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Programme in WEST BENGAL following NCTE Regulations, 2014

READING AND REFLECTING ON TEXT

1st SEMESTER • COURSE-EPC-1

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**Course-EPC-1 (1.1EPC1) :
Reading and Reflecting on Texts**

Theory: 25 Engagement with the field: 25 • Full Marks: 50

Unit I : Introduction to Reading

Reading—Meaning and Process • Importance of Reading across Curriculum • Characteristics of Reading.

Unit II : Reading Skills

Levels of Reading—literal, interpretative, critical and creative • Types of Reading—intensive and extensive reading, Oral & Silent Reading • Reading Techniques—Skimming and Scanning • Methodology of Reading.

Unit III : Reading the Text

Types of Texts—Narrative, expository, descriptive, suggestive, empirical, conceptual, ethnography, policy documents, field note • Importance of Different Texts in Curriculum.

Unit IV : Developing Reading Skills

Developing Critical Reading Skills • Developing Reflective Skills • Activities for Developing Reading Skills • Developing Metacognition for Reading.

Unit V : Reading Comprehension

Developing Reading Comprehension • Problems of Reading.

Engagement with Field / Practicum

Any one of the following—

- Divide the class in small group and provide different kinds of texts and instruct them to read and reflect according to the nature of text.
- Divide the group and provide one text and suggest students to make different interpretations.
- Design vocabulary games to enhance your vocabulary
- Read the text and provide a five words summary to each paragraph.
- Reading and comprehension exercises.
- Skim through the text and give suitable title to the text.
- Complete given text in stipulated time and summarize it in 6 / 7 lines with a suitable title.

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1

INTRODUCTION TO READING

READING—MEANING AND PROCESS

The term 'reading' is used in different ways by different people to mean different things. If we think of reading as a process, we will have at least three categories of words that define reading (*Nuttall 1982*):

- (i) articulate, pronounce, speak, enunciate, etc.
- (ii) decode, identify, decipher, segmentation, etc.
- (iii) comprehend, interpret, making sense, searching meaning, etc.

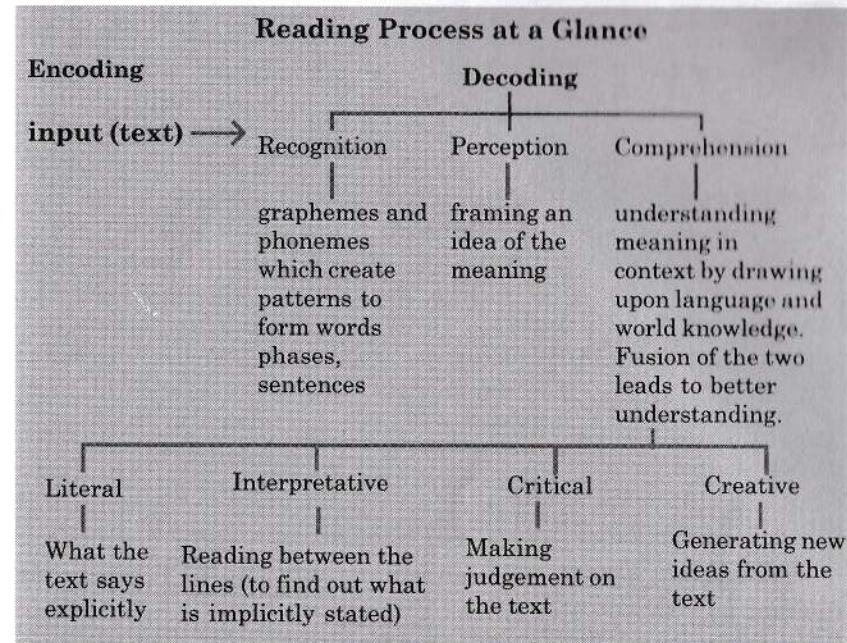
If we reflect on the words of group (i) we probably consider reading as an articulating process used for teaching pronunciation and reading aloud. For beginners, reading aloud is important but it lasts only for 3-4 years. The second group (ii) implies that reading is primarily a decoding process of identifying words. This kind of reading is associated with the beginners of elementary schools. The third group (iii) refers to reading as finding out meaning, interpreting and making sense of a text. This type of reading requires cognitive maturity. Reading in this sense generally starts with the secondary school stage and continues to higher education stage.

For most of us, reading seems to be a simple task. But in reality, it is a complex skill involving a number of simultaneous operations—both physical and mental. In order to understand a written text, such as an essay, first, letters must be identified, then words must be recognized and assigned meaning, the words must be strung together to form the meaning of the sentence, and the sentence must be understood in the context of all of the other sentences that have occurred before in the text. So there are many different component processes in reading. These components are called 'sub-skills' of reading.

Well, then what are the component processes involved in reading? The list given below gives us some of the more obvious 'sub-skills' of this complex skill:

- (a) recognizing a sequence
- (b) recognizing cause and effect
- (c) identifying the main idea
- (d) guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the context
- (e) comparing and contrasting
- (f) skipping over unnecessary passages while skimming for information
- (g) drawing inferences
- (h) distinguishing between the writer's opinion and statement of facts
- (i) locating the 'topic sentence' of a paragraph
- (j) making a summary of the text
- (k) inferring the mood of the writer
- (l) recognizing the meaning of various graphic signals, e.g., punctuation marks, paragraph indentation, capitalization, etc.

Looking at the sub-skills mentioned in the list we can say that reading is such a complex process that it cannot be defined so easily. Simply, we can say that it is a process of sight, sound and sense. It needs coordination of eyes and brain to understand the message contained in a text. Several processes seem to be taking place simultaneously in reading like, to name a few, articulating, decoding, identifying, deciphering, understanding, creating meaning, inferring, evaluating, and so on. One can add other words to this list. Even after adding as many words as he can, he will ultimately be found unsatisfied to grasp the totality of the reading process.



As a process, reading involves mainly two types of activities:

- (a) mechanical activity, and
- (b) mental activity.

The former consists of decoding and deciphering letters, words, sentences and discourses while the latter refers to reading for meaning. The first activity involves visual perception but the second activity is mainly concerned with understanding and thinking. In literature of reading, the first activity is called '*reading skill*' which, in other words, means '*decoding skill*' or '*word-attack skill*'. A beginning reader starts with this skill and so obviously, it is a '*lower-order (reading) skill*'. This early phase of reading is known as '*learning to read*'. Decoding skill represents the abilities necessary to convert orthographic symbols into speech (sounds). This set of abilities requires the reader to recognize that the script represents units of language such as phonemes, syllables, and words. Some of the sub-skills of this skill would be: recognizing syllable patterns, converting strings of letters into sound, recognizing upper-case and lower-case letters and recognizing word boundaries.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Decoding print	Identifying letters, words, phrases	Scanning, fixating, anticipating, categorizing, testing, matching, verifying
Making sense	Assigning meaning to phrases and sentences	Anticipating syntactic and semantic categories, matching, verifying, retrieving material from long-term memory, comparing, inferring
Questioning	Noting discrepancies between different statements or between what is read and what is known	

The second activity, i.e. mental activity can be further subdivided into three categories:

- comprehension skill (reading comprehension skill)*
- fluency skill*, and
- critical reading skill*.

(a) **Comprehension skill** represents the ability to use context and knowledge to derive meaning from the text. Examples of comprehension skill would be recognizing text structure, identifying the main idea, predicting what will come next in the text, etc.

(b) **Fluency skill** requires the reader to see larger chunks of phrases/sentences as wholes which assist a reader to read more quickly. Fluency skill would involve such abilities as *sight word recognition* and recognizing high-frequency letter clusters, rapid reading, and possessing an extensive vocabulary.

(c) **Critical reading skill** provides the reader with the skills to analyze, synthesize, reflect, and evaluate what is read. This process involves such activities as analyzing the cause-effect relationship in the text or adopting a critical stance toward the text or an event. Both comprehension and critical reading skill are regarded as *higher-order skills*. This skill is important for *reading in content areas (different academic disciplines/ subjects)* and it is generally referred to as '*reading to learn*'.



1. Literal Comprehension

1.1 Recognition

- 1.1.1 Recognition of Details
- 1.1.2 Recognition of Main Ideas
- 1.1.3 Recognition of Sequence
- 1.1.4 Recognition of Comparison
- 1.1.5 Recognition of Cause and Effect Relationship
- 1.1.6 Recognition of Character Traits

1.2 Recall

- 1.2.1 Recall of Details
- 1.2.2 Recall of Main Ideas
- 1.2.3 Recall of Sequence
- 1.2.4 Recall of Comparison
- 1.2.5 Recall of Cause and Effect Relationship
- 1.2.6 Recall of Character Traits

2. Reorganization

- 2.1 Classifying
- 2.2 Outlining
- 2.3 Summarizing
- 2.4 Synthesizing

3. Inferential Comprehension

- 3.1 inferring Supporting Details
- 3.2 Inferring Main Ideas
- 3.3 Inferring Sequence
- 3.4 Inferring Comparisons
- 3.5 Inferring Cause and Effect Relationship
- 3.6 Inferring Character Traits
- 3.7 Predicting Outcomes
- 3.8 Interpreting Figurative Language

4. Evaluation

- 4.1 Judgements of Reality or Fantasy
- 4.2 Judgements of Fact or Opinion
- 4.3 Judgements of Adequacy and Validity
- 4.4 Judgement of Appropriateness
- 4.5 Judgement of Worth, Desirability and Acceptability

5. Appreciation

- 5.1 Emotional Response to the Content
- 5.2 Identification with Characters or Incidents
- 5.3 Reactions to the Author's Use of Language
- 5.4 Imagery

Table: Cognitive and Affective Dimension of Reading Comprehension

MODELS OF READING PROCESS

When people think about children's reading and reading acquisition, they usually think of learning to read words. However, the real purpose of reading lies in deriving meaning from the text. In fact, reading without understanding the meaning is no reading at all. We have already said, reading is a very complex cognitive process and researchers are still trying to understand different aspects of the reading process. Several approaches and a number of models of reading have been put forward by the researchers, such as:

- (i) *Bottom-up approaches*,
- (ii) *Top-down approaches*,
- (iii) *Interactive approaches*,
- (iv) the Rumelhart model,
- (v) the Kintsch and van Dijk model,
- (vi) the Just and Carpenter model,
- (vii) the Stanovich model,
- (viii) the Anderson and Pearson schema-theoretic view,
- (ix) Perfetti's model,
- (x) the McClelland, Rumelhart, et al. model,
- (xi) the Rayner and Pollatsek model,
- (xii) Mathewson's model of attitude influence,
- (xiii) New literacy approaches, etc.

Due to certain practical problems, we cannot discuss all of these models. So here we will restrict ourselves to discuss only three of them, namely,

- (i) Bottom-up approaches,
- (ii) Top-down approaches, and
- (iii) Interactive approaches.

Lastly, we will discuss the relevance of *schema theory* in the context of understanding the reading process .

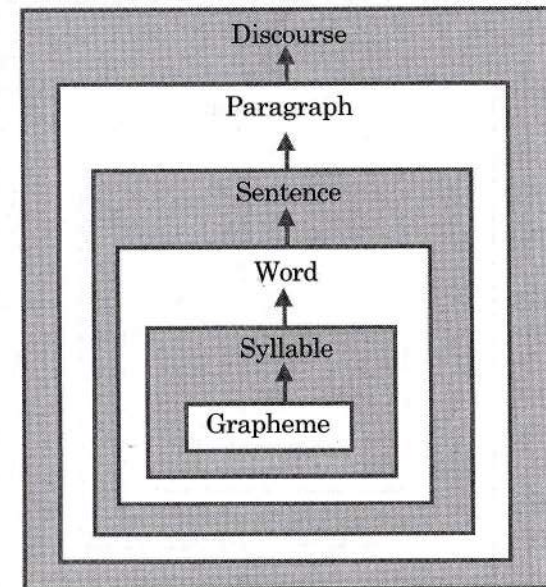
(i) Bottom-up approaches model

Bottom-up model of reading process basically assumes that a reader constructs meaning from letters, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences by processing the text into phonemic units that represent lexical meaning, and then builds meaning into a linear manner. In other words, it holds the view that reading is a

process of building or transforming graphemes (letters) into phonemes/syllables/ words, words into sentences and sentences into the overall meaning, which reflects traditional attitudes towards reading.

Letters/Grapheme → Phoneme → Meaning

In this model, readers begin with the lowest level, from which the symbols are identified. Strings of symbols are then analyzed into morphological clusters, from which words are recognized and then strings of words are analyzed into phrases and sentences. The meaning of the text is expected to come naturally as the code is broken. This approach assumes that the reading task can be understood by examining it as a series of stages that proceeds in a fixed order, from sensory input to comprehension and then to appropriate response.



Bottom-up approach

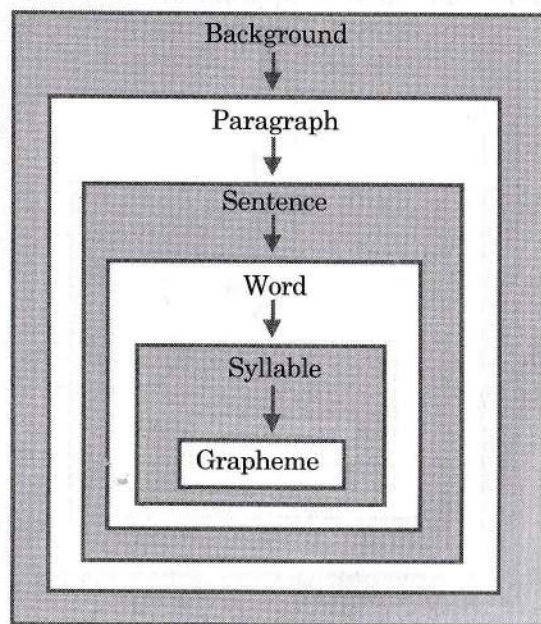
Therefore, from the point of view of bottom-up model, accuracy in understanding linguistic units is very significant and the lower-level processing skills in reading are important. This model weakens the significance of reading comprehension because the focus is on the understanding of linguistic knowledge but little attention is paid to schema, i.e. related cultural background, the whole text, text structure, etc.

(ii) Top-down approaches model

Top-down model emphasizes the use of readers' real world knowledge in memory. It assumes that a reader approaches a text with conceptualizations above the textual level already in operation and then works down to the text itself.

Background Knowledge → Text → Meaning

The most influential and comprehensive top-down model is put forward by Kenneth S. Goodman (1967): "The goal of reading is constructing meaning in response to text; it requires interactive use of grapho-phonetic, syntactic, and semantic cues to construct meaning." Readers do not read every word, but see through the text in order to be able to guess the meaning of the words or phrases.



Top-down approach

During reading, according to this model, a reader takes in large units of meaning of the text at a time, matches what he already knows with the meaning he derives from the text. This reader applies his background knowledge (linguistic, formal and content) to the text in order to create meaning that is personally and contextually sensible. Top-down processing

occurs as the system makes general predictions based on higher level and general schemata. It searches for the input from information to fit into these partially satisfied, higher order schemata.

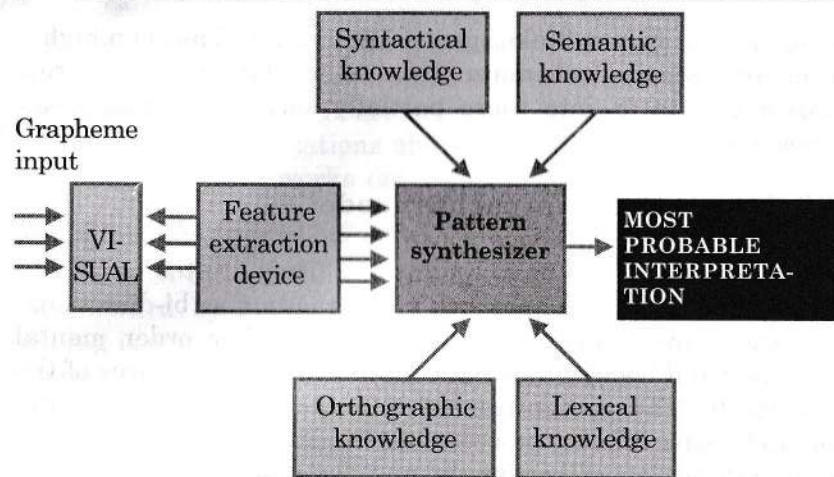
(iii) Interactive approaches model

From the discussion above it can be said that both bottom-up and top-down models have limitations. They are too naive and simplistic. Interactive approach views reading as bi-directional in nature, involving the application of higher order mental processes and background knowledge as well as features of the text itself. The recognition of this fact results in a more comprehensive reading process, namely, interactive model which is an interaction of bottom-up and top-down model claiming that prior knowledge and prediction facilitate the processing of input from the text. The interaction in this perspective takes place at three levels:

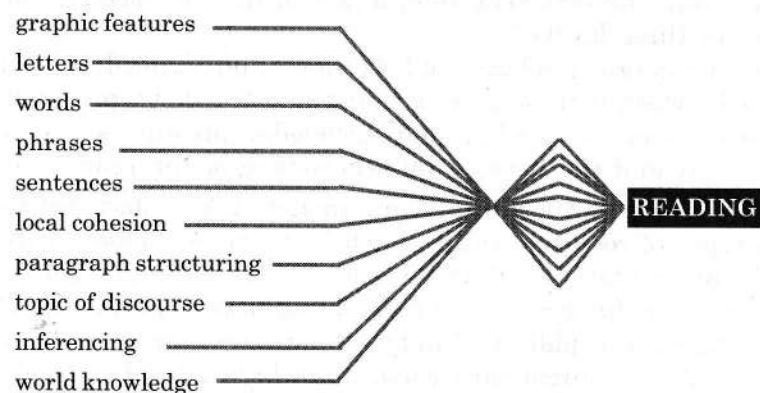
- (1) the interaction between lower-level and higher-level skills;
- (2) between bottom-up processing and top-down processing;
- (3) between the background knowledge presupposed in the text and the background knowledge of the reader.

According to Grabe, here interaction takes place between two types of cognitive skills which he terms as: 'identification' and 'interpretation'. Fluent readers seem to simultaneously employ what have come to be known as *lower level skills* that allow them to rapidly and automatically recognize words (and presumably grammatical forms), while *higher level skills* allow them to comprehend and interpret. Lower level skill involves rapid and precise unconscious processing called *automaticity*.

In interactive reading, both bottom-up and top-down processing should be occurring at all levels simultaneously. Readers may employ bottom-up process as a base for comprehending a text and then turn to top-down process to execute high-level interpretation of the content of the text. Prediction of the content will be confirmed, revised or rejected through further data analysis. Interactive mode of reading process is the combination of bottom-up and top-down model, and thus it absorbs their merits and avoids the limitations to a great extent. Till now, this is the model which is accepted by most reading scholars and psychologists. Hence, it is advocated by many researchers to employ it in academic context.



Interactive Model of Reading



A simplified interactive model of reading

In contemporary approaches to reading, meaning is not seen as being fully present in a text waiting to be decoded. Rather, meaning is created through the interaction of reader and text. In order to understand the interactive model better, we should discuss the *Schema Theory* and its relevance in context of reading.

(iv) Schema theory & Reading

A great number of researches on 'schema theory' has been conducted and they have shown that the theory is useful in helping improve students' reading ability.

SCHEMA THEORY

Introduction

There are various influential ways of defining schema, and nearly all cognitive definitions of schema stem from Bartlett's *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology* (1932). Later Rumelhart (1980) puts forward the concept of schema theory again basically as a theory of how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind and is used. He writes that "All knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schemata." Three years later, Widdowson defines schema as "cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in a long-term memory."

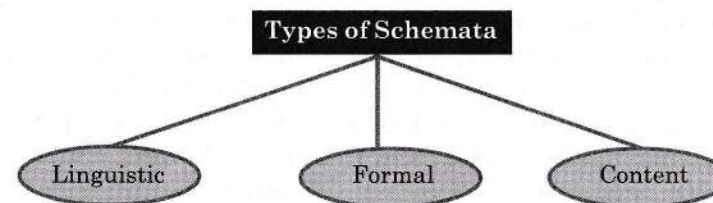
From the above definition, we may conclude that schema (Plural: schemata or schemas) is the prior knowledge gained through experiences stored in one's mind. It is an abstract structure of knowledge.

Types of Schema

Generally, there are three major types of schemata, namely,

- (i) linguistic schemata,
- (ii) formal schemata, and
- (iii) content schemata.

These three are closely related to reading comprehension.



(i) Linguistic Schemata

Linguistic schemata refer to readers' existing language proficiency in vocabulary, grammar and idioms. They are the foundation of other schemata. Linguistic knowledge plays an essential part in text comprehension. Without linguistic schemata, it is impossible for the reader to decode and comprehend a text. Therefore, the more linguistic schemata a reader has in his mind, the faster the reader acquires information and better understanding takes place.



(ii) Formal Schemata

Formal schemata are the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts. They include knowledge of different text types and genres, and also include the knowledge that different types of texts use different text organizations, language structures, vocabulary, grammar and level of formality. Formal schemata are described as abstract, encoded, internalized, coherent patterns of meta-linguistic discourse and textual organization that guides expectation in our attempts to understand a meaning of a text. Readers use their schematic representations of the text (e.g., fictions, poems, newspaper articles, and academic essays) to help comprehend the information in the text. Studies show that the knowledge of the type of text and its genre facilitate reading comprehension. Nevertheless, compared with the linguistic and content schemata, the formal schemata is less useful in the reading process. Some scholars do not accept formal schemata as a separate item. They believe it is a part of linguistic schemata.

(iii) Content Schemata

Content schemata refer to the background knowledge of the content area of a text, or the topic a text talks about. They include topic familiarity, cultural knowledge and previous experience with a field. Content schemata deal with the knowledge related to the content domain of the text, which is the key to the understanding of texts since one language is not only the simple combination of vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar but also the bearer of different levels of the culture. To some extent, content schemata can make up for the lack of language schemata, and thus help learners understand texts by predicting, choosing information and removing ambiguities.

Several studies show that readers' content schemata influence their reading comprehension more greatly than formal schemata. On the whole, the familiarity of the topic has a direct influence on readers' comprehension. The more the reader knows about the topic, the more easily and quickly he comprehends the information of the text. Therefore, if one wants to be an efficient reader, he should try to gather knowledge about more fields and topics. Learners with more prior knowledge can better



comprehend and remember the text more. Hence the policy of reading across curriculum (RAC) should be adopted for our students in educational institutes.

Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension

From the above discussion, it is understood that schema plays an important role in reading comprehension. But how? For that now we will look at the relationship between schema and reading comprehension.

Three types of schemata and reading comprehension

In general, reading can be regarded as the ability to gather meaning from printed symbols, taking into account both the individual's level of reading and purpose for reading. In pedagogic context, reading must be defined in accordance with students' levels of reading in order to meet their needs. For beginners, recognizing words and comprehending literal meaning are important components of reading. For intermediate readers, reading contains a deeper understanding of texts in terms of main ideas and textual organization, etc. For advanced readers, reading includes not only comprehension but also interpretation and critical evaluation.

The importance of *schematic knowledge* is now widely acknowledged in foreign language teaching and many researches on the schema theory have been carried out.

Now we may turn to the relationship of the three types of schemata and reading comprehension.

(i) Linguistic Schemata and Reading Comprehension

As mentioned before, linguistic schemata refer to readers' existing language proficiency in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. As the base of comprehension, linguistic knowledge plays an important role in understanding the text, especially for learners at the elementary stage of learning. Without basic linguistic knowledge, no reading strategy or skill can function effectively. Therefore, the more language schemata readers have in their mind, the more information readers may acquire from the text, and the more effective readers they may become.



(ii) Formal Schemata and Reading Comprehension

Formal schemata refer to the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts, including knowledge of different text types and genres, and the acknowledgment that different types of texts use organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar and level of formality quite differently.

Carrel (1984) made an experiment to investigate whether we can facilitate English as Second Language (ESL) or English as Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension by teaching text structure based on schematic knowledge. The result of the experiment proved that explicit teaching of the text structure can improve students' reading comprehension. Different reading materials bear different characteristics and a suitable employment of formal schemata helps significantly in reading.

(iii) Content Schemata and Reading Comprehension

Content schemata refer to the knowledge relative to the content domain of reading materials, which is the key to the understanding of a text. As a language does not only consist of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures, it also carries different levels of culture. Studies have proved that content schemata involves comprehension and remembrance more than formal schemata. Readers recall the most when both the content and rhetorical forms are familiar to them while unfamiliar content may cause more difficulties in content comprehension.

With this discussion of schema theory we can assume that we have a fair idea of the reading process. Having discussed the theoretical aspects of the process of reading, we can now try to define it. But, as we all know, it is very difficult to define reading. At this point it is better to look at some views on reading:

1. Reading is thinking under the stimulus of printed page.
2. Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game.
3. Reading comprehension is understanding a written text. (Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible.)
4. Some experts believe that when we read something, we understand it at three levels:
 - (a) The purely literal responding to the graphic signals only with little depth of understanding.
 - (b) The reader recognizes the author's meaning.



- (c) The reader's own personal experiences and judgements influence his response to the text.

These three levels can be summarized as: "reading the lines, reading between the lines and reading beyond the lines".

5. Reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.
6. Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known.

More Definitions of Reading

We can also consider the recent definitions of reading by experts. Here a varied list of definitions of reading is given:

- "Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible." (Grullet, 1981).
- Reading means "dealing with language messages in written or printed form". (Urquhart & Weir, 1998).
- Reading means reconstructing "a reasonable spoken message from a printed text, and making meaning responses to the reconstructed message that ... parallel [responses] to the spoken message." (Carroll, 1964).
- "Reading is a neuronally and intellectually circuitous act, enriched as much by the unpredictable indirections of a reader's inferences and thoughts, as by the direct message to the eye from the text." (Wolf, 2007).
- Reading is "a complex, multifaceted pursuit requiring the continuous deployment and integration of multiple operations ... [A]dept reading is a constellation of interfaced capabilities, ranging from mechanical mappings to more sophisticated conceptual manipulations, such as reasoning and inferencing." (Koda, 2004).
- "Reading can go from the mechanical uttering of the newsreader to the innumerable levels of interpreting any text. In the sense of understanding meanings, reading has always been applied to a wide range of phenomena, including the reading of barometers, tea-leaves and facial expressions." (Barton, 2007).

- Reading is no different from “any other kind of thought, except that with reading, thought is engendered by a written text. Reading might be defined as thought stimulated and directed by written language.” (Smith, 2004).
- For the billion or more people with Internet access and the emerging generation of “digital natives,” reading is synonymous with “reading the Web.” (Boardman, 2004; Wolf, 2007)—“intelligently finding, evaluating, and making use of a great variety of sources of information.” (Warschauer, 1999).
- Reading on the Web is similar to reading in print, but when viewed from both cueing systems and transactional perspectives, it is clear that Web reading is more complex than print reading.” (Eagleton and Dobler, 2007).

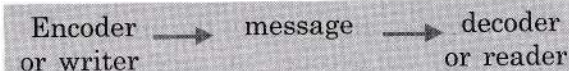
Well, let us stop here because this is enough. You must be feeling bored to read all these definitions. So, before moving to the next section, let us just look at the definitions to find out the dominant features of reading which the reading scholars highlight:

Grullet (1981) and Urquhart & Weir (1998) straightforwardly assert that reading is constructing meaning from written text. Carroll (1964) explicitly associates reading with the reconstruction of a spoken message. Wolf (2007) and Koda (2004) focus on the cognitive and neurobiological operations involved in the reading process. Barton (2007) gives a broad definition of reading that goes beyond mediation around a text. Smith (2004), on the other hand, focusses on the cognitive dimension of reading, suggesting reading and thought are inseparable. From this survey, we can say that reading is a complex process and it cannot be defined so easily because it means different things to different scholars particularly, when we think of the different purposes of reading and the varying processes that are called into play, it seems that no single statement can capture the complexity and totality of reading. A more comprehensive definition will need to address the characteristics of reading by fluent and matured readers.

In spite of all these definitions, it should be noted that there is no one comprehensive definition of reading. For some particular reasons it is really difficult to arrive at a comprehensive definition.

Process of Reading

We may consider two common views of reading to discuss the process a little bit elaborately for better understanding of reading. **First**, reading is a *decoding and meaning making process*.



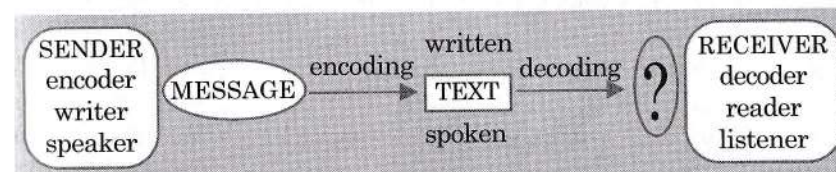
The encoder encodes the message while the decoder decodes it and understands it. That is, decoding is not of much value if it is not followed by comprehension.

We know, reading is an active process. A reader can understand a text only when he uses his mental faculties. To understand a reading text he should have:

- (a) the knowledge of the writing system (graphemes)
- (b) the knowledge of the language (morphology, syntax and semantics)
- (c) the ability to interpret
- (d) the knowledge of the world
- (e) a reason for reading and a reading style appropriate for it.

Knowledge of all these contributes to his understanding—the way in which he interprets the text and the meaning he constructs out of the text. This may be the reason why Kenneth Goodman calls reading a “psycholinguistic guessing game”.

Thus, while reading, a reader interacts with a text, decodes it and constructs his own meaning. What he constructs depends not only on what the writer writes but also on what the reader brings to the text. So reading is a meaning making process.



Secondly, we may say that *reading is also a communicative process*. Look at this very simple model of the process of communication.

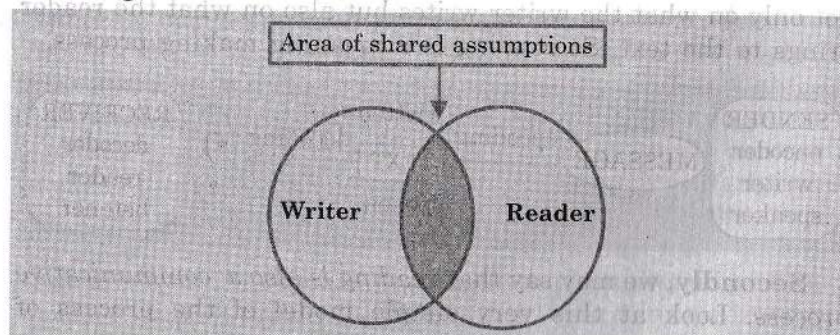
The encoder has a message in his mind (it may be an idea, a fact, a feeling, etc.) which he must first put into words. That is, he must encode it. Once it is encoded, in either written or

spoken form, it becomes available as a text to any other person who reads or hears it. i.e., the person who **decodes** the message that it contains. Once it is decoded, the message enters into the mind of the decoder and it is understood; then communication has been achieved.

Things can go wrong at any stage in the process. For instance, we cannot be sure that the decoder has received the message as it was intended by the encoder. The decoder may not have understood the language and style in which the message has been encoded, or the encoder may not have encoded his message properly, in an organized manner. However, one thing is clear from this model, i.e., it assumes that reading means getting message out of the text as nearly as possible the message that the writer put into it.

This is a fairly widely held view of reading. According to this view, the text is full of meaning conveyed through words, and the meaning can be absorbed by the reader's mind. It is like a blank slate on which the text imprints the words and the ideas. The writer has done all that is required for understanding his message and the reader need not make any effort, but has only to let his mind absorb it passively. The reader's role is thus seen to be apparently a passive one.

Problems rise when there is a mismatch between the presuppositions of the writer and those of readers. Therefore, the text will not be understood by anyone who lacks this knowledge.



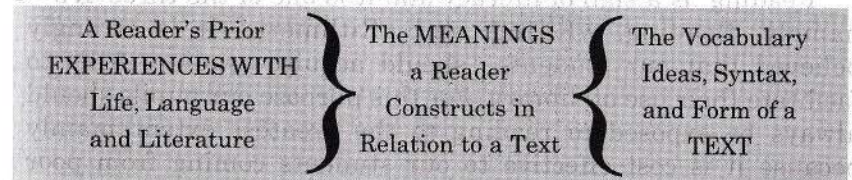
The above figure shows how two people can have certain things in common, the shaded area where the two circles overlap. This area includes all the knowledge that they share, including knowledge of language; it also includes attitudes, beliefs, values

and assumptions that they share. The unshaded areas represent experiences that are unique to each individual, not mutually understood by each other.

It is clear, therefore, that the greater the size of the shaded area, the easier the communication. That is, if the writer and the reader are from closely similar backgrounds, with similar attitudes, beliefs and assumptions, cultural knowledge, the reader can interpret the text with apparently no conscious effort. There is, however, the danger that a careless reader may assume that the extent of the shaded area—that common ground—is longer than it actually is. In that case he is likely to misunderstand the text, trying to read into it meanings that are not there. Similarly, a writer may assume that his reader is likely to share a great deal of his knowledge, beliefs, etc., but the reader may actually struggle to make sense of the text. (We will come to this point again in Unit-III.)

It should now be clear that the meaning of the text does not merely lie in it, waiting to be passively absorbed by the reader. On the contrary, the reader has to be actively involved in getting the meaning out of the text. Good readers interact with the texts that they read. They have personal expectations about what they want to get out of a text, and they bring those expectations to bear on what they read. They actually recreate meaning by constructing, or generating relationship between what they read and what they already know.

In generating the meanings, they draw on their prior knowledge and beliefs about the subject, their "world knowledge", so to speak that relates to the subject. Readers have networks of prior understanding about a topic, what theorists call **schemata** about what we have already discussed elaborately before in the context of 'interactive approach to reading'. In reading they add to those networks, filling in some of the gaps in what they know or in their existing schemata: The prior knowledge a reader already has about a subject is equally important with what he gets from a text as the actual words in the text.





The diagram above shows the relationships among prior knowledge, a text, and the meanings a reader constructs in relation to the text. The diagram also shows that, in creating meaning, good readers rely also on their prior knowledge of how language works, of how ideas are organized in writing and of how different forms are structured.

Thus schemata are knowledge structures which represent a generalized knowledge about objects or events, or even about a language system, which are activated while processing a text. An important function of schemata is therefore to help readers match what they know with what the written text tells them, i.e., to monitor their comprehension which will be discussed again in Unit-III (This is technically known as comprehension monitoring).

It has already been noted that the term *top-down* and *bottom-up* are used in this context to explain the interactive process of reading. Top down processing refers to the use of predictions based on one's prior knowledge, while bottom-up processing refers to the role of the text in providing input through decoding, or letter and word recognition. Reading is thus an interactive process of two things; there is a simultaneous interaction of the reader's prior knowledge and his sampling of the text; to put it in more technical language, the meaning of a text is reconstructed through a constant interaction between the information obtained through bottom-up decoding and that obtained through top-down analysis.

IMPORTANCE OF READING ACROSS CURRICULUM

'Reading maketh a full man.'

—Francis Bacon

'But if men are human, because they can talk, they are civilized, because they can read.'

—Dan Lacy

Reading is a sign of literacy and it is one of the three 'R's—namely, Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic. It is strongly believed that our students should acquire reading skills to facilitate their use of library. For this purpose our pupils should always be exposed to reading to the greatest extent mainly because it is cost effective to our students coming from poor



economic background. This is especially true for English as a Second Language (ESL) in India. Therefore, by reading a good amount of English we can develop such insight into the working of the language that we can even hope to surpass the native speakers so far as reading skill is concerned. Reading holds the key to the development of real communicative competence for our students.

The vast majority of our students ultimately use English as an important 'Library Language' and naturally 'reading' or the ability to understand the written language will be the most useful skill to them. In the present age of explosion of knowledge, the skill of reading plays an important role in the life of an individual. It performs so many functions and its importance cannot be denied, in spite of several other resources like computers, internet, etc. The students have to refer to the reading materials in serious writing. It provides opportunities for academic, personal and professional growth. Especially, 'reading' is within the reach of all levels of students. We refer to dictionaries, railway time tables, and we read newspapers, letters, reports, novels, books, etc. Basically we read will be done for two purposes: one is for pleasure and another is to get information. So the reader has to be actively involved in the process of reading for both entertainment and gathering information.

The goals for language learning are two folds: first, attainment of a basic proficiency, and second, the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition. This argues for an *across the curriculum approach* that breaks down the barriers between language subjects, e.g. Bengali (L1) & English (L2) and other subjects (like Science and Geography) and at the same time, between L1 and L2. At the initial stages, mother tongue or the dominant regional language (L1) is the language for learning activities that forms the child's knowledge of the world. At later stages all learning takes place through language. Higher-order linguistic skills (e.g. critical reading) are necessary for L1 as well as L2 and reading skill is transferable. Research finding shows that reading skill acquired in L1 improves reading skill in L2. Likewise, failure to acquire reading skills in L1 obviously affects the performance in L2.



Language as a constellation of skills, carrier of thoughts, transmitter of culture and marker of identity cuts across school subjects and academic disciplines. Reading is a generalized skill (consisting of several sub-skills) which should be mastered by all students. In fact, mastery over the reading skill is the key factor for academic success in educational institutes. In many situations, all of these skills and sub-skills need to be used together. This is why it is important to view reading as everybody's concern at school, and not as a responsibility of the language teacher alone. Further, the foundational role of the skills associated with reading does not stop with primary classes, but extends to secondary, senior secondary stage, leading to college and university level as new needs arise in the content areas. (NCF 2005).

Reading across curriculum seems important because teachers and education experts believe that linguistic performance depends largely on reading. So purposeful use of reading is employed in the curriculum and the entire curriculum influences children's reading development. For this purpose an organized policy is to be implemented such as:

- (i) Involving every teacher at every class in pupil's reading development,
- (ii) Every teacher's initial training should include a substantial course on reading, regardless of teacher's intended method subject.
- (iii) Discrete skills like word recognition, spelling, punctuation, elimination of errors are not given importance. Instead, a wholistic approach is adopted where comprehension seems to be important.
- (iv) Whole class as well as the whole institute will be converted into a rich environment for reading. Keeping this in mind, NCF-2005 has also pleaded for print-rich-environment in classrooms and schools. It is therefore, we can find that after the advent of reading across the curriculum, there has been a shift from teaching reading to learning through reading, from teacher-centredness to student-centredness.

But, how to implement RAC in schools?

M.L. Tickoo suggests the following measures:

1. Make reading for pleasure an essential part of total schooling. Every school must understand the value of reading as part of basic education and provide for it



through various means including setting aside one or more hours a week for reading on the general timetable. What needs to be understood here is the importance of language across the curriculum (LAC).

2. Teachers of non-language subjects must work with language teachers to encourage regular reading habits. An obvious way to do so is to assign tasks which require independent reading, and reward those answers what are based on such reading.
3. Equip the school library with plenty of books and journals or magazines at the appropriate levels. This will require the cooperation from teachers belonging to all subjects and every department.
4. Two other measures will also contribute to building a reading-rich environment.
 - (i). The first to find effective ways of bringing into harmony the reading curriculum of different languages—first, second and foreign—that are taught in schools. For this we need:
 - (a) awareness among all language teachers of the advantages of using multiple languages and of effective ways of bringing about such an atmosphere, and
 - (b) administrative support for ideas that help different language departments organize common programmes and activities to bring their syllabi and teaching closer to each other.
 - (ii). The second measure is for the language teacher to work towards providing plentiful graded reading materials at the appropriate level (in terms of ages, interests and abilities) for every pupil. A book-corner should become an essential part of every language classroom and the teacher, singly or with other language teachers, should invest time and attention to make it a rich resource for learners at various levels of development. Ways must also be found to ensure that pupils' efforts at reading extensively are encouraged, monitored and rewarded.

CHARACTERISTICS OF READING

1. Reading is **purposeful**. There is always a reason for reading. In general terms, we read either for information



or pleasure. The purpose in reading a recipe is obviously different from the purpose of going through a legal document.

2. Reading is **selective**. That is, the type of reading we do or the way we read a text varies according to our purpose in reading. We can scan a page in the telephone directory to locate a name, a telephone number, or an address, but we have to pay careful attention to every word in a legal document. We scan for specific information, noting only what is relevant to our purpose at the given moment and rejecting or ignoring the majority of what appears on the page because it is irrelevant to our purpose. We skim, attempting to extract the gist of a text. Or we read intensively with the aim of decoding the whole of the writer's message.
3. Reading **speed varies** according to content and purpose. Efficient readers use the minimum number of clues in the text—semantic and syntactic—to extract the information they need. A good reader is one who might read a novel at 400 words per minute but when it comes to reading a legal contract he could slow down his rate to 80 words per minute. A less able reader tends to read all the texts slowly. He lacks the flexibility required to handle different kinds of reading materials for different purposes. Note the speed of reading by various types of readers in the following table:

The Pace of Reading		
Speed	Purpose	Good Reader
Slow	used when material is difficult and/or high comprehension is required	200-300 words per minute (wpm) 80-90% comprehension
Average	used for everyday reading of magazines newspapers, etc.	250-500 wpm-70% comprehension
Fast	skimming, used when highest speed is needed.	800+ wpm; 50% comprehension is required; comprehension is intentionally lower.



4. Primarily reading is **silent reading**. Reading aloud is a special skill used, for example, by actors and news readers, but seldom by general readers. If it is used, its purpose is to communicate to another person a written message to which that person does not have access.
5. Reading is **text-based**. It seldom involves the mere decoding of individual sentences isolated from context.
6. Reading involves **complex cognitive skills**. Readers do not merely decode the message. They make predictions and inferences – they anticipate what will follow next in the text, based on what they read. They build assumptions about the overall content at the macro-level and predict what is likely to come next at the micro-level. That is why reading is called “a psycholinguistic guessing game”.
7. Reading is based on **comprehension**. That is, understanding meaning is integral to reading. Reading is centrally a **comprehending process**. We read to understand what the writer intends to convey in writing, though we also go beyond it. Reading and comprehension should not be equated; comprehension is a more all-encompassing concept than reading. Nonetheless, as fluent readers, we assume that comprehension is a central goal of reading.
8. Effective reading involves **chunking of information** that the well-developed schema makes possible. At the time of reading, our eyes take chunks of words which are meaningful. They move forward and backward over the text. Chunking depends on the sense group of the sentence.
9. Reading is an **interactive process** in two ways. Reading combines many cognitive processes working together at the same time. The pattern of parallel interaction is essential to fluent reading. Reading is also an interaction between the reader and the writer. The text provides information that the author wants the reader to understand in certain ways. The reader also brings a wide range of background knowledge to reading, and he actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting in terms of background knowledge activated by the reader.

10. Reading is also a continuously **evaluative process**. At one level, evaluation is tied to being strategic and purposeful in that we evaluate how well we are reading (or monitor our reading). Evaluation also occurs when we decide how we should respond to a text. Do we like what the author says? Do we have an interest in the information? Do we agree with the author? How does the text compare with other texts on the topic? Do we like the attitude and perspective of the author? Do we want to learn more? Do we want to continue reading? This pattern of evaluation of the text calls up our own attitudes and emotional responses to the text and the topic, and it requires a strong set of inferencing processes and the use of background knowledge.
11. Ongoing evaluations make reading a **learning process**. However, in combination with evaluation, all reading activity is a learning process in one sense or another. With almost any text we read, the evaluation process makes reading a learning process as we make decisions about how to respond to the text.
12. Reading is a **strategic process** in the sense that a number of skills and processes used in reading calls for an effort on the part of the reader to anticipate text information, select key information, organize and mentally summarize information, monitor comprehension, repair comprehension breakdowns, and catch comprehension output to decide the meaning.
13. These multiple efforts obviously make reading a **flexible process**. As reader's purpose shifts, as comprehension is impeded, or as interest varies, the reader adjusts reading processes and its goals. The flexibility demonstrated by fluent readers keeps the processes on and varying purposes of reading point out the fact that reading is also (and always) a **purposeful process**.
14. Fluent reading is certainly a **rapid and efficient process**. It is rapid in the sense that we read most materials at the 250-300 wpm. Even material that is related to learning or professional work will be read at this rate unless we are new to the information and actively trying to learn it. Reading is efficient not only in terms of the overall reading rate, but also in terms of the ways

that various processing skills work together smoothly. When we read, we coordinate rapid and automatic word recognition, syntactic parsing, meaning formation, text-comprehension building, inferencing, critical evaluation, and linkages to prior knowledge resources. We do this seemingly without effort and with all processes synchronizing in time.

15. Finally, reading is a **linguistic process**. It is not possible to read without making graphemic-phonemic connections, without recognizing the words to be read and the structural components (syllables) organizing the words, and without having a reasonable store of linguistic knowledge (morphological, syntactic, and semantic) of the language of the text. At one level, this is obvious, but it is so easily overlooked or ignored that it must be stated explicitly. If we are asked to read a newspaper in Japanese (Kanji Script) and we do not know the script or any words in Japanese, no amount of background knowledge on a topic will assist us in reading the text. There are clear and obvious limits to background knowledge and reasoning as foundations for reading. The processing of linguistic information is central to reading comprehension.

Exercise

1. Objective / Very short type questions (for 2 marks)

- (a) What is reading?
- (b) What is decoding skill?
- (c) Mention four sub-skills of reading.
- (d) What is bottom-up approach to reading?
- (e) What do you mean by top-down approach to reading?
- (f) What is interactive approach to reading?
- (g) Mention any two models of reading.
- (h) In the context of reading, what do you mean by fluency skill?
- (i) What is chunking of information?
- (j) State four features of reading.
- (k) What is the basic concept of reading across the curriculum (RAC)?
- (l) Suggest two measures for implementing RAC.
- (m) According to NCF-2005, what is print-rich environment?
- (n) Who is a slow/fast reader?
- (o) Who is an average reader?



- (p) What is 'learning to read'?
- (q) What is 'reading to learn'?
- ✓ (r) How can you differentiate 'learning to read' from 'reading to learn'?
- (s) What is 'word attack skill'?
- (t) Which reading skill is considered as 'lower order skill'?
- (u) Which reading skill is considered as 'higher order skill'?
- (v) Write a definition of reading.
- ✓ (w) What is schemata?
- ✓ (x) What is linguistic/formal/content schemata?
- ✓ (y) In the context of literacy, what are the three 'R's'?
- ✓ (z) Who said: 'Reading is a psychological guessing game'?

2. Short type questions (for 5 marks)

- ✓ (a) Explain: Reading is a decoding process.
- (b) Why do you think that reading is a communication process?
- (c) Mention the sub-skills of reading.
- ✓ (d) What is reading comprehension?
- (e) Explain the concept of 'reading to learn'.
- ✓ (f) Write the features of reading.
- (g) Explain: bottom-up approach to reading/top-down approach to reading.
- (h) Explain with diagram the concept of interactive process of reading.
- ✓ (i) What is the relevance of schema theory in reading?
- ✓ (j) Show your acquaintance with the concept of 'reading across the curriculum'.
- ✓ (k) What does NCF-2005 say about RAC?
- ✓ (l) What measures should be taken to implement RAC in our schools?
- (m) Discuss any one model of reading.
- (n) State the features of reading as a strategic process.
- ✓ (o) Explain with diagram: reading as a communication process.
- (p) Explain the 'Interactive theory of reading'.

2

READING SKILLS

LEVELS OF READING—LITERAL, INTERPRETATIVE, CRITICAL AND CREATIVE

Levels of reading

Good readers operate cognitively at four highly interrelated and overlapping levels of meaning:

- (i) the *literal*,
- (ii) the *interpretative*,
- (iii) the *critical*, and
- (iv) the *creative*.

Literal: Literal comprehension refers to 'reading the lines', i.e., reading in order to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a text. So literal reading means: understanding the information stated directly in a text. That information may be facts, sequences of events, main ideas, generalizations, cause and effects, etc. The key element in comprehension at this level is that the information is present "in black and white" in the text. The reader does not have to dig too deeply to get it. He should be able to state exactly what the passage is saying, to make sure that he understands it. He is not expected to find information which is not explicitly stated in the passage, or finding out implied meaning using his experience and intuition and by inferring, what is known as inferential reading.

Literal comprehension is of fundamental importance. It requires a thorough understanding of paragraphs, sentences and word meanings and is required for higher levels of comprehension.

Interpretative: To read at the interpretative level, is to read 'between the lines', to recognize ideas and information not directly stated. In doing so, the reader must make inferences.



Writers do not always state facts directly. They imply emotions and attitudes, and suggest points of view. For instance, an author may not state directly that a particular character is bad, but the words he uses to present him may convey the author's attitude towards that character. A perceptive reader should be able to recognize this attitude. He must be able to get beyond the surface meanings of words and see what the implications of such words are.

Interpretative reading also involves getting out meanings expressed through literary allusions, archaic words, idiomatic expressions, and figures of speech like simile, metaphor, irony, etc.

One of the most difficult interpretations a reader must make is in terms of inferences. The reader must bring his background knowledge, his previous experiences with language, literature, and life in constructing meanings.

Critical: Critical reading requires making judgements with regard to a text. The reader may judge the accuracy of facts, the validity of conclusions drawn, or the effectiveness of the author's style.

Critical reading also requires giving reasons for the judgement and stating the criteria used in making it, commenting on the views expressed in the passage and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the treatment of those ideas. It is very difficult to develop critical reading skill in younger students. A number of suggestions have been put forward by reading experts for procedures which will help students develop a critical perspective on texts. Clarke and Silberstein (1979) suggest the kind of critical questions which can be asked about reading material:

- 'For what purpose and for what audience is this intended?'
- 'What knowledge and attitudes does the author presume of the audience?'
- 'Are you convinced by the evidence presented by the author to support the claims made?'
- 'Does your own experience support the conclusions reached by the author?'
- 'and 'Do you share the author's point of view?'



More recently, Wallace (1992) has suggested a framework of questions for critical reading based on Kress (1985), which will enable readers to identify and resist the values underlying a text:

1. Why is this topic being written about?
2. How is the topic being written about?
3. What other ways of writing about the topic are there?
4. Who is the text's model reader?

The questions would certainly help readers to challenge the ideology of the text. (We will discuss critical reading again in Unit-V.)

Creative: Creative reading calls for the generation of new ideas, insights, applications and approaches. It requires invention, prediction, and use of the imagination. Proposing an alternative conclusion or generalization based on reading the text and suggesting related examples are exercises in creative reading. Composing orally, drawing, and writing stories with same pattern or same words as in those that one has read are also exercises in creative reading. Creative reading is a very difficult thing to be taught. Only when a student has some inner impulses to find something new in a text, creative reading can take place. Here reading a text acts as a take off point and it leads him further to create in the form of writing something as his own.

Creative reading uses *divergent thinking skills* to go beyond the literal comprehension level and move on to the interpretational and critical reading levels. At this stage, the reader tries to come up with effective alternative solutions to those presented by the writer. The reader is now in a position to argue with the author or can suggest alternative interpretation to a particular problem or issue.

If a reader could be inspired to be creative he is likely to use fact or information that he learns in a personal creative way. Creative reading may initially be encouraged through musical expression, pictorial representation, or printed words, songs, poems, recitations or dramatization. In order to perceive, understand, and respond to a variety of linguistic interpretations of reality, he gets in touch with different expressions of the language arts. He needs to be introduced to long-distinguished



literary forms. He learns about the various literary forms, distinguishes one form from another, experiences the subtle nuances of language, derives satisfaction from recognizing subtle and fine requirements of many verbal forms.

The skill and strategies for reading we hope to develop in a reader may be stated broadly as follows:

- (a) **Skills involving flexibility of technique:** variations in reading rate, skimming, scanning, etc.
- (b) **Skills of using non-textual information:** information that is strictly not part of the text itself such as : reference apparatus, graphic conventions, illustrations and diagrams. They are known as 'non-prose texts'.
- (c) **Word-attack skills:** recognizing the letters of the alphabet and reading groups of letters as words, understanding the meaning of the word by using morphology, contextual clues or a dictionary.
- (d) **Text-attack skills:** interpreting the text as a whole using all the clues available including cohesion and rhetorical structure.

Out of these, the text-attack skills are perhaps the most complex in the reading process. To develop these skills, we need to use texts which exhibit the characteristics of a true discourse; that is, texts which have a recognizable content, and are coherent and structured.

TYPES OF READING—INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE READING, ORAL AND SILENT READING

Intensive & Extensive Reading

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Francis Bacon

We need to distinguish two kinds of reading described traditionally as **intensive** (sometimes called *reading for accuracy or reading for information*) and **extensive reading** (sometimes called *reading for fluency or reading for pleasure*).

Intensive Reading: In intensive reading, we read not only for detailed comprehension of meaning but also for mastering



the vocabulary and structures of sentences (i.e. linguistic and stylistic elements). It is a detailed reading based on accuracy. In intensive reading, a passage is read with the purpose of concentrating on certain points:

- (i) ability to read silently and quickly
- (ii) ability to understand the passage thoroughly- both globally and locally
- (iii) ability to negotiate the speed of reading depending on the nature of the text and the purpose of reading.
- (iv) ability to summarise the text
- (v) ability to participate in a discussion (question-answer session) on the content of the passage.

If a reader can master these abilities he will be what we call a *proficient reader*. Intensive reading covers a wide range of information and texts. It is a higher level activity and is generally used for comprehension of a difficult text, making notes for examinations, to read legal and official documents, circulars, notices etc. This kind of reading is associated with academic and legal domains. Tasks based on intensive reading help a learner answer the inferential questions as well as critical questions from the passage.

Intensive reading involves the readers working through a relatively short passage or text and examining it closely and in detail. The aim is to arrive at a detailed and thorough understanding of the text. Material for intensive reading is purposively chosen with view to developing the student's power of judgement and discriminative reasoning of interpretation and appreciation. Students learn to scan for information, to read with careful attention and concentration, and to extract the major ideas and arguments. Attention is also paid to the logical development of ideas and accompanying style in writing. Critical appreciation of a poem or a prose passage (often included in English curriculum at the college level) needs this kind of reading.

So intensive reading means: the full understanding of the text with all its arguments, its symbolic, emotional and social overtones, the attitudes and purposes of the author, and the linguistic and literary means the author employs to achieve his purpose. Thus, intensive reading is a process of reading which involves several other skills including skimming and scanning.



Intensive reading can be divided into three phases:

(i) Pre-reading, (ii) While-reading, (iii) Post-reading phase.

Skills associated with intensive reading are shown in tabular form.

Pre-reading Stages	While-Reading Stages	Post-Reading Stages
1. Establishing a good physical environment	1. Checking comprehension throughout the reading activity	1. Appreciation of text and writer
2. Setting reading purpose	2. Identifying the main idea	2. Revisit pre-reading expectations
3. Accessing prior knowledge	3. Making inferences	3. Review notes, glosses, text markings
4. Asking questions about a topic	4. Recognizing patterns in the text structure	4. Reflect on text understanding
5. Semantic mapping	5. Looking for discourse markers	5. Consolidate and integrate information
6. Skimming for general ideas	6. Monitoring vocabulary knowledge	6. Review of information
7. Previewing the text: examining headings, pictures, title, etc.	7. Predicting the main idea of each paragraph	7. Elaborate and evaluate
8. Reviewing instructions	8. Glossing	8. Determine what additional information is needed
9. Identifying text structure and genre	9. Comparing what is read with what is known	9. Apply new information to the task at hand
10. Determining what is known about the topic	10. Evaluating value of what is being learned	10. Relate the text to own experience
11. Predicting what might be read.	11. Re-reading text or skipping ahead	11. Critique the text.



Extensive Reading: Extensive reading, on the contrary, involves reading in quantity without bothering to check every unknown word or structure. It is used for developing a taste for reading and making the learner an independent reader. Our main purpose of extensive reading is to train students to read fluently (both in L1 and L2) for their own enjoyment and without the help of a teacher. Students are encouraged to read widely on subjects which interest them personally (e.g. art, games, literature, politics, music, society, science, history, etc.) and share what they have enjoyed with their friends. Pupils, in addition to their text books, are urged to read supplementary readers, magazines and periodicals, newspapers, comics, novels and story books. This is also known as *rapid reading* for pleasure or for information. It is viewed as a leisure time activity. For this kind of reading, guidance from teacher is necessary otherwise the objective of extensive reading will not be fulfilled. The overall aim of this type of reading is general comprehension and it involves reading of longer texts for a long stretch of time.

Extensive reading plays an important part in the process of second language learning for several reasons.

First, it can provide better exposure to language through a wide variety of materials.

Second, it is an activity that can be carried out by the students on their own outside the classroom because it provides valuable reinforcement of language already presented in the classroom.

Third, it gives students useful practice in skills such as inferring meaning from the context when structures and vocabulary are not familiar. Besides, class time is limited and the amount of reading needed to achieve fluency and efficiency is very great. So extensive reading is necessary. Moreover, it may be the only way in which a student can develop his language proficiency.

Furthermore, as **extensive** reading is, or should be, reading for pleasure on topics that interest the students, it increases their motivation and gives them a more positive attitude towards the target language in course of their life.



Extensive Reading	Intensive Reading
Overall understanding	100% understanding
Read a lot	Limited reading
Easy texts	Difficult texts
Fluent reading	Word-for-word reading
Read for meaning	Translate into first language
No direct study of grammar	Focus on grammar use and rules
No Comprehension questions	Many comprehension questions
No direct teaching of strategies	Direct teaching of strategies
Ignore unknown words	Use dictionaries

A course of reading should include both intensive and extensive reading because we need both kinds of reading in course of our life.

After completing such a course in reading (intensive & extensive) a student should be able to:

- skim a passage to identify the topic, the central theme, and other general ideas and information to ensure that he reads only what is relevant.
- scan to locate specific details or items of information.
- grasp the meaning of words and phrases in context, and interpret idiomatic, figurative, and other non-literal uses of language.
- understanding the meaning and function of punctuation.
- understanding rhetorical organization of a text and make use of his understanding in interpretation of a complex message.
- recognize and discriminate between facts, beliefs, judgements, opinions, hypotheses, and expressions of bias, probability, uncertainty, tentativeness, etc.
- understanding the relation between sentences and clauses in a text by making use of the reference system, discourse markers, etc.
- understanding logical relationship between sentences and parts of a text, such as cause and effect, general and specific, pros and cons, generalization and supporting details, etc.
- make inferences and form generalizations based on a text and justify them with evidences from the text.



- make use of non-text information (e.g. diagrams, charts, maps, graphs) to supplement textual information, thereby increasing his understanding of the text.
- select information from text and use it for a particular purpose (e.g. presenting it in note form, presenting arguments for or against a proposition, taking part in role-plays, discussions, etc.)
- match his expectations based on his own knowledge, experience, and imagination with the writer's assumptions, etc. and recognize the similarities and differences between the two.
- locate the source of misunderstanding in a text and handle it.
- evaluate the ideas, arguments, etc. developed in a text, the author's point of view or tone, and style.
- differentiate fact from opinion or point of view used in a text.

Oral / Loud Reading and Silent Reading

In considering the reading process, we have to distinguish between two quite separate activities: *reading aloud* ('loud reading') and *reading for meaning* ('silent reading').

Reading aloud: Children who are learning to read often read aloud, in order to relate words or graphemes (what they see) to the sound pattern (pronunciation). In developing loud reading, a teacher should bear in mind that he should provide the model reading to his students and they should emulate him when they are asked to read aloud. They should also follow the punctuation marks and the pronunciation of individual words. Of course, students are asked to read aloud as a matter of routine in our classrooms. But when required, they should be able to do it correctly. The importance of silent reading does not reduce the importance of loud reading, especially in the initial stage of schooling. It is an important means to mastering the language code. It is an effective device for quick testing of reading comprehension and improving pronunciation. Since reading means reading with comprehension, it is necessary for the pupils to understand the passage before they read it aloud. Without understanding, reading would become, what Maria Montessori called it, 'barking at print'.



Reading aloud, however, appears to have been the norm (even for private, personal purposes) in scribal societies. The shift to silent reading in advanced societies may have been encouraged by several factors such as:

- (i) the advent of print,
- (ii) the spread of literacy,
- (iii) an awareness that reading aloud disturbs others within earshot,
- (iv) a belief that saying (or muttering) what is being read indicates a low level of skill, and
- (v) appreciation of a silence that makes the message more meaningful and personal.

Reading aloud in public is an ancient practice that lies at the roots of publishing (in the sense of 'making public'), and in many parts of the world it continues to be an important means of disseminating information and educating the young. It includes *dictation* that is read out to be written down by students and *lecturing* from a prepared text at a pace that allows note-taking.

Reading aloud well involves control of breath, voice and body, a capacity to look up from a text and back without losing one's place, and, depending on subject and occasion, an element of drama and display.

In many classrooms, the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation (i.e., ear training) and encourage 'expression speaking', i.e. speaking with feeling and emotion. For early readers, reading aloud is of course an important aid; beginners have to discover how reading is associated with the spoken words they have already learnt to use, and also is different from them. But the early reading stage does not last long – normally, two or three years at the most.

The purpose of reading aloud is not just to understand a text but to convey the information to someone else who has no access to it, such as reading out parts of a newspaper article to a friend, or reading out a notice to other people who cannot see it clearly, or reading to someone who is blind or a person who has lost his spectacles.

Obviously, *reading aloud* involves looking at a text, understanding it, and also saying it (with audible sound). Physically, it is a much more difficult activity than reading



silently because our attention is divided between reading and speaking. We often stumble and make mistakes when reading aloud in our own language, and reading aloud in another language is even more difficult. Moreover, it slows down the reading process and may even affect comprehension to a certain extent unless we read a text after several rehearsals.

Silent Reading or Reading for meaning: *Silent Reading or Reading for meaning*, on the other hand, is the activity we normally do when we read books, articles, newspapers, cartoons, advertisements, posters, etc. It involves looking at sentences in a text and understanding the message they convey.

Reading is thus an active process. When we read, we do not merely sit as passive receivers of the text. We also draw on from our own knowledge of the world and of the language to help us guess what the text will say next.

Silent reading generally refers to private reading which is so basic a skill that its nature is little discussed. It differs from other forms of scanning one's surroundings by being focused, sustained, relatively disciplined, and accompanied by thinking about the meaning of what one sees. The concept of this reading is often extended to other kinds of disciplined, reflective activity, such as 'reading' someone's face for a message, 'reading' a building plan for information, or asking "Do you read me?" (Have you understood me?) after sending radio message. One can also 'read' signals at a distance, braille by touch, and Morse code by listening. The eye movements that occur in conventional reading consist of jerks and stops. Each jerk entails a change in focus, and is technically known as a *saccade* (from French: the jerk on the reins of a rider controlling a horse); each stop is a *fixation*, a moment of stability in which signals are transmitted from retina to brain. On average, readers make three or four fixations a second, and each may register several letters or several words, depending on such factors as distance from text, size and kind of lettering and familiarity with language, orthography, and subject matter.

Readers use both visual and phonetic skills, combining a capacity to decipher writing and print letter by letter with an indirect awareness of the heard equivalents of what is graphically displayed. This cross-association of graphic and phonic symbols appears to be natural: readers may at any time



audibly or inaudibly say a syllable or word so as to help grasp its nature, function, and meaning.

Silent reading means reading silently, without moving the lips. Efficient reading consists of the ability to connect meaning directly with the graphic symbols. Mohanraj mentions five uses of silent reading:

- It makes the learner aware that reading is a personal activity.
- It promotes faster reading because eyes can see more words at a time than we can pronounce them (as it happens during reading aloud.)
- Promotes better understanding of the text because the focus is only on the content.
- It is less tiring than reading aloud.
- It is natural, and everyone around us reads silently.

According to Mohanraj, all the important study skills require quick, efficient and imaginative reading, and this is possible in silent reading than in reading aloud. The teacher should pay special attention to this reading.

There are five kinds of silent reading. Among them, the *survey reading*, *skimming* and *superficial reading* come under 'extensive reading' and the other two, *content study reading* and *linguistic* or *literary study* come under 'intensive reading'. Silent reading is both an end and a means in reading. It is a means to achieve:

- I. **Intellectual ability:** the students are able to get quickly at the facts or thoughts in the subject matter.
- II. **Literary:** The students get entertainment as well as enlightenment.
- III. **Linguistic:** It aims at the expansion of pupil's vocabulary as well as knowledge of grammar.

READING TECHNIQUES—SKIMMING AND SCANNING

Now we will discuss two techniques of reading which depend on our purpose of reading:

- (i) Skim, and (ii) Scan

Skim

By skimming we mean browsing over the surface of a piece of writing, or glancing rapidly through a text, to find out its general



content, central idea(s) or gist, understanding its organisation and comprehend the tone and intention of the writer. We do this, for example, when we want to find out whether a certain article is relevant to our own area of interest, or when we glance over a page of a newspaper to see if there is anything worth reading in detail, or when we leaf through a book to find out its subject matter.

Skimming is a good exercise for getting a global idea or summary of a text. It is an activity in which reader's eyes run over a text quickly in order to get a general idea of that text. This is what we do when we select a book to buy in a bookfair. We generally lift a book, look at the title page, contents, backcover, and perhaps the price of the book; then we glance through the preface and browse over some pages here and there to decide whether we want to buy it or not. This is exactly what is known as skimming.

In skimming, the reader only picks up the important points and discards irrelevant or excessive detailed information. While engaging in this process, the reader does not look for minute details but tries to conceive an overall impression of the text that can be summed up in short, may be in a word or a phrase or a sentence. Reading the headlines of a newspaper or going through the 'abstract' of a scholarly article or a table of contents of a book involves the process of skimming.

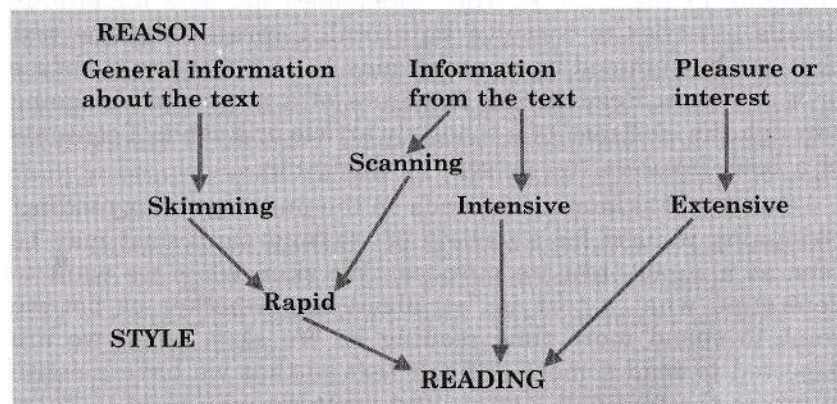
Our use of skimming depends on the purpose of our reading. Skimming is used for a variety of reasons (and so it may be seen as a super-ordinate purpose). We skim when we want to determine what a text is all about and whether or not we want to spend more time reading it. We skim when we are expected to read a more difficult text so that we have a sense of where the text will lead us and what we may need to know to understand it. We skim when we need to work through many texts and want to make decisions about which texts to focus more attention on. We also skim when we are under intense time pressure and need to reach some decision about the usefulness of information in a text.

Scan

By scanning, we mean darting over much of a text to search for a specific item or piece of information that we wish to discover. This skill therefore involves the ability to reject or pass over

irrelevant information. Scanning is therefore involved in our process of searching, especially for academic purposes.

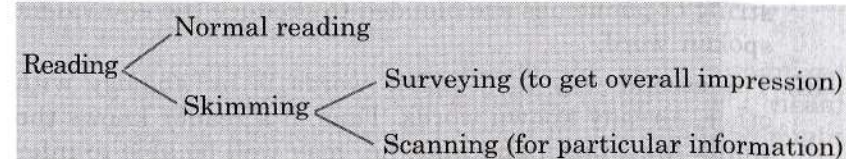
Scanning is looking quickly through the text searching for a specific fact. When we use a dictionary to find the meaning of a word or when we consult a thesaurus to find synonyms and antonyms of a certain word we resort to scanning. It is the kind of reading we do when, for example, we read through a biographical account to find out the date on which a certain event happened, or when we go through the table of contents in a book to see whether a certain aspect of a problem has been dealt with in the book, or when we glance through the telephone directory looking for a person's telephone number. When a quick answer to a specific question from a passage is required we generally scan and find out the answer. Sometimes index (subject index and author index) given at the end of books helps us in scanning. While searching for the time of departure of a particular train we need, we generally run our eyes over the timetable and locate it. This is also an example of scanning that we practice in course of our daily life.



Here is a note of caution. For the sake of clarity we have talked about skimming and scanning as two separate processes but in reality, depending on the nature of the task, they are often intermingled even though we remain unconscious about this. Skimming and scanning are important techniques of reading for academic purposes. When we want to locate some specific information, we engage in *search processes* that usually include both of them. If we have read a chapter in a book and want to check when and where (in which periodical) Tagore

wrote *Home and the World (Ghare Baire)*, we might first try to recall the context in which that discussion had occurred, then, skim through the chapter to find the most likely pages, and then scan those pages for suitable information. Both skimming and scanning are processes carried out at a very high speed (with high rates of words per minute [wpm]). The combination of scanning (identifying a specific graphic form) and skimming (building a simple quick understanding of the text) allows a reader to search for information.

So far I have discussed about skimming and scanning is a traditional notion. But in recent literature of reading, we find a change. Here I am referring to the types of reading as discussed by Michael J. Wallace (2013).



According to Wallace, reading can be divided into two categories: (i) Normal reading and (ii) Skimming. Again, skimming can be divided into two categories: (i) Surveying (to get over-all impression) and (ii) Scanning (for particular information). When we survey, for example, a book or a chapter, we want to get a general idea of what it is all about. When we scan a text, we look for specific information which we know, anticipate or suspect, is there. Both surveying and scanning are forms of skimming, by which we mean that a reader does not read every word of a text. It should be noted here that scanning is not a part of intensive reading (some of us have this wrong idea).

METHODOLOGY OF READING

The topic 'methodology of reading' may be discussed in two heads:

1. Methodology of Word Recognition (decoding)
2. Methodology of Comprehension/Reading Comprehension including Metacognition.



1. Methodology of Word Recognition (decoding)

There are different ways in which words might be deciphered, and some or all of these ways might be used by the beginners or by skilled readers.

- (i) The first way to *decode* words to sound by applying knowledge about how written symbols (*graphemes*) map onto spoken symbols (*phonemes*)—relies on the *alphabetic principle* of written language, say Bengali or English. Decoding requires that the reader first parse the written word into its constituent graphemes (which do not necessarily correspond to letters). This process is sometimes called *segmentation*. The phonemes that correspond to the graphemes then need to be allocated, and the resulting string of phonemes are blended to produce the equivalent spoken word.
- (ii) The second way to decipher words is by *analogy* with other, already known words. Thus, if a reader knows the words *cake*, *bake*, and *lake*, he may well be able to infer the pronunciation of an unknown word, such as *fake*, *take*, *shake* by analogy between the rhymes (sounds) of these words. In single-syllable English words, the pronunciation is much more regular than that of phonemes; so attention to rhyme units can help during reading development.
- (iii) A third way to decipher words is by *prediction from context*, perhaps with the help of some partial *word cues*, such as initial letter. Some authors have claimed that use of context is the main way of reading in adults, particularly in irregular orthographies, such as English. Prediction, however, cannot account for how most words are read, because words cannot be guessed always accurately even by skilled readers. The available evidence suggests that contextual cues are more likely to be used by readers to monitor the process of reading (i.e., to correct errors after words have been 'recognized') than to play a significant role in initial word decoding.
- (iv) A fourth way to read words (and one that is usually associated with skilled reading rather than developing reading) is to recognize the word 'by sight' or from memory. This is often referred to as *sight word reading*. When



words are very familiar, readers can recognize them at a glance, and the pronunciation and meaning of the word will immediately come to mind. However, this way of reading does not imply that the word is recognized as an unanalyzed 'visual pattern'.

Stage and Phase Models of the Development of Reading

Various models have attempted to give an account of the stages or phases that children go through as they learn to read. In general, such models propose that the child progresses from reading words as unanalyzed wholes to taking more analytic approaches in which he uses grapheme-to-phoneme mappings and orthographic knowledge. For instance, an early model (Frith, 1985) proposed three stages:

1. A *logographic* stage, in which the child recognizes familiar words as visual patterns, using salient visual features. Untaught words cannot be identified but might be guessed from context.
2. An *alphabetic* stage, in which the child learns and uses grapheme-phoneme mappings to decipher unknown words and to read non-words.
3. An *orthographic* stage, in which the child learns the conventions and higher order rules of the orthography and identifies words by making use of orthographic units larger than graphemes, without recouring to grapheme-phoneme conversion.

More recent models of reading development have suggested that it should be viewed as the progression through overlapping phases, rather than discrete stages. Ehri proposed a *phase theory* to describe the progress of reading development. He distinguished between four phases in learning to read words:

- (a) pre-alphabetic phase,
- (b) partial-alphabetic phase,
- (c) full-alphabetic phase and
- (d) consolidated-alphabetic phase.

(a) The *pre-alphabetic phase* characterizes the period when children have very little knowledge of the alphabetic system. Thus, they remember words by using salient visual cues, such as remembering the word *yellow* has 'two sticks in the middle'. This phase is similar to Frith's logographic stage.



(b) In the *partial-alphabetic phase*, as the name suggests, children have some partial knowledge of the alphabetic principle and so will be able to use some of the letters in words—typically first letters—to help themselves remember the identity of those words. Because only partial cues are being used, a child in this stage might think that any short word beginning with the letter 'd' says *dog* and will typically confuse similar words (e.g. *horse* and *house*).

(c) In the *full-alphabetic phase*, the reader will know the major grapheme-phoneme correspondence in the writing system and will also develop a sufficient level of *phonemic awareness* to segment words into phoneme units (phoneme segmentation). As a result of this skill, the reader will be able to read new words by decoding them and will also have the ability to approximate the spelling of words. An important aspect of this phase is the child's developing ability to read independently—i.e., to translate unfamiliar printed words to their spoken equivalents by phonological recoding (or 'decoding'), rather than having to be told what they are. This important development has been referred to as a *self-teaching mechanism*. The idea behind this mechanism is that each successful identification of a new word provides the reader with the opportunity to acquire the word-specific orthographic information that is important in visual word recognition.

(d) In the *consolidated-alphabetic phase*, the child will have acquired knowledge of larger units and of context-dependent spelling patterns. In this phase, readers are able to use a variety of different strategies to decipher unfamiliar words. They will, for instance, be able to read words by analogy with other words, will be aware of familiar spelling patterns and their pronunciation (e.g., *wr-*, *thr-*, *-ight*, *-ing*), will know about exception words, such as *depot*, *island*, *pint*, and *colonel*, and will be aware (at least implicitly) of contextual constraints on pronunciation of graphemes, such as the pronunciation of 'c' depending on the vowel that follows (consider how you would pronounce the non-words like *cibe*, *cort*, *cyne*, and *culf*). In this phase, much of the knowledge is likely to come from experience of reading, rather than through explicit teaching.

In general, these levels are closely linked to age and years of schooling, but in principle they need not be so. Children and



even adults may fail to progress to the right phase if they do not develop a good working knowledge of the alphabetic and orthographic principles of their language.

One important thing to note about stage and phase models of reading is that the 'sight word' reading of the skilled reader is a far more sophisticated mechanism than the logographic reading of the beginning reader. The beginning reader will be able to recognize a restricted set of words by using limited cues, whereas the skilled sight word reader will have a wealth of information about a written word at many levels (graphemes, rhymes, analogies, etc.). Yet the decoding phase cannot be skipped. Some have suggested that decoding to sound is simply a distraction for the child and can even be harmful in the development of fluent word recognition. However, from a self-teaching perspective, decoding of words is crucial in order (for the child) to form well-specified and complete orthographic representations of words.

The way in which children approach initial reading varies, and may depend crucially on how they are taught and what language they are learning to read. For instance, children who begin reading with some phonological skills may not go through a logographic stage at all, and children who are learning to read in German (which is more orthographically transparent than English) may proceed more rapidly to the full-alphabetic phase.

2. Methodology of Comprehension /Reading Comprehension including Metacognition

It seems reasonable to assume that once children have learned to decode with a reasonable level of efficiency, comprehension will follow automatically, since children learning to read are using the spoken language to communicate their ideas. In general, reading and listening comprehension are highly correlated, particularly when decoding differences are minimum (i.e., correlation tends to increase with age, as children become more proficient decoders).

Written language typically makes use of syntactic constructions and vocabularies that may not be well-known to children from their spoken interactions. The 'language of books' is specific language register with which children may not be



familiar—particularly if they have less exposure to the language when they begin to read. In addition, written language demands the integration of information of different types of discourses in a manner that spoken language usually does not.

Young children may be so engrossed in the word-decoding aspect of reading that they do not have sufficient spare cognitive capacity to carry out comprehension processes. As children get older and their decoding skill improves, they are likely to have more resources to devote to comprehension. Indeed, it has been shown that in the later primary school years, comprehension ability replaces decoding ability as the most important predictor of overall reading level.

Understanding a text can be viewed as a constructive process that results in a coherent and integrated representation of the things described in the text. In order to construct such a representation, the reader needs to be engaged in a number of processes; thus, many different skills may contribute to text comprehension. The reader needs to derive and integrate the meanings of the individual words, sentences, and paragraphs. He also needs to identify the key ideas in the text. To understand a story, for instance, the main characters and their motives, and the plot of the story, need to be determined. Inferences must be made to fill in information that is left implicit in the text. In addition, skilled readers reflect on what they are reading in the text and see whether the text makes sense. By monitoring their comprehension in this way, readers can identify when they need to make an inference to fill in missing details and can take corrective action, such as re-reading, when comprehension fails. In efficient text comprehension, many of the processes will be going on simultaneously.

Next we will consider three skills specifically associated with the construction of the meaning-based representation of a text—namely,

- (a) inference making,
- (b) metacognition and comprehension monitoring, and
- (c) understanding text structure.

It is here one factor that we will consider in relation to the development of these three reading-related skills is *working-memory capacity*. Working memory refers to the system used to store and manipulate information simultaneously. Children's



working-memory capacity increases with age. The cognitive resources available to readers will affect how well they can engage in the processes needed to set up and develop their representation of text's meaning. Thus, working-memory capacity may be a limiting factor in the development of good text comprehension.

(a) Inference Making

The construction of a meaning-based representation of a text involves going beyond the literal content of the text through the generation of inference to make links and to fill in the missing details. Inference has many roles in comprehension: it can be used to establish referential coherence, causal antecedents to events, and characters' emotional reactions. In general, inferences can be distinguished into two main types: *coherence* and *elaborative*. Coherence inferences are necessary as they require that information explicitly provided in the text be integrated and that information from general knowledge be incorporated with information in the text itself for establishing local cohesion between adjacent clauses or establishing global coherence between different events, actions in a text. Elaborative inferences embellish information in the text, but they are not strictly necessary to understanding. In effective and efficient comprehension, the emerging mental model of the text will be used to indicate where such gaps in comprehension occur and act as a signal to the reader that an inference is needed.

Developmental studies show that young children are able to make the same inference as older ones. They are also sensitive to the necessity of the inference; for example, they do not make unlimited numbers of elaborative inferences. However, younger children do not make as many relevant inferences as older children.

Several factors may limit younger children's ability to generate inferences. Many inferences rely on knowledge of the world, and there is a good deal of evidence that prior knowledge influences both comprehension and memory in children.

- (i) One possibility is that young children fail to generate inferences because they lack the relevant knowledge. Thus, young children's difficulties with inference making cannot be attributed solely to general knowledge deficits.



- (ii) Strategic reading behaviour may also play a role in the generation of inferences. Young children may lack the knowledge about how and when to make inferences. Indeed, children can be trained to use cues and to generate questions that promote the production of crucial inferences, which in turn, facilitates their comprehension of the text.
- (iii) A third possibility is that young children's inference-making skills are limited by their developing working-memory capacity. The available processing capacity of this memory system will limit the ability to integrate information within the text and to incorporate general knowledge to fill up the gaps of information for proper comprehension.

An important issue is whether inferences are generated as the text is read or later, perhaps when prompted by a question. Most researches on children's inference making have assessed their ability by use of memory measures, such as question-answering or recognition tests. As a result, we know little about which inferences children make on-line – *as they are reading* – and how age factor and reading ability might affect this process. The available data suggest that by the age of 9 years, children slow down while reading key sentences that require an inference to be made. It is an indication that they are engaging in inferential processing during reading.

(b) Metacognition

Metacognition in reading concerns knowledge about the purpose, goals, and processes of reading and the regulation of reading. It is a complex mental process of thinking about thinking.

Knowledge about reading. A popular way to assess children's knowledge about reading is simply to ask them questions, sometimes by describing hypothetical situations and asking them what they would do. When interviewed, young children often demonstrate a lack of awareness that they need to make sense of the text and are more likely to report that reading is about 'getting the words right.' It is not surprising that beginner readers place a greater emphasis on word-reading accuracy than comprehension, because to them, the former is likely to be the more salient and/or emphasized feature of reading. Thus, young children's reading ability might be limited in part because their view of the purpose of reading is different from that of older children.



Comprehension monitoring. Comprehension monitoring concerns the understanding of connected passages (both prose and poetry). It is usually assessed by the reader's ability to detect inconsistencies in text, such as made-up words, scrambled sentences, contradictory sentences, or statements that conflict with external information (world knowledge). These error-detection tasks require readers to evaluate their understanding of the text. Although there is a general tendency of re-comprehension monitoring to improve with age, the extent to which it is demonstrated can be affected by aspects of the task.

Younger children are often unable to detect that crucial information is missing from text and do not seem to realize when a text does not make sense. However, they are able to detect some errors. For example, young children are better at detecting lexical inconsistencies in made-up words than internal inconsistencies, where two pieces of information in the text contradict each other. The instructions given to the children can also influence performance. Children are more likely to report problems when they are forewarned of the task. They are also more likely to report a lack of understanding when the criteria are made explicit. Thus the standards used by children to detect errors improves with age.

Age-related improvements on error-detection task may also be related to children's developing *information-processing capabilities*. Their monitoring difficulties are more pronounced when the anomalous pieces of information are nonadjacent and have to be integrated across several lines of text; this indicates that working-memory capacity may play a role. In addition, effective comprehension monitoring cannot take place unless the reader has acquired the ability to integrate propositions to construct a coherent representation of a text. Thus, successful comprehension monitoring may be linked to good inference-making skills and vice versa.

Self-regulation of reading. A skilled reader needs knowledge about reading strategies. He knows how to read for different goals and purposes. In contrast to young children, older readers appreciate that someone might read a story differently if their goal is to remember that story literally (word for word) than if the goal is to remember its meaning. Readers also need to possess the appropriate strategic knowledge so that they can take



corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected. Knowledge about effective repair strategies improves with age. Thus, young children's reading ability might be limited by their restricted knowledge about the goals and purposes of reading and about specific reading strategies.

(c) Understanding Text Structure

A central element in comprehension is understanding how the ideas in a text are related to produce a text as a whole. Explicit awareness about text structure and the expectations produced by certain common features of text may be useful aids for readers, helping them to invoke relevant background information and schemas to facilitate the integration of the different ideas in a text. This integration will depend on many skills and abilities, such as inference making, but an important one is the ability to appreciate which are the main ideas in a text (what it is all about) and to understand how it is structured. The majority of research with developing readers has focused on understanding of narrative structure, because this is the form of text that young readers are most familiar with.

The ability to identify the main ideas in a text has been described as the "essence of reading comprehension." Young readers have difficulties in recognizing the central theme or main ideas, and even 12- and 13- years-old readers sometimes find it hard to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant detail in a text. As children develop, not only do they get better at selection the main point in story; they also change their minds about what sort of information is most important. In addition, they expect certain types of information to occur in stories, and they add important details when retelling stories that were missing key elements, so that the retold story conforms to the story as they expected it to be. Similarly, if a story is told with the events not in order, children often restore it to a more normal order when they retell it.

One way to access children's understanding of narrative structure is to get them to tell stories themselves. Children's narratives become more coherent with age, and there are age differences in the type of structural framework used to place events within a narrative. Pre-schoolers tend to tell character or temporally bound narratives, but by 8–10 years of age, children produce more sophisticated event sequences that are causally related and integrated.



Knowledge about the information provided by structural elements of stories, such as titles and the beginnings and endings of stories, develops throughout the middle childhood. Story comprehension could be impaired by a child's not knowing how to use this information. Titles and introductory information act as context setters, guiding the reader to slot events into structures and schema representations. Additionally, knowledge about the purpose of endings may be important, because endings often summarize the main points of the story and relate the events together.

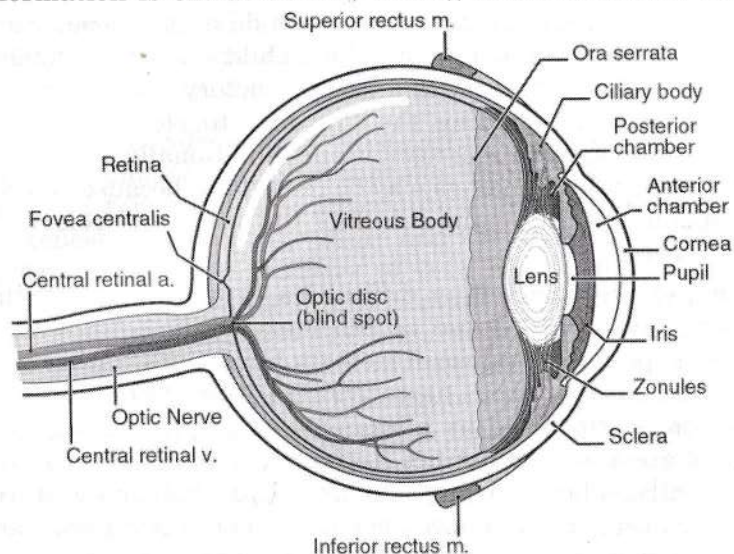
Some of the storytelling difficulties experienced by young children may be attributed to problems with planning their narratives, perhaps because of memory limitations, rather than a lack of knowledge about narrative structure. When narrative production is supported by a sequence of pictures, many pre-schoolers are able to construct stories containing episodes that are causally related. It is also probable that some of the developmental gains in knowledge about story conventions and structural coherence are facilitated by literacy experience. Children with several years' experience of reading and listening to stories simply have had more exposure to story conventions and well-formed stories than pre-schoolers. It is likely that as children acquire knowledge and use goal plans to interpret everyday events, they become more adept at constructing coherent, integrated representations of such events (whether they are actual or fictional).

Methodology of Reading / Mechanics of Reading

Previously we know very little about the physiological process of reading. But now we have enough knowledge regarding how reading occurs.

In order to understand how reading occurs, it is important to know how eye movements contribute to the reading process. People have the impression that while reading their eyes move continuously through text, only pausing on difficult parts occasionally, but this is not the case. Instead, the eyes alternate between a series of pauses (called fixations) and eye movements (called saccades) while reading. On average, fixations last roughly 200 to 250 ms (micro seconds), although there is variability. The average saccade length when reading English is roughly six to nine character spaces and lasts approximately

20 to 50ms. Vision is mostly suppressed during saccades; so information is extracted only during fixations during reading.



During normal reading, people move forward in text 85% to 90% of the time, and remaining 10% to 15% of the time is devoted to regressions, that is, moving the eyes back in the text. Till date, the factors that lead to regression are not very well known. However, it is clear that regressions can occur either by comprehension difficulties or error in where the eyes landed (called oculomotor error). One special type of regression is called a 'return sweep'. This is a right to left eye movement (when reading English) that occurs when the eyes move from the end of one line of text to the beginning of the next line of text.

As mentioned above, there is variability in the average length of fixations (called fixation duration), saccade size, and regression rates. As the difficulty of the reading material increases, saccade size tends to decrease, fixation durations increase, and more regressions are made. The skill of the reader also affects eye movement characteristics, with less skilled readers showing longer fixation durations, more regressions, and shorter saccades.

The perceptual Span in Reading and the Use of Parafoveal Information

When we read, not all letters and words on a line of text can be seen with the same clarity. A line of text can be divided into three

regions based on acuity limitations. The *foveal region* comprises 1° to the left and right of fixation and has the best acuity; here letters can be identified easily. The *parafoveal region* comprises the 4° to the left and right of the foveal region. In this region, acuity is not as good as that of foveal region and it is more difficult to identify letters than when they are in the foveal region. Finally, *peripheral region* is everything outside of the foveal and parafoveal regions. Acuity in this region is very poor (acuity differences are due to the anatomical make-up of the retina). Thus, one of the main purposes of eye movements in reading is to bring information (i.e., the words being read) inside the foveal region, where it can be most easily identified.

Reading by Ear or by Eye?

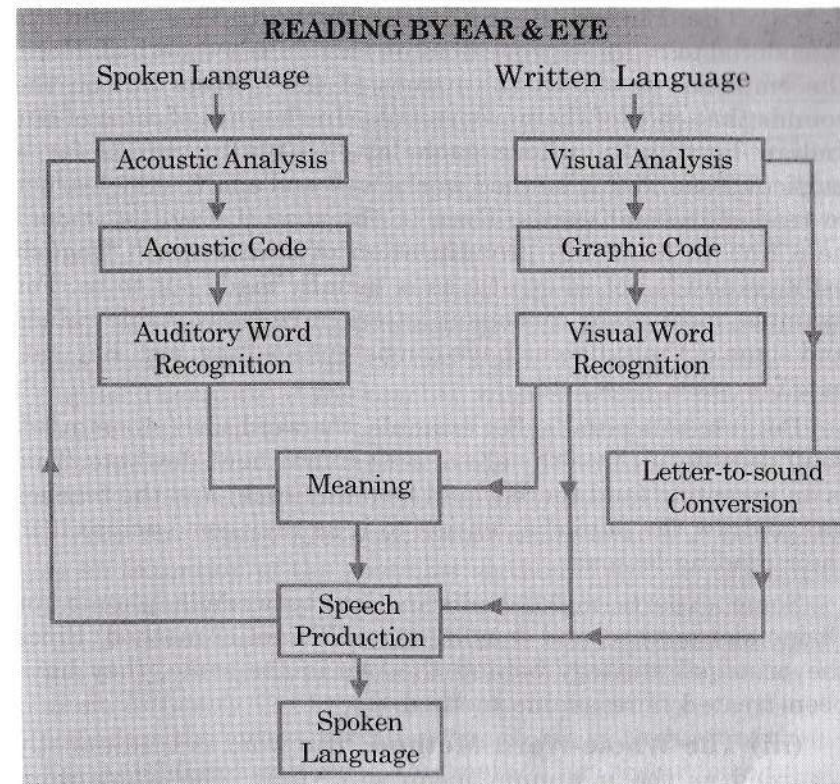
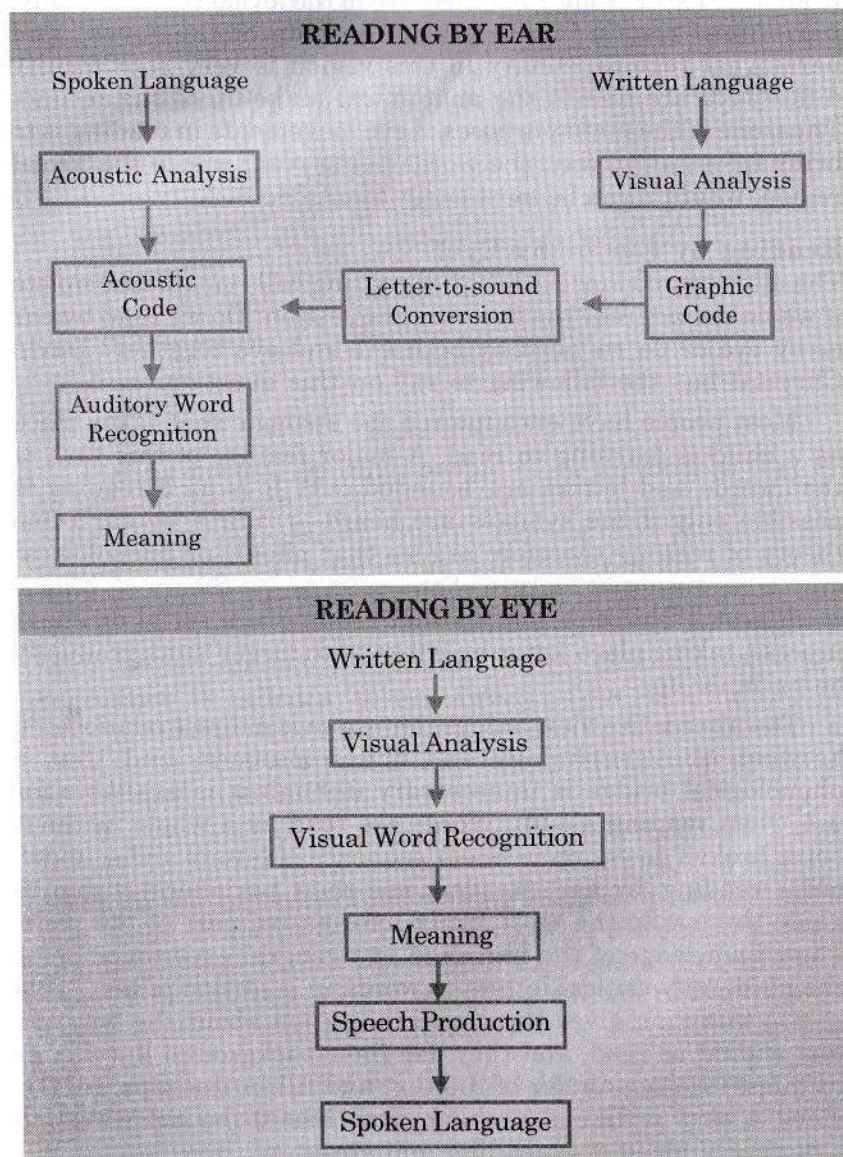
The discussion on methodology of reading will remain incomplete if we do not address the theoretical question: Do we read by ear or by eye or do we read by both ear and eye together? David Chrystal has the following to say on this question:

Most people have encountered the struggle that takes place as a child is learning to read. A major feature of this task is that words and letters are 'sounded out'. It is as if reading is possible only if the symbols are heard—reading 'by ear'. One theory of reading therefore argues that phonic or phonological step is an essential feature of the process – a theory of '*phonic meditation*'. The view implies that reading is a serial or linear process, taking place letter-by-letter, with larger units gradually being built up.

The alternative view argues that there is a direct relationship between the graphology and the semantics, and that a phonological bridge is unnecessary (though it is available for use when reading aloud). Words are read as a whole, without being broken down into a linear sequence of letters and sounded out – reading 'by eye'. Readers use their peripheral vision to guide the eye to the most likely informative part of the page. Their knowledge of the language and general experience helps them identify critical letters or words in a section of text. This initial sampling gives them an expectation about the way the text should be read, and they use their background knowledge to 'guess' the remainder of the text and fill in the gaps. In this view, a text is like a problem that has to be solved using hypotheses about its meaning and structure.

The arguments for and against these views are complex and multifaceted, deriving from the results of a vast number of experiments on aspects of reading behaviour.

Most scholars make a compromise between the two approaches and believe that we read by both ear and eye.



Methodology of Teaching Reading for Word Perception

Methods of Teaching Reading.

The various methods of teaching reading may be broadly divided into two groups: the 'atomistic' and the 'holistic'. Or more precisely, the methods may be said to lie on different points on a scale with these two as the two extreme ends. Here are some of the methods, beginning at the 'atomistic' end of the scale:

(i) The Alphabet Method: This is an age-old method. In this method, the emphasis is on learning the *names* of the letters of the alphabet in their sequential order. A, B, C, D,...etc. Pupils are then made to memorise words as consisting of these 'named' letters, E.g., *em ei tee tee ee ar* → matter, etc.

Nowadays this method is considered out-dated because memorising the names of the letter in a particular sequence has very little relevance to the actual process of reading (except for consulting the dictionary and for oral testing of spelling).



(ii) **The Phonic or Syllabic Method:** This method is considered to be an improvement on the alphabet method. Here, the emphasis is not on the names of the letters but on the sounds that each of them represents. In the case of most of our Indian languages, where each letter usually stands for a particular sound this method works well and enables the learner to read individual words. Even in the case of English, it does help him to learn the pronunciation of a new word. English orthography is not so erratic as is usually made out to be. For example, most of the consonant letters have fairly stable values and some of the syllables have consistent spelling, e.g., hat, cat, bat; few, new, dew, etc.

But it has its pitfalls. For example, the word *sew* (pronounced/sou/) does not fit into the above series: few, new, dew) etc. This is an exception (and there would be many such) and the teacher has to draw the pupils' attention to it as they come across it in their reading lessons.

Some experts make a distinction between a phonic (or Phonemic) method and a syllabic (or Phonetic) method. Since the principal strategy behind the two is the same, they have been treated here as one method.

(iii) **The Whole-Word Method:** The word is traditionally regarded as the minimum meaningful unit. The whole-word method therefore seeks to take the word as an indivisible unit. In this method the learner is taught to read each word as word-picture, without attention to individual letter. This helps him avoid incorrect spelling-pronunciation as the pronunciation of a word is learnt as one single item, and not as a combination of the sounds of the letters. The popular Look-and-Say method of teaching reading at the beginning stages is based on this method. In the Look-and-Say method, the pupils look at the words flashed before them and say the words as quickly as possible.

(iv) **The Sentence Method:** The sentence method has much in common with the Whole-word method except that here the minimum teaching unit is the sentence and not the word. This is based on the psycholinguistic principle of taking the sentence as the minimum unit of thought.

The sentence method relies heavily on the principle of situational teaching. We do not generally realise how much we depend upon situations or contexts in understanding language.



While listening, we do not listen for individual words. We anticipate an entire sentence from the situation; and even if we do not hear a word or two we do not have much difficulty in understanding the message. Similarly, in reading also we proceed by guessing whole sentences from the first few words. Therefore, if the context is clear and the sentence structures and the words are familiar, teaching reading by the sentence method is psychologically sound.

To develop the skill of reading, the sentence method must fulfil two important conditions: (1) the context must be clear, and (2) the structures and the words must be familiar to the pupils. Therefore, if the teacher wishes to adopt the Look-and-Say method to present sentences in flash-cards, he should create appropriate situations to present them. The structures and words should also be familiar from the previous oral lessons.

(v) **The Story Method:** This method may also be regarded as an extension of the sentence method. Here the teacher tells the class a little story to create a verbal context and then presents (on flash-cards or on the blackboard) sentences connected with the story. Since the context is known, the pupils do not have much difficulty in identifying the sentences. The story method considers the entire discourse (the story) as the unit of thought. Since children love stories, this method has the added advantage of creating greater motivation in the pupils.

(vi) **An Eclectic Method:** From the above discussion, it will be clear that no single method of teaching reading is suitable for all occasions and for all learners. Depending upon his circumstances and group of pupils, the teacher has to use a judicious combination of all the above methods. Further, all the methods lie on a scale which extends from single letters to the entire discourses. We all take recourse to both atomistic and holistic strategies in reading. The sentence method is useful for developing longer eye-span which facilitates rapid reading. On the other hand, the phonic method will help the pupils to deal with new words. Since our ultimate goal is to prepare the pupils to read on their own, this method is of crucial importance.

Teaching reading in a non-alphabetic language-Chinese
So far whatever we have discussed about teaching reading is true for any alphabetic language like English, German, French, Bengali, Hindi, and so on, but not for the logographic languages

like Chinese or Japanese. So it will not be irrelevant if we have some idea about teaching reading in Chinese, the nature of which language is completely different from English, Bengali or Hindi.

There is a specific approach to teaching reading in non-alphabetic languages such as Chinese. The graphical unit in Chinese writing system—the character (hanzi) is a sign corresponding to a syllable which has a meaning of a subject or a notion (ideograph). It is helpful to distinguish between characters and words in describing Chinese. A distinctive feature of its morphology is compounding. A word may be composed of 1-2 or 3 characters, and its meaning is mostly derived from the meaning of the characters of which it is composed. More than 75 per cent of the words in Chinese are compound words formed by combining two or three morphemes, or which about 65 per cent are two-morpheme disyllabic compounds. On average, a single Chinese morpheme appears in about seventeen compound words. Most Chinese compound words are semantically transparent.

There are four different tones in the pronunciation of Chinese, and syllables with the same tone can be written in several different characters with very different meaning. This means that each character must be learned separately. The estimated number of Chinese characters is 85,000. A Chinese reader generally needs to know about 2,500 characters in order to read a newspaper of average difficulty (National Education Commission and National Language Construction Committee, 1993; Ministry of Education, PRC, 2001) and acquire relevant graphical, phonological and semantic processing skills.

In compound Chinese characters, which account for more than 80 per cent of all Chinese characters, there is a phonetic component, which sometimes gives a clue to the sound of the character, and a semantic reading, which sometimes gives a clue to the character's meaning. However, it must be stressed that the phonetic component does not always give the sound of the character directly and Chinese children are rarely explicitly taught to use these components to learn to read because they are quite irregular. In short, orthography-phonology correspondence is neither straightforward nor consistent.

Exercise

1. Objective / Very short type questions (for 2 marks)

- (a) What is literal reading?
- (b) What is interpretative reading?
- (c) What is critical reading?
- (d) What is creative reading?
- (e) What is intensive reading?
- (f) What is extensive reading?
- (g) What is silent reading?
- (h) What is loud reading?
- (i) What is skimming?
- (j) What is scanning?
- (k) What do you mean by 'reading for meaning'?
- (l) What do you mean by 'reading for pleasure'?
- (m) What do you mean by 'text-attack skill'?
- (n) What do you mean by 'reading for fluency'?
- (o) What do you mean by 'reading for accuracy'?
- (p) What do you mean by 'reading for information'?
- (q) What are the three stages of intensive reading?
- (r) Why is extensive reading important for our students?
- (s) State two purposes of reading aloud.
- (t) State two methods of teaching word perception.
- (u) What is metacognition?
- (v) Mention some components of reading comprehension.
- (w) What is phonic/alphabetic/sentence method of teaching reading to beginners?
- (x) What is saccade? What is fixation in the context of reading?
- (y) What is sight vocabulary?

2. Short type questions (for 5 marks)

- (a) Explain the concept of critical reading/ interpretative reading/ creative reading.
- (b) Why do you think that critical/creative reading is a higher-order skill?
- (c) Differentiate between interpretative and critical reading/ critical and creative reading.
- (d) How is extensive reading different from intensive reading?
- (e) How is loud reading different from silent reading?
- (f) How is skimming different from scanning?
- (g) What are the purposes of loud reading /silent reading?
- (h) What are the purposes of intensive reading /extensive reading?



- (i) Discuss the methodology of word reading.
- (j) Discuss the methodology of reading comprehension.
- ✓ (k) What do you mean by comprehension monitoring?
- (l) What do you mean by metacognition?
- ✓ (m) Why is inference making important in reading comprehension?
- ✓ (n) Why is understanding text structure important in reading comprehension?
- ✓ (o) Explain methodology of reading from physiological aspect.
- ✓ (p) Discuss four methods of teaching reading.
- ✓ (q) What is 'language-experience' approach?
- ✓ (r) Explain the 'sentence method' of teaching reading?
- (s) What are the stages of reading?