

CHAPTER III

READING PROCESS

Primitive man calls reading 'magic', and he is right.

"Reading provides experience through which the individual may expand his horizons; identify, extend and intensify his interests, and gain deeper understanding of himself, of other human beings, and of the world."¹

3.1 Reading defined :

There is no consensus about the definition of the reading in the research literature. It is, therefore, difficult to define it simply, and much confusion arises from consequent misunderstandings.

A broad definition that has been greatly used is that reading is the bringing to, and the getting of, meaning from the printed page. This implies that readers bring their backgrounds, their experiences, as well as their emotions into play.

Nuttall remarks,

if we are in conversation with someone, we can stop him and ask for explanations and examples whenever we need them. In the same way, when we have difficulties in reading we need to interrogate the text. Since the writer is seldom available for consultation, the text is our only reference; and reading has been described as our active interrogation of a text.²

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1. R., Strang. The Improvement of Reading. New York: McGraw Hill 1967. Reprinted in (eds) A., Meluik and J., Meritt. 1972. P.8
 2. Christine, Nuttall: Teaching Reading Skills in a foreign Language. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982. P. 9.

This succinct definition of reading is reflected in Candlin's view that "reading, whether in mother tongue or target language, sets three centres in motion-- a centre involving the reader, a centre involving the text and a centre on the interaction of the reader and the text."¹ This is to say, the meaning is not merely lying in the text waiting to be passively observed by the reader. As it is mentioned earlier, the reader breathes meaning into the text so as to tailor it into comprehensive chunks to suit his purposes. The reader is thus actively involved in getting the meaning out. Reading, it can, then, safely be described, as an interactive process.

The term 'reading' is used as a total integrative process including (i) the affective (ii) the perceptual and iii) the cognitive domains. Hence 'reading' is defined as a multifaceted and layered process in which a reader tries to decode, by actively interacting with the text, to establish a meaningful communication with the writer.

3.2 The Nature of Reading Process :

Reading is a decoding process. It is a complex process involving many physical, intellectual; and often emotional reactions. There are three important components in the reading skill; these are the recognition of the graphic marks, the correlation of these with formal linguistic elements, and the

1. C.N., Candlin: Preface to J.C. Anderson and A.W. Uguhart (eds.) Reading in a foreign Language. London: Longman, 1984.

correlation of these with meaning. Reading becomes meaningful only if we get at the meaning behind the graphic symbols through our ability to recognise the semantic content of the graphic symbols and the sounds they represent. According to W.S.Gray, "Reading is conceived today as a complex activity of four dimensions: the perception of words, a clear grasp of meaning, thoughtful reaction, and integration. All four steps are essential in varying combinations if adults are to secure through reading an adequate understanding of the conflicting issues that current life presents, to choose wisely between alternatives, to find valid solutions to the challenging personal and social problems faced, and to develop richer and more stable personalities."¹ Arthur I. Gates too stresses in similar terms, reading for use.

It (reading) can and should include all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving. The reading programme should, therefore, make careful provision for contribution as fully as possible to the cultivation of a whole array of techniques involved in understanding, thinking, reflecting, imaging, judging, evaluating, and reasoning.

Before the World War I reading at school meant reading aloud. If a pupil could read aloud with due attention to the pronunciation and articulation of the words and to the modulation

1. W.S. Gray: The Teaching of Reading and Writing. UNESCO, 1961.

of this voice, he passed the test as a good reader, It was assumed that he understood what he read. That he might be mechanically pronouncing the words without knowing what the passage was about was scarcely ever appreciated. But by 'reading' is meant, in modern education, 'silent reading.' According to Farnham, the reader should get at the thought straight from the printed page. Edward Fry holds a similar view. According to him, the reader should go as directly as possible to the author's idea. He should not be a proof reader and worry about spelling, he should not be a radio-announcer and worry about pronunciation, he should be a mind reader and try to determine quickly and efficiently what the author had in mind.¹

There are two kinds of reading skill: the skill of reading aloud and the skill of reading silently.

3.2.1 Reading Aloud :

Reading aloud is primarily an oral matter; it is closer to pronunciation than to comprehension. It is good that the students develop the skill of reading aloud. However, only a few people are required to read aloud as a matter of daily routine; newscasters, teachers, actors, etc., are some of them who should cultivate the skill; the huge majority do not have to read aloud except on occasions.

Reading Aloud - Its Aims and Purpose :

- 1) Reading aloud serves a useful purpose. It helps to remove defects in speaking English due to regional influences.

1. E. Fry, Teaching Faster Reading - A Manual, Cambridge University Press, 1963, P. 41.

- ii) English language requires a special training, particularly in its phonology-pronunciation, articulation, intonation, stress, tone and speed etc. This training is essential for effective speech.
- iii) The first step in the teaching of reading is oral work. The teacher should give practice in classroom conversation before asking his pupils to read the book. The subject of conversation should be related to everyday life of the pupils.
- iv) Reading aloud is a good test of a learner's ability in that language-pronunciation, stress, rhythm and comprehension.
- v) Reading aloud is an art; like other arts it is expressive, dramatic and recreative.
- vi) Reading aloud develops a sense of appreciation, particularly appreciation of prose and poetry.
- vii) Teacher's model reading is a very delicate point in the teaching of reading aloud. It should be in an ideal way. The pupils readily imitate him.
- viii) The ultimate aim of reading aloud is to prepare pupils to do effective silent reading, which is more economical and useful.

Mr. Emil W. Manzel in his book 'Suggestions of the Teaching of Reading in India', expressed his objections against oral reading or reading aloud. He believes that we cannot obtain the best result through reading aloud. He also believes that the aim of reading is to derive pleasure and profit by reading aloud. These aims are not achieved. Besides, people show indifference to reading aloud however clear it is. In actual life also, loud reading is defeated by silent reading.

One, who becomes habituated of reading aloud cannot be an extensive reader. Neither can ~~he~~ become a fast reader. Though the objections are there, it is not wise to neglect it wholly. It trains the pupil to express himself in the spoken English.

3.2.2 Silent Reading :

The greatest amount of reading that is done in the world is silent. The skill of silent reading, however, varies from person to person and depends on several factors including each person's requirement.

Broadly speaking, there are five uses of silent reading

These are :

- 1) To make a survey of materials to be studied and to look through indexes, chapter headings and outlines,
- 2) to skim,
- 3) to familiarise oneself with the material, and its thought content,
- 4) to study the material in depth, and
- 5) to study the language in which the material is written from a literary or linguistic point of view.

Silent Reading - Its Aims and Purposes :

- 1) Silent reading facilitates to acquire complete mastery of a language. The pupils read with ease, fluency and understanding.
- ii) Silent reading helps to consolidate different skills, acquired in that language, e.g., vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, meaning, structures, punctuation etc. In silent reading the pupil recognises the familiar parts of

the language and responds to them more naturally.

- iii) The ultimate aim of silent reading is to derive pleasure and profit.
- iv) Silent reading is always rapid. The reader's energy and attention remains concentrated on meaning and assimilation of information.
- v) The earlier we train our pupils to read silently the better it is. As soon as the pupils gain some background of the basic structures we should start giving them practice in silent reading.

PROCESS :

If we wish to inculcate the skill of silent reading among our pupils, we have to do the following things:

- 1) The teacher should explain to the beginners what silent reading really is? He should tell them frankly the purpose and advantages of silent reading.
- 2) He should observe the caes. There should be no lip movement. They should read with eyes and not with lips. They should read by not pointing to each word with their fingers, pen or pencil. It limits their eye-span.
- 3) The time should be judiciously ascertained according to the nature and length of the material and the general standard of the class.
- 4) The material, for silent reading should be carefully selected. It must be short and easy in the beginning. It may grow long and difficult in succeeding years. But the point of interest must not be lost sight of. Their interest must be preserved.

- 5) The teacher should attend the weaker ones properly. Give them a limited amount of reading material in a limited time.
- 6) It is better if the English teacher seeks the co-operation of the teachers teaching their mother-tongue.
- 7) When the time given for reading is over, questions must be put to test their understanding. These questions ought to be simple, pointed and direct and ought to demand relevant answers from the pupils.
- 8) At the senior stage, where the questions may be difficult and a bit more lengthy, all vagueness about them must be avoided.
- 9) When you demand a precise, central idea, or substance of a paragraph, develop a verbal situation in the class and allow your pupils to talk about the paragraph. They should be asked to note the important ideas and arrange them serially.
- 10) If the paragraphs are many, or a single paragraph is quite long and you feel that it can not be taken up as a single unit, break it in to convenient units.
- 11) Gradually, develop among them taste for wide reading. Help them in the selection of such books,

We have observed that there are five uses of silent reading. The first three of them, viz. survey reading, skimming, and superficial reading come under extensive reading and the last two, viz content study reading and linguistic or literary study come under intensive reading.

3.2.3 Extensive Reading :

Extensive reading presupposes speed and ease which come only from copious reading. One of the drawbacks of institutions in English in our educational institutions is that no encouragement in the form of facilities is given to the students to read copiously. As a remedial step, students should be introduced to a graded list of simple or simplified novels and biographies, and questions regarding the names of the main characters, the nature of the story etc. which do not require critical or analytical answers may be set for them.

3.2.4 Intensive Reading :

It has for its objective the full understanding of the text with its argument, 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. Intensive reading in a sense is study.

3.2.5 Reading :Comprehension :

No two persons agree on the definition of 'reading comprehension.' "Comprehension is a construct i.e. it cannot be directly observed or measured"¹ Each one conveniently defines it according to what is most suitable to him.

It is, for our purpose, defined as a complex interactive and intellectual process involving a number of

1. Dorothy, Rubin Teaching Reading and Study Skills in Content Areas. New York: CBS College Publishing, 1983

abilities. The two major abilities involved are "word Meanings" and "verbal reasoning"¹ Without these two, there would be no reading comprehension and subsequently, without any reading-comprehension there would be no reading.

Perhaps, it is not irrelevant to quote Thorndike here. He observed that "reading (comprehension) is a very elaborate procedure, involving a weighing of each of many elements in a sentence, their organization in the proper relations one to another and the co-operation of many forces to determine final response"² Today investigators are still exploring reading comprehension in attempts to understand it better and through the years many have expounded upon Thorndike's theory.

"Psycholinguistics and cognitive Psychology have influenced the researches done on the process of understanding. The studies, however, are neither conclusive nor comprehensive. It is not easy to say that if a reader were to follow certain prescribed rules, s/he would most assuredly have better comprehension. What is evident from these researches is the growing attention given to text structure and reader"³

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1. Dorothy, Rubin. Teaching Reading and Study Skills in Content Areas. New York: CBS College Publishing. 1983.
 2. E.L., Thorndike. Reading and Reasoning: "A Study of Mistakes in Paragraph Reading." Journal of Educational Psychology. 8.6, Pp 323-332.
 3. Barbara, Taylor. "Children's Memory for Expository Text After Reading", Reading Research Quarterly. 1980. XII:3, Pp 399-411.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF READING IN ENGLISH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA.

Ours is an age of communication. Though advance in communication is made possible today by electronics, we cannot neglect the importance of the printed page. Higher education or interchange of serious professional knowledge is not possible without it. There are millions untouched by electronic in developing countries like India. And so the printed page is the only means of communication. Therefore reading is a prime necessity to us. To neglect reading is to neglect education. A literate population is a necessity if the process of democracy is to function properly. As Jennings pointed out:

"If democratic living is valuable to us as individuals and as members of groups, then we have to make certain that every generation will grow beyond our grasp and understanding. Techniques are not enough and the expansion of scientific knowledge is never sufficient. We need to develop the kind of living understanding of the relations of our daily experiences to the total experience of the human race. We need to be able to read widely and wisely in the library of "all our yesterdays" to keep the record of our achievement straight. We need to be able to read accurately the words and the features, the hopes and plans of ourselves and our fellowmen."¹

1. Jennings 1965, P. 191, Quoted from How to Increase Reading Ability. Albert J. Harns and Edward R. Sipay. David McKay Company, Inc. New York, P.1.

As technology advances, more occupations tend to require higher levels of education or specialize training in which improved reading ability plays a vital role. Automation has eliminated the jobs of many unskilled or semiskilled workers, many of whom did not possess the minimum reading skills required for success.

As Compared to movies, radio, and television, reading has certain unique advantages. Instead of having to choose from a limited variety, or from the currently available films, the reader can select from the finest writings of the present or past. He can read in a place and at a time chosen for his own pleasure. He can read what, when, where, and how he pleases. This flexibility insures the continuing value of reading both for education and for entertainment.

It is not necessary and wise to go through each and every experiment and failures on our own. We can get the benefits of the achievements done by the advanced countries. It can be done only through reading.

English is a world language. According to an American survey, 50,000 scientific technical journals are published each year in English. There are also 1,200,000 significant articles. 60,000 new scientific books and 1,000,000 research reports annually. Everything important written in any language is translated in English. So we may say English as a 'pipeline' for the stream of western thought. Today our need for this pipeline is greater and even more urgent.

Broadly speaking there are two types of reading materials. One is the scientific, the collection of the facts and information. It gives us power to alter our environment to our advantage. The other consists in imaginative realizations of actions, emotions and values and represents the wisdom and insight of men of unusual sensibility. It enriches our personality through vicarious experience. To us, not literary but practical English, is an inescapable necessity for many years to come.

Michael West, writing of the need for bilingualism for the majority of the nations of the earth, said much the same thing:

Man needs two kinds of language; he needs an expression of the 'dear and intimate things', a language of the home, the fire-side, the mother land; a language^{of} emotion and unexpressed associations. He needs also a language of fact, knowledge, exact ornament, scientific truth- a language in which words are world-current and steadfast in their meanings. The small languages of the world fulfill the first purpose, but as time goes on they prove more and more insufficient for the second, insufficient for the complexity, the variety, the international 'team-work' of modern knowledge.¹

1. M. West, Bilingualism, Occasional Reports No 13, Government of India. 1926, 9. v.)

English has a continuing role to play in the country is a belief shared by agencies, official and unofficial. The official Language Commission in 1956, stressed the need for the teaching of English principally as a language of comprehension-- so as to develop in the students learning it a faculty for comprehending writings in the English language, more especially those relating to the subject-matter of their specialized fields of study.¹

The Kunzru Committee appointed by the UGC (1957) stressed the same thing by saying that 'for the majority the primary aim of learning English may be ability to read and comprehend.'²

A working group appointed by the UGC in 1961, in its report stresses the need for developing reading efficiency in our students. Both the English Review committee appointed by the UGC in 1965 and the study group appointed by the Ministry of Education in 1967, came to the same conclusion that the pupil must learn the language well enough to be able to read books in English in his subjects of study.

The Education Commission of 1964-66, in its report published in 1967, makes repeated references to English as a 'library language.'³

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1. Official Language Commission, Report, Government of India, 1956, P. 75.
 2. Kunzru Committee, Report, UGC, 1957, Pp 8-9.
 3. Education Commission, Report, Government of India, 1967, P. 15.