use a particular reading strategy while reading (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). However, helping students employ strategies while reading can be difficult because the individual student controls and needs different strategies (Barnett, 1989).

“When students become aware of the complex nature of reading, they become enthusiastic about improving their strategies. The successful reader tends to select from a range of strategies. For example, they skip inessential words, guess from context, and continue reading the text where they were unsuccessful in decoding a word or phrase” (Wallace, 1993).

According to Vacca (1996), “Unsuccessful readers often fail in reading tasks because they lack knowledge of and control over the strategies needed for effective text learning.”

Brown (1994) suggests that teachers should show learners strategies of reading that enable students to bring their own information to the written word. Brown (1994) divided reading strategies into ten.

1. Identifying the purpose in reading

This means clearly identifying the purpose in reading the text. Students know what they are looking for and can find specific information.

2. Use graphemic rules and patterns (one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondences)

to aid in bottom-up decoding (for beginning level learners)

Students are given hints and explanations about certain English orthographic rules and peculiarities to help them in reading and understanding the text.

3. Use efficient silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension (for intermediate level learners)

Students do not need to pronounce each word but try to visually perceive more than one word at a time. Besides, students can skip the unessential word and try to infer its meaning through context.

4. Skimming

This consists of running eyes across a whole text to get the gist. Skimming gives readers the advantage of being able to predict the purpose of the passage, the main topic or message, and some of the supporting ideas.

5. Scanning

This consists of searching for some particular pieces of information in a text to find a definition of a key concept or to list a certain number of supporting details. The purpose of scanning is to extract certain specific information without reading through the whole text.

6. Semantic mapping or clustering (grouping ideas into meaningful clusters)

This helps readers to provide some order to the chaos. Semantic maps made for a productive group work technique as students collectively induce order and hierarchy to a passage.

7. Guessing

Reading is a “guessing game”, the sooner learners understand this game, the better off they are. Students can be given clues such as word analysis, word associations,

and textual structures before guessing. Guessing consists of guess the meaning of a word, a grammar relationship, a discourse relationship, a cultural reference, content messages, and infer implied meaning.

8. Vocabulary analysis

This can be used when students do not immediately recognize a word. The method is to look for prefixes that may give clues, look for suffixes that may indicate what part of speech it is, look for roots that are familiar, look for grammatical contexts that may signal information, and look at the semantic context for clues.

9. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings

This requires the application of sophisticated top-down processing skills. Implied meaning has to be derived from processing pragmatic information.

10. Capitalize on discourse markers to process relationships

There are many discourse markers in English that signal relationships among ideas expressed through phrases, clauses, and sentences. A clear comprehension of such markers can greatly enhance learners' reading efficiency.

According to Nuttall (1996), Reading strategies can be divided into three parts:

1. Before reading

1.1 Provide a reason for reading

A reason for reading should be provided to enable students to judge what they can skim over, what they must attend to in detail, according to its relevance to their purpose.

1.2 Introduce the text

This leads students to the right direction and makes them interest in reading the text. The introduction should not be too long and not include anything that the

students can find out from the text. Teachers can give them the right questions and get them involve in a discussion.

1.3 Break up the text

If the text is too long, it should be split into several sections. Teachers may emphasize some important parts and ignore the others. It can hold the students' interest if teachers handle a short section at a time.

1.4 Deal with new language

A few key words should be taught before students begin to read. Teachers should not teach all the new language beforehand but help the students to use the context as a guide to interpret some of the new language.

1.5 Ask signpost questions

This is to guide the students to read by giving a questions or a task. The signpost questions can direct students' attention to the important points in the text. This also gives students a specific reason for reading and they will read purposefully in order to find the answer or complete the task.

2. While reading

Teachers can provide class organization with a great variety of material to enable students with varying interests and varying levels of language ability to find texts that suit them. The use of group work with the guidance of teacher, text, or fellow students to promote discussion is suggested while reading. Groups should be organized not be large or more than five and should sit in circle or square. Teachers act as a consultant to show students how to solve the problems themselves.

Worksheets setting out the tasks should be supplied to groups to motivate them to read and discuss. Some extra activities beyond those given in the textbook can make

group work successful.

3. After reading

It is the time to put questions of evaluation and personal response and to help the students to relate the text to the world in which it is placed. At this stage the students will be asked the content linking to their own experience or knowledge. Besides, the connection between the content and other work in the same field is established.

In conclusion, reading strategies are employed in order to improve reader's ability in reading and understanding the English text. As a result of this, readers should be encouraged to find out and apply reading strategies which suit them best. Exercises and activities beneficial in practising each reading strategy should be provided to students.

4. Learning style

Learning style refers to "any individual's preferred ways of going about learning." Students have different preferences and beliefs in learning. Some students tend to like games and pictures whereas the others prefer to learn by watching and listening to native speakers instead (Nunan, 1998). Some students learn well through lectures and discussions. Some students can be motivated to learn when pictures, films, diagrams, drawings, books, or magazines are presented to them. The traditional teaching of the chalk-and-talk method tend to discourage students in learning.

Littlewood (1994) states that "The level of anxiety felt by students, which is a result of personal factors, can also hinder learning." Thus a sympathetic teacher and co-operative atmosphere can support learning (Nuttall, 1996). Higgs (1982) expresses his idea that "Matching learning and teaching styles is necessary for each aspect of the

teaching and learning process. Teachers should link their methods to the learning processes of the students for effective teaching and learning.”

Language learners have their own different styles in learning. To encourage students to have an interest in reading, teachers may seek for what style they prefer in learning. Good understanding of the teacher can support students to learn according to their styles in the classroom.

2.2 Teachers

1. Teacher language in the classroom

In the countries where people study English as a foreign language, the language which the English teacher uses in the classroom should be taken into account. Students who study English as a foreign language should have opportunity to listen to the target language more than their own native language. Having practice speaking and listening to the target language can make the student accustom to English and learn faster. The first language and the target language which the teacher employs are known as code switching. According to Zilm (1989 cited in Nunan, 1998), “Code switching is affected by the nature of the activity, the use of English by the teacher, the teachers’ perceptions of how the students learn, and both the teachers and students perceptions of the role and functions of the native and target language. Zilm also finds out that when she increases the amount of the first language, the students also increase of using it and vice versa.”

Aside from teacher language in the classroom, teacher questions are also important. Questioning in the reading class should not be only tests of memory. Before questioning, the teacher is to get the purpose clear what he/she wants to ask and what

reading strategy he/she want the student uses before giving a response. This statement is supported by Nuttall (1996) who states that “The purpose of questioning is to make the student aware of the the way language is used to convey meaning, and of strategies he can use to recover the meaning from the text.” In Good and Brophy’s views (1987 cited in Nunan, 1998), students do not perceive a clear logical sequence to factual questions when the teacher ask the questions from the text without the purpose of questioning. The teacher needs to select the types of questions in terms of their potential to stimulate extended student response.

In conclusion, the teacher language and the questions they use in the classroom are important activities in teaching students to read. In monolingual situations, the first language may be used to explain the difficult parts of the text. When the student is accustomed to the target language, the teacher can use both first language and target languages and gradually remove the first language. In terms of questioning, the purpose and the types of questioning should be aimed to help the student in comprehending the text.

2. Teacher feedback

According to Nunan (1998), feedback on learner performance can be classified in two types: positive feedback and negative feedback. Positive feedback is much more effective than negative feedback in changing student behaviour. Teachers who let students know that they have performed correctly by praising them can increase their motivation in learning language. During class students receive feedback on postreading activities and discover in general how well they have understood the text (Barnett, 1989). Feedback and error correction can either encourage or discourage the student in learning English. The teacher needs to examine not only how and when such feedback is

provided, but also whether the feedback is positive or negative, and who receives the feedback.

As mentioned above that feedback provided by teachers can be positive or negative to students in learning English. The information available in feedback allows learners to confirm, disconfirm, and modify their grammar, but these effects depend on their readiness for and attention to the information available in feedback (Chaudron, 1990). Besides, inconsistency, ambiguity, and ineffectiveness of teachers' corrections may cause students' uncertainty in reading and doing English assignments.

3. Teacher behaviour

The teacher in the reading classroom needs to make it clear that learning to read is natural, easy, and inevitable (Brumfit, 1994). Before teaching, teachers should identify student needs, evaluate available materials and other resources and have a clear sense of who students are, why they are studying the foreign language, what the program goals are, what the course objectives are, what kind of information and activities are already accounted for by the textbook and other materials (Higgs, 1982).

Teachers who have proficiency in teaching English, have attention in students needs and have an understanding of students learning styles and their reading strategies tend to be more successful in teaching English.

2.3 Methods of Teaching Reading

According to Nuttall (1996), many teachers like to teach all the new words and structures in the text before reading begins because they feel it is the duller part of the lesson. Barnett (1989) expresses his different idea that "Foreign language reading

instruction should go beyond detail- eliciting comprehension question to recognize authentic reading purposes and to give learners a reason to read.” The other two researchers, namely, Kress and Phillips point out the way in helping students learn and practice skills necessary for proficient reading as below.

Kress (1985, cited in Wallace, 1993) mentions three phases for critical reading: pre-reading (students’ providing their own questions/statements, or hypotheses), while-reading (students’ examining the writer’s linguistic choices to find out his/her viewpoint), and post-reading (students’ consideration how the text might have been written by another writer in another context).

Phillips (1985 cited in Barnett, 1989) suggests four phases of reading similar to Kress’s: pre-reading activities involve appropriate background knowledge and activate necessary schemata, while-reading exercises help students develop control of the foreign language and decode problematic text passages, post-reading exercise check students’ comprehension and lead them to a deeper analysis of the text, and follow-up activities take students beyond the particular reading text by transferring skills and by integrating reading with other language skills.

Good teaching of reading skill is not necessary to be focused on only one form. Teachers can use many different kinds of teaching styles and methods. They don’t have to focus on only one method. Rather, teachers may select the instruction which they feel best fits their students and their own preferences.

Alvermann & Phelps (1998) state that Direct Instruction is useful for teaching a specific skill or process. In this approach, the teacher first states explicitly what is to be learned and models the skill or process. Students have to use the skills on their own. It

is most useful when there is a single, relatively straightforward content objective or literacy objective to be learned within a one-or-two-day time frame.

The other useful reading instruction method suggested by Ogle (1986 cited in Alvermann & Phelps, 1998) is K-W-L (Know, Want to Know, and Learn). In this model students first identify what they know about a topic, then decide what they want to find out about it, and finally discuss what they have learned. In the first phase of a K-W-L lesson, students brainstorm and discuss the ideas they have on a topic they will be reading about in their text. They can jot down their own ideas on worksheets or in their learning logs with teacher guidance and modeling. They can categorize the information they have discussed and anticipate other categories of information that they may find as they read. K-W-L is an especially useful technique for allowing students from diverse cultural backgrounds to share experiences and beliefs that are relevant to a topic.

In summary teaching methods play an important role in student success or failure in learning English. Matching learning and teaching styles is necessary for each aspect of the teaching and learning process. In teaching reading skills, the text is merely a tool. Teachers have to link the textbook to the learning process of the student and try to match their methods of teaching to the student learning styles.

2.4 Environments

Environments in this study refer to those “inside” and “outside” classroom. “Inside the classroom” refers to the classroom climate and the physical environment in the classroom such as the quietness, the air-conditioner, the light, the desk, the chair, the bulletin board, the white or black board, the pictures, and so forth.

1. Internal environment (inside the classroom)

Obviously, sight, sound, and comfort extremely affect students' learning behaviour. The classroom should be neat, clean, and orderly in appearance, and free from external noises. The teachers should make use of bulletin board by attaching charts, pictures, and visual aids in order to help students to accomplish the English course learning. Then, the seating arrangement also affects students' learning behaviour. Seating should be arranged with respect to different behaviour. The rule of thumb is that students should be able to see and talk to one another. If the classroom has movable desk-chairs, the semi-circles, U-shape arrangement, concentric circles or a circle are most appropriate. If the room has tables with two to four students at each, try to come up with configurations that make interaction among students most possible. For deciding who sits next to whom, it would be better for students to decide on their own unless the teachers want to mix the students. Finally, blackboard used should be neat, well placement, and appropriately erased because a messy and confusing blackboard can make students frustrated (Brown, 1994).

2. External environment (outside the classroom)

"Outside" environment refers to the encouragement given to the student by parents, relatives, and friends and the media used in the real situation such as the newsletter, brochures, pamphlet, magazine, and the newspaper. According to Alvermann & Phelps (1998), creating a favorable learning environment is necessary. The environment involves selecting appropriate instructional practices, grouping arrangements, choosing instructional resources that will motivate students to learn in their classrooms such as supplementary print materials and highly interactive computer technology.

Moreover, parents and teachers' positive expectation help students achieve what they read.

Environments both inside and outside the classroom have an effect on the student in learning to read. Language teachers should keep in mind that the good classroom climate, the appropriate position of the classroom equipment, the realia media, and the encouragement which the student receives from people around him/her can strengthen his/her learning.

2.5 Teaching aids

Materials are an important component within the curriculum and are often the most tangible and visible component of pedagogy (Nunan, 1998).

Tomlinson (1998) states that materials are anything which is used to help to teach language learners. Materials can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard, and anything which presents the language being learned. In this study, teaching materials are grouped into four main subheadings: textbooks, audio-visual aids, realia, and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning).

2.5.1 Textbooks

Regarding teaching materials, textbooks are the most obvious and most common form as they are widely used in 67 to 90 percent of all classroom instruction (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). However, textbooks which are used in classrooms are selected mainly by teachers' supervisors. Brown (1994) suggests that it is the teacher's work to wisely select the textbooks.

Text selection criterion have become more dependent on reader interest, type of text, text structure, authenticity, and the match between reader and text schemata (Bernhardt, 1984 cited in Barnett, 1989). Authentic texts are vital as they motivate students, offer a real context, transmit the target language culture, and prepare students to read outside the classroom (Grellet, 1981 cited in Barnett, 1989). Simplified texts are not necessarily easier to read; the standard “simplification” process often destroys useful references and redundancies and alters the author’s intended meaning (Grellet, 1981 cited in Barnett, 1989). Thus, the teacher who wishes to develop students’ reading strategies must adapt available materials, and work as much as possible with authentic texts.

Brumfit (1994) states that, “Texts in the real world are usually meaningful.” Appropriate texts provide comprehensible input from which learners assimilate grammar and vocabulary (Barnett, 1989).

In case teachers are able to select textbooks on their own, they should use the textbooks which 1) help to accomplish the course goals, 2) fit the students’ background, 3) integrate the skills relevant to curriculum, 4) have appropriate content, 5) have good quality practice material, be sequenced, pay sufficient attention to words and word study, 6) contain variety of English and a cultural bias, 7) have good clarity of format, and 8) have a teachers’ guide. Nunan (1998) states that it is important to ensure that the materials selected are consistent with learners’ attitudes, beliefs, and preferences.

Other written texts such as newspaper, magazine, business letter, and advertisement can be parts of classroom. These supplementary materials are used to extend textbook concepts and provide a gist for writing about them (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998).

The content of the text needs to be scrutinized: the amount and type of vocabulary, the pertinence of situations that are presented, and the authenticity of the cultural context are relevant considerations. Apart from this, teachers should consider how the textbooks look. Simple graphic device-boxes, shading, color, and arrows can help much in reading. The text should be attractive and well laid out, with plenty of white space. Illustrations should be attractive and relevant to the content. There should be appendices and other end matter with maps, verb summaries, and a glossary. From above we can see that physical characteristics are also important in selecting the textbooks (Ariew, 1982).

2.5.2 Audio-visual aids

Aside from classroom textbooks, audio-visual aids can enhance interactive reading. Audio-visual aids refer to the equipment used in teaching English such as video tape cassettes and films with documentaries on special topics, slides, photographs, posters, and other illustrations. Brown (1994) suggests that teachers create audio-visual aids on their own. They can record television programs which are not long or complex (a very simple advertisement or a segment of the news) with a VCR. In addition teachers can pick out from recent magazines pictures (photos, diagrams, advertisement) that have large enough people or objects in them to be easily seen by all students in the classroom setting.

At present there are already encouraging signs that teachers and students are using electronic mail (e-mail) to exchange information in highly effective ways (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). According to Schaffer (1988), microcomputers and related technology represent potentially tools for education. Campbell (1988) claims that the

computer can help to promote the idea that learning can be a source of genuine pleasure. However, he feels that to introduce educational technology, without providing adequate training for the teachers who are to use it, is to cause disaster.

2.5.3 Realia

Realia refers to real objects used to teach students in classroom setting such as food items, advertisements, signs, tools, letters, faxes, e-mail and other materials. These realia can motivate the student in reading the English texts. According to Brown (1994), teachers should add some significant reality to the classroom. Realia helps students get used to reading authentic texts in real situations. Photographs and other realia topically related to the reading, although rarely connected directly to the passage, are useful for pre-reading because they allow the reader to predict text content, give cultural details, and identify settings (Barnett, 1989).

2.5.4 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

CALL stands for Computer Assisted Language Learning (Malley, 1990). It is the term most commonly used by teachers and students to describe the use of computers as part of a language learning which began with the record-player.

CALL has provided a new resource for language classrooms. As Brown(1994) points out, the computer can be used to do text modification (punctuate a text, change tenses, rearrange random sentences, edit an essay), reconstruct text, and analyze the test items. On the other hand, Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) gives an idea that for the learners, CD-ROM offers information and the opportunity for repetitive practice and offers more interactivity than paper-based materials. Moreover, the Internet is bringing further changes as courses can now be downloaded from all over the world.

In conclusion, reading problems are caused by a multitude of interacting factors. Firstly, students are not motivated to read the English texts because they do not have good reading strategies. Secondly, students feel nervous about studying with teachers who fail to adjust the methods or materials of instruction to suit students' needs. Thirdly, students cannot be expected to learn to read efficiently unless they are given appropriate and adequate instruction. Fourthly, crowded classroom may contribute to some students' reading problems. Teachers cannot give individual attention when their classrooms are too big. Lastly, the materials such as computer, CD-ROM, and Internet motivate students in learning.

3. Research dealing with reading comprehension problems and factors affecting the students reading achievement and/or failure

There are numerous studies on reading comprehension problems and factors affecting the students' reading achievement and/or failure done by both Thai and foreign researchers. The studies are summarized and presented as follows:

Noisangsri et al (1982) studied problems, environment, and levels of English reading abilities of Ramkhamhaeng Open University. These students took Fundamental English Courses (Eng 201 and Eng 202). There were 1,639 students from every faculty who were given questionnaires. The findings were 1) the areas that students had most difficulty in reading were with new vocabulary and idioms, structure of the language, and understanding of the cultural background of the story respectively, 2) students who encountered these problems were the ones who did not seriously study, spend extra time for reading, and 3) students who lived with parents were weaker in reading English than those who stayed in the dormitories.

Ali (1992) sought to identify and analyze the perceived nature and causes of the English language-based problems and the coping strategies of the Indonesian and Malaysian students studying in Indiana University in the United States of America. The highlights of the findings showed 1) the length of study in the US had significant relationships with both specific and overall language problems, 2) the educational level, prior use of English, residence in an English-speaking country, and length of stay in the U.S. contributed to a significant difference between the overall language problems, 3) a number of causes of the students' English language based problems existed and that they were mostly related to their prior learning and native culture, and 4) students used a number of coping strategies effective for overcoming language problems and achieving academic success.

Kitao, K. & Kitao, S. K. (1995) investigated difficulties Japanese have in reading English. The findings showed 1) students' reading speed was slow, 2) students had limited vocabulary, 3) students paid attention to individual word and sentence rather than understood the relationships among them, 4) students were lack of schemata in order to imply literal meanings, and 5) the English and Japanese differences in development of paragraphs.

Pinkerd (1995) investigated reading strategies and reading comprehension of six Thai native speakers when they read orally and silently using expository and narrative texts written in English. The findings revealed that three graduate and three undergraduate Thai native speakers in this study employed 29 different reading strategies

that were categorized within six main headings including 1) negotiating meaning, 2) losing understanding, 3) utilizing language as a tool within a sentence, 4) tying information across sentences, 5) comprehending, and 6) reaching to the text. The results showed that the differences were based upon individual reader background.

Thearmtanachock (1999) investigated English language reading abilities and reading strategies of second-year Payap University students. The study focused on the four reading comprehension skills which were 1) identifying main ideas, 2) making inferences, 3) making predictions, and 4) drawing conclusions. The findings showed that the average percentage scores that the students obtained were 46.00, 47.50, 42.30, and 40.30. Regarding reading strategies used, there were only 6 of 15 reading strategies found to be used frequently, and 8 of 15 reading strategies were found to be used sometimes. The results emphasized the indication that students had insufficiently used reading strategies, considered as one of the learning factors. Therefore, it affected the students' reading abilities.

Saranjam (1986) did a survey of problems in using teaching techniques to teach English reading encountered by the Northern Region Upper Secondary School Teachers. Four sets of questionnaires were used to ask about teaching circumstances and problems in using techniques to teach English reading at the upper secondary school level. There were 178 English teachers from both Muang District and the rural areas who were given questionnaires. The findings revealed the major problems causing teachers' failure in

using techniques to teach reading to students were 1) the poor background in English of the students, 2) the students' inattention when the techniques were used, 3) the lack of exercises to support the use of each technique, 4) the students' favor of the translation teaching method, 5) the lack of the knowledge and understanding in using techniques in reading among the teachers, and 6) the time consuming.

In addition, the problems found in teaching reading of the teachers in upper secondary schools were, 1) the students lacked motivation to study English, 2) the reading materials were not suitable, 3) few students were interested in English and most of them had bad attitudes toward English, and 4) the students found it difficult to understand the passage as a whole even if they knew the meaning of the vocabulary.

Collins (1993) did experimental research on the purpose of improving children's reading skills using previewing, repeated readings, and self-monitoring techniques. The results failed to support the research hypotheses that self-monitoring would enhance the efficacy of the reading improvement strategy. Moreover, implementing a reading improvement strategy with or without a self-monitoring component would increase the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction.

Costa (1994) investigated limited reading proficient students in two types of cooperative learning groups for reading instruction. Fourth-and-sixth grade students were observed and analyzed as they worked in cooperative groups for reading instruction. Two types of procedures were used: (a) Know, Want to Know, Learn (KWL) (with expository text), (b) Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) (with narrative text). Results indicated that fourth graders experienced more difficulty with KWL procedures

than did sixth graders. Both grader levels were able to respond to the teacher's questions presented in the CIRC format. Cooperative learning for reading instruction was shown to generate quality discussion and understanding for children of limited reading proficiency.

Wongsuwan (1992) studied the problems concerning text reading skills of Mattayom Suksa 6 (Upper Secondary Level) students in the Demonstration Schools. The subjects were divided into two groups: (1) Arts and Science students, and (2) Bangkok and provincial students. The results indicated that the ability of Arts students in vocabulary in context and paragraph organization was better than that in sentence structure. Whereas the ability of Science students in the three areas of difficulty was at average level. The results also showed that the achievement of Bangkok and provincial students were at average level. Besides, there was no significant difference between mean score in sentence structure, but there was a significant difference between the achievement of Bangkok and provincial students in vocabulary in context and paragraph organization.

Nagy (1993) did a survey on the effect on the reading comprehension scores of low-achieving third- and sixth- grade students of expressive writing, both in journals and in four paragraph structures. Reading specialists worked with two experimental groups at each grade level to help them develop an awareness of four-paragraph structures (main idea, sequence of events, drawing conclusions, and problem and solution) by having the students write expressively both in journals and in four-paragraph structures. The results were 1) the writing experiences had no significant effect on

reading comprehension, 2) the reading comprehension of sixth-grade students was significantly greater on a measure of overall reading comprehension, 3) the main idea comprehension of sixth-grade students was significantly higher than the sixth-grade experimental group, 4) sequence-of-events comprehension of sixth-grade students was significantly greater, 5) drawing-conclusions comprehension was not significantly greater for either grade, and 6) problem-and-solution comprehension of third-grade students was significantly greater.

Sclafani (1993) investigated the effectiveness of a computer-assisted approach contrasted to a textbook approach for teaching reading in a community college setting. This study was designed to compare two methods of reading instruction, one based on computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and the other based on conventional textbook instruction. The design used in the study was a pretest-posttest, treatment and controlgroup design. The findings revealed that no statistically significant difference between the textbook instruction and the computer-assisted instruction on vocabulary and on total reading scores. However, there were many statistically significant differences in gains between pretest-posttest and time-on-task groups in both reading comprehension and vocabulary. From these findings, it appeared that achievement was similar whether instruction was computer-assisted or textbook. This may be because the instruction was individualized for both groups. Perhaps individualizing instruction is more important than the delivery of materials. When the same teacher taught the same material in the same organized way via both media, the same learning was achieved in both groups.

Makita (1994) surveyed criteria for selecting appropriate children's literature for limited-English-proficient Japanese students and their use in ESL/bilingual programs at the primary level. The findings revealed that the appropriateness of contents, and the consideration of the needs and interests of Japanese students were important elements in making books selection decisions. Furthermore, students should be given the opportunity to be challenged in English.

Parasakul (1984) conducted a survey of the students' attitudes toward English, achievement, and needs in learning English. There were 533 lower vocational students from 6 majors (finance, personnel administration, marketing, accounting, economics, and laws) who were studying at Turakit Bandit College in Bangkok were given questionnaires. The result was that the students who had good attitudes towards English were more successful in learning English than those who had bad attitudes. Most of the students had a 47 percent reading ability. Besides, the result from the questionnaire also indicated that 71 percent of students wanted their English teachers to speak more English than Thai. Finally, the student-centre approach was requested by 82 percent of these students.

Mullen (1994) investigated the relationship between self-concept and students' attitudes toward reading, identified classrooms behaviors that are associated with students' attitudes toward reading, and examined developmental trends in students' attitudes toward reading during the intermediate grades (fourth, fifth, and sixth). The findings showed that certain facets of self-concept tend to be significantly associated with different dimensions of reading. Three significant canonical variates were obtained

from self-concept and reading attitudes. Also, a highly significant relationships was found between certain classroom behaviors and 2 of 8 dimensions of reading attitudes. Furthermore, certain reading attitudes change during the intermediate grades.

Zhang (1994) studied Chinese students' metacognitive awareness in reading English and its effect on comprehension by using the test. The subjects were 315 college students in Sichuan Province, the People's Republic of China. The study revealed 1) Chinese students' metacognitive awareness of English reading in some way related to comprehension, 2) the students' motivation to read for enjoyment and for the improvement of reading ability are positively correlated with their reading scores, and 3) most students reported that they used top-down strategy in reading but they may not know how to use them as their perceived reading strategies were not related to their reading scores.

Caragine (1993) studied inferencing strategies in contexts: supporting four Chapter 1 students in sixth-grade reading. The purpose of this study was threefold, 1) to investigate the role of prior knowledge in the classroom inferencing of four female sixth-grade Chapter 1 students, 2) to ascertain what these students' responses to a strategic instructional program by a reading specialist teacher are and 3) to record evidence of students' increased inferencing and use of cognitive strategies as well as their feelings and beliefs about reading and their own reading abilities as a result of their instruction. Results showed that students' background knowledge, family background, personalities, and learning styles influences their inferencing abilities.

Boonpattanaporn (1985) studied the ability in using business English of two groups of students who studied business English. The first group was Mattayom Suksa 6 students and the other group was the third-year level commercial students. The instrument was the questionnaires asking about the student ability in using English. The results were both groups of students have low ability in four skills of English.

Danwivat (1985) studied the comparison of the ability in using English for agriculture of the agricultural program students in Mattayom Suksa 6 and the third-year level commercial students. The instrument was the test measuring the student ability in using English. The results revealed that the Mattayom Suksa 6 students and the third-year level commercial students have low ability in using English. When comparing to other skills, the students have the most problem in reading.

Deeprom (1995) investigated the students' increasing command of English after utilizing the task-based activities. The samples were forty-seven students enrolling in Business English 1 at Chiangmai Vocational College. The samples were divided into two groups numbering thirty-nine and eight. The two typical sets of research tool were 1) proto-syllabus and 2) task-based activities. The second set was the the proficiency test. The sixteen task-based activities were implemented with thirty-nine students, revealed that all activities were effective. After utilizing the 16 task-based activities, gained scores of these thirty-nine students' increasing command of English were statistically significant at the level of .01.