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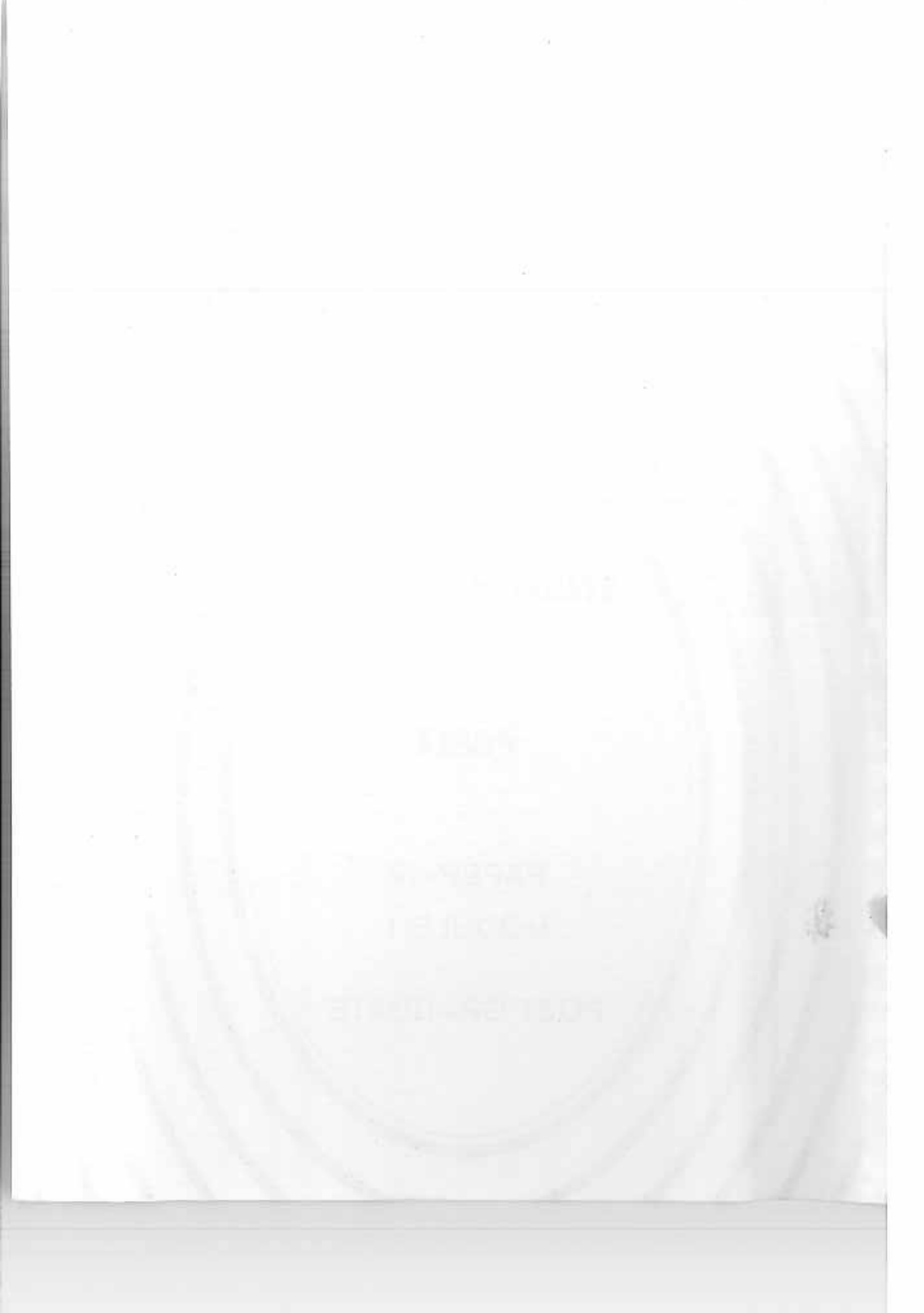
**STUDY MATERIAL**

**PGELT**

**PAPER-IV**

**MODULE 1**

**POST GRADUATE**



## PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great part of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these to admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

**Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar**  
Vice-Chancellor

Second Reprint : March, 2017

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Printed in accordance with the regulations and financial assistance of the  
Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.



# **Post Graduate : English Language Teaching**

## **[PG : ELT]**

### **Paper - IV**

### **Module - 1**

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**Module - 1**

**Theoretical Bases, Approaches & Technique of  
Skills Development**

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## **Unit 1 □ Listening Skills**

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## 1.0 Objective

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Listening is a critical element in the competent language performance of all language learners.

All the four language skills, viz. *listening, reading, speaking* and *writing* are equally important for learning a language. In a country like India where we came across a multi-lingual set-up, the major language for proper communication in English, despite its status of a second language.

According to Wilga Rivers (1981) listening is used nearly twice as much as speaking and four to five times as much as reading and writing. Recent studies indicate that listening is crucial for communication not only at the workplace but also in the English classroom.

So it is our important task to develop all the four skills with equal stress. Distening has a great role in learning the English language. This unit is designed.

- (i) to help our learners to understand the importance of listening and develop listening skills,
- (ii) to familiarize our learners with ways of the proper method to develop this skill,
- (iii) to enable the teacher to use materials to expedite the development of the skill,
- (iv) to suggest activities, that could be used for teaching learners of English.

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Among all the four language skills listening skill has an important role to learn a language. Still we often find this skill to be ignored in our classroom teaching. It is rather widely overlooked. It is neglected not because we cannot identify the importance of listening in classroom teaching, but because we take it for granted that the learners should achieve this skill automatically without any special care of training. We, the teachers, believe that we are providing sufficient exposures to our students; the materials we give them for practice will suffice for developing their listening skill. But the matter is not that simple. When a teacher delivers; lectures in the classroom in English, s/he is supposed to demand that the students are listening to him or her properly. S/he always likes it for granted that they should understand what s/he explains what instructions s/he gives, they should carry it out; Whenever s/he praises or rebukes, they should understand it. Is it really so easy? Actually it is an important duty of a teacher to prepare them for understanding him/her; it should be his/her prior task to train the students specially for comprehending, the message of him/her in the classroom as well as of others, outside the classroom. Only then s/he can expect the peers to respond to the demands of listening. Sometimes teachers make a wrong, specially in vernacular medium school, using regional language. Many teachers often confess that they do not teach English

through English, because they believe that use of regional language will help the students a lot to understand his/her language properly. Sometimes they are forced to (1) switch over to the mother tongue because of student's demands.

But instead of fulfilling the demands of learners and explaining everything in regional language or mother tongue, teachers must be conscious of making the students aware of the utility, need and importance of listening skills in English. They should set up an ideal learning environment in the class-room. It should be made in such a way that students themselves will make a serious attempt at learning English language skills in general and listening skills in particular. They will not demand the use of regional language further. This consciousness-raising cannot proceed widely if it is not associated with various tasks or activities. These tasks must be interesting. They must have relevance to their daily lives, for that reason. But first of all the teacher should identify the learners needs and should make them well-equipped with specific strategies and proper motivation for their different listening needs. This is the only way to build up their confidence in this skill.

In this unit you will come across the various features of listening. At the same time you will be introduced to the materials, which are ideal for developing listening skills. But before discussing the topic elaborately you must consider some basic questions, with which the discussion may proceed. They are—

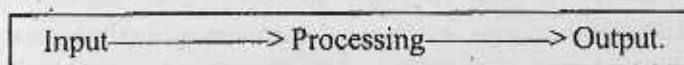
- (i) What is listening ?
- (ii) Why are listening skills important for us ?
- (iii) What are the different types of listening ?
- (iv) What are the strategies involved in listening skills ?
- (v) What are the barriers to listening ? How can it be overcome ?

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## 1.1 What is Listening ?

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Listening is an active process. It can be depicted as follows :



Input here refers to the utterances uttered by the speaker where as the output is the listeners' response. The listener processes the input before coming out with his/her output. Now the question is what happens during the processing. That we will discuss now.

Listening is a demanding process, not only because of the complexity of the process itself, but also due to factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message and any visual support that accompanies the message and any visual support that accompanies the message (Brown + Yule, 1983).



The processing takes place in two ways :

## 2.1 Bottom up Processing

In the process the listener is solely dependent on the incoming input for the meaning of the message. After receiving the input it is analysed upto the initial level. First of all sound signals are organized into words ; the words into phrases, then to clauses and at last into a whole sentence. In this bottom up process two factors help the listeners a lot for grasping the meaning of the message—his/her *lexical* and *grammatical* competence. Let us take an utterance from a conversation and observe the involved process through which we proceed before understanding the meaning.

**Input :** *Prem could not reach school in time.*

At first the input is organised into words :

Prem/could/not/reach/school/in/time

Then it is organized into sense groups :

Prem/could not reach/school/in time.

Our grammatical knowledge helped us in this process. With the help of our mental dictionary we reached the propositional meaning of the utterance. It just highlighted a certain inconvenience of Prem : Upto this point we have been engaged engaged in bottom up processing.

Bottom up processing refers to deriving the meaning of the message based on the incoming language data, from sounds to words to grammatical relationships, to meaning. Stress, rhythm and intonation also play a vital role in bottom-up processing. It could be activated as the learner is signated to verify comprehension by the teacher asking a question using the declarative form with rising intonation (You see that door over there ?). Practice in recoquiring statements and questions that differ only in intonation help the learner develop bottom-up processing skills.

## 2.2 Top down processing

Here the responsible factor is the listener's background knowledge to make out the meaning of the message, not the input only. Listeners are supposed to guess the meaning on the basis of their worldly knowledge and to approach the input to confirm the guesses and fill out the specific details. An utterance can have many meanings depending on the context in which it is used and usually we get the clue to the intended meaning when we see the utterance preceeding or following it .

Top down processing refers to utilizing schemata (background knowledge and global understanding) to derive meaning from and interpret the message. For e.g.

**There was a big traffic jam :** Prem could not reach school in time .

With the help of **underlined** utterance we can came to a point that it is offering the explanation for Prem's late-coming. But we can draw this conclusion only when we have a worldly knowledge



that over cannot reach a place in time if there is a traffic jam on the roads. It is our duty to train our learners in both kind of processing. Learners need to be aware that both of these processes affect their listening comprehension and they need to be given opportunities to practise using them. Sometimes tones of speaker also become a factor for understanding the meaning. We can determine the attitude of the speaker.

Listeners can also know the attitude of the speaker to proceeding and subsequent propositions with the help of proposition markers such as '*Of Course*', '*Really*' and establish continuity between one utterance and another with the help of discourse markers such as '*Actually*', '*Hell*', '*Anyway*' and '*Now*'. We can also used cues such as '*talking about that*', '*Reminds you of*', '*By the way*' to identify directions in topic development. (Richard, 1985).

So the following process in involved is comprehension.

1. The identification of the type of interactional act or speech event in which the listener to involved. (eg. conversation, lecture, discussion debate).
2. Recall of scripts relevant to the particular situations.
3. Inferring the goals of the speaker through reference to the situation, the script and the sequential position of the utterance.
4. The identification of the propositional meaning of the utterance.
5. Assigning an illocutionary meaning to the message.
6. Retainers this information and acting upon it.
7. Deleting the form in which it was originally received. [Richard, 1985 : 193]

#### **Review Question-I**

A senior teacher of Physics is discussing a particular topic of physics, i.e. Light, on a radio programme, designed for the students of Higher Secondary level. Another experimened teacher and a trainee teacher of same subject are listening to the radio teacher. What processing strategies might they employ in their listening ?

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### **1.3 Why are Listening Skills Important For Us ?**

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At first we, as teachers, must be aware of the need and utility of teaching or developing listening skills of our learners. In a multilingual set up like India we have our national as well as many regional languages. For this reason we require a language which can serve the purpose of communications well in many situations and on that perspective English has a unanimous acceptibility. There we have listen to the English language and understand the message. For example we can say that we should have proper listening ability while listening to radio/TV news, announcements at the bus-terminus/railway stations and at the airport, instructions in an English medium schools etc. There are other real-life situation we face in banks/central Govt. officers, while talking to an unknown

person on the road or strangers on the telephone, during interviews (public/private sector), while watching movies/TV programmes etc. There English is the only language for communication.

But listening is often said to be a passive skill while speaking is described as an active one. This is not wholly true for listening is also an active skill as it is mainly concerned with decoding a message and understanding it. Moreover the listener has to show that he has or has not understood the message from his response. On the other hand it is necessary to teach/develop learners' listening skill just to improve their speaking skills. Listening to others' spoken English also helps learners in improving their own spoken English. There are some situation where we need to listen someone/ something in English. As a reason, we can say that we have sheer purpose(s) for listening to somebody. For example we can say that when we listen to a political speech, it could be listening for the overall gist of what is being said or when one worker meets another in a coalmine and says, "It's a hard work", their purpose is not an communication of information but on acknowledging each others' presence and creating a non-threatening, harmonious interaction between them so it is clear that there are two purposes—

(i) Transactional and (ii) Interactional. However they are not served in mutually exclusive situations. In any one situation, one can be subjected to both interactional and transactional listening. For example a manager might use the transactional mode while discussing a project with his/her colleague(s) and later shift to casual talk.

### **How can listening help the learner acquire English ?**

Current reach and theory point to the benefit of providing a silent or pre-speaking period for the beginners (Dunkel, 1991). Delaying production gives learners the opportunity to store information in their memories. It also spares them the trauma of task overload and speaking before they are ready. The silent period may be long or short. It could comprise several class periods of listening activities that poster vocabulary and build comprehension such as Total Physical Response (TPR) approach. In this approach the teacher gives a series of commands while demonstrating each one. Learners show their comprehension by acting out the commands as repeated by the teacher. Learners the emselves begin to give commands as they feel comfortable speakers. The demands of this task helps to enhance rather than inhibit language acquisition. (Van Duzer, 1997).

### **Review Question No.-II**

A. State the purpose/purposes for which you might be listening in the following contexts.

Context	Purpose
1. Taking down dictation	
2. Listening to a joke	
3. Listening to a Cricket Commentary	
4. Listening to announcements at the railway station.	

B. Look at the following situations and comment on the purposes :

1. One student to another in the corridor of the Principal's office in a college waiting for their turn to meet the Principal.  
It's a lovely day, isn't it?"
2. Colleagues greeting each other at their office. "Hello! how are you?"
3. One worker to another worker in a factory workshop. "It's a hard work."

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## 1.4 What are the Different Types of Listening ?

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Adrian Doff (1988 : 199) talks about two types of listening :-

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (a) Casual listening :   | Often we listen to a person or something purposelessly. At such times we, generally, do not listen to them carefully. Unless we hear something interesting, we lack our full concentration. This type of listening prevalent in social context when we interact with others. |
| (b) Focussed listening : | This is 'intensive listening' for information or for transacting business. The listener, here, is attentive and pays full concentration on what the speaker is saying.   |

### Review Question No-II

What is the difference between listening and hearing ?

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## 1.5 Listening Strategies

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We have already looked at the situations and purposes of listening. Now we should concentrate on the strategies of listening. We have already discussed two types of processing—Top-down and Bottom up in 3.1. In the former we have related the *social* and *situational* context where we let the speakers make inferences and deductions. In the latter we comprehend message by understanding phonological features, discourse makers, grammatical cohesion, lexical cohesion etc. But we, as teachers, need to involve both the processing while training our students in developing listening skills. This should be our main strategy. Not only that we should even design curriculum or the tasks in such a way so that it can fulfil our mission.

**5.1. What happens when we listen ?** It is imperative for teachers to understand that listening is an active process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual cues

(Richards, 1983 ; Rubin, 1995). Most of what is known about listening stems from research native language development ;

The basic processes of listening have already been discussed in the previous section. It is important for us to know that these processes do not work simultaneously all the time. They may, however, work in rapid succession, or backward and forward as needed. The listener is not conscious of performing these steps.

S/he usually

1. Determines a reason for listening
2. Deposits an image of what s/he listens to in the short-term memory
3. Attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, radio ad) and the function of the message (to persuade, inform, request etc.)
4. Predicts information expected to be included,
5. Recalls background information (schemata) to help interpret the message,
6. Assigns a meaning to the message,
7. Checks that the message has been understood,
8. Determines the information to be of help in long-term memory.
9. Deletes the original form of the message that had been received into short-term memory (Brown, 1994), Dunkel, 1999).

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## 1.6 Barriers of Listening

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There are some reasons which create barrier on the way of proper listening. They are :-

- (a) The listener may not listen to something properly.
- (b) Sometimes s/he may listen to it properly but may not comprehend the message due to the usage of the difficult words or due to his/her ignorance of the sentence pattern used.
- (c) Sometimes s/he may have heard the speaker but may not have listened to him/her because of the pre-occupation of his/her mind with something else.
- (d) Very often, inspite of listening to the speaker or understanding the message, s/he cannot interpret the message successfully due to lack of his/her previous knowledge. This point should be illustrated more elaborately. Sometimes the listeners can sense what they hear, while interpreting the spoken message with the help of their worldly or previous knowledge. But sometimes lack of background knowledge lead them to serious problems in comprehension. This have been well exemplified with real-life experience by Anderson and Lynch (1988). One of them found it very



difficult to make out a polite comment of an elderly female stranger in a street in Glasgow. She said, "That's the University. It's going to rain tomorrow". Though he understood every word but could not comprehend the message. When the author requested the lady to repeat, the lady repeated her comment about the University and the likelihood of rain next day. Still he could not guess the relationship between the University and rain. In order to find out the relationship between the two, the author had to go beyond what she said by using his worldly knowledge. He says that he needed to make use of the following :

**General Factual Knowledge :**

- (a) Sound is more audible downwind than upwind.
- (2) Wind direction may affect weather conditions.

**Local Factual Knowledge :**

- (3) The University of Glasgow has a clock tower with a bell.

**Socio-Cultural Knowledge :**

- (4) Strangers in Britain frequently refer to the weather to 'oil the wheels of social life.'
- (5) A polite comment from a stranger usually requires a response.

**Knowledge of Context :**

- (6) The conversation took place about half a mile from the University of Glasgow.
- (7) The clock-tower-bell was just striking the hour.

(Anderson and Lynch, 1988 : 12)

Normally, the university bell is not audible. But because of the downwind it was audible on that day. Downwind also suggests that it is going to rain soon. He actually needed that knowledge to understand what she said.

The above example shows the role of various factors in the interpretation of a message.

For another example look at the following extract of a conversation :-

A : Do you have a 286 ?

B : No, I've got a 486.

A : Is it Sx or Dx ?

B : Dx.

A : Good.....you don't have to wait long when you save your files.

B : I can show the PC to you.

A : Well. Does it have a single drive or a double drive ?

B : A double drive. It has windows and a nice mouse too!

A : Interesting! I'll come and play with the mouse.

Those who have an access to the computer world, know that A and B are talking about a computer machine. But the people who are not quite acquainted with the computer configurations will find it difficult to interpret the conversation, though the extract doesn't have any difficult words; rather some of the words like, 'save', 'mouse', 'drive', 'windows' have been used with specific meaning. And this unfamiliar use of familiar words is the cause of non-comprehension here.

#### **Review Question No.-IV**

Say what Manish and Raj are talking about in the short conversational extract given below :

Manish : Have you used SLR ?

Raj : Yes, I have.

Manish : What is the synchronizing shutter speed point?

Raj : It is 250.

Manish : Has it been taken in the morning ?

Raj : Yes, at 11 O'clock. It was very sunny.

Manish : What about the aperture ?

Raj : It is 11.

Manish : I think you've used zoom, haven't you ?

Raj : Yes, zoom in the object.

Manish : That's why the entire row of the palm-trees along with the fountain have come with the entire Victoria Memorial Hall.

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## **1.7 Teaching Methods for Developing Listening Skills**

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To develop the learners' listening skill the teacher should stress on the teaching-methods. In section 3.3. we have already come across two types listening—casual listening and focussed listening. The teachers should be careful in giving their learners enough practice in both of them.

Sometimes we notice ignorance about the importance of listening to come in the way of teaching learning. A successful teacher always finds it necessary to establish the importance of listening. In this way the learners have the right frame of mind to learn listening skills. A teacher must make the learners interested in listening activities. S/he can do that

(a) by arousing their curiosity

- (b) by appealing to their imagination
- (c) by creating information gaps in their minds.

Apart from the ignorance there are other problems too. In India our students are hampered in their ability to listen for meaning by certain weaknesses. In general they are :

- (i) inadequate range of words and phrases that are understood ;
- (ii) inability to maintain attention ;
- (iii) inability to understand pronunciation other than the personal or regional pronunciation ;
- (iv) inability to understand fast speech ;
- (v) inability to understand against background noise through acoustic/electrical interference.

The main remedy for the first weakness lies in the student enriching his vocabulary through reading and by looking up unfamiliar words in dictionaries with phonetic transcriptions such as "*The Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English*" (Latest publication in 2000 ; edited by Sally Wehmeier and Phonetics editor is Mickael Ashby).

The second weakness is general. Many efficient listeners for short stretches lose their efficiency if they have to go on listening for an unbroken stretch of more than twenty minutes. It has been found from experience that dictation is an admirable exercise for sharpening attentions. Listening to broadcasts or recordings of full-length plays, and to films, is almost certainly of great value. The dramatic situation and the variety of dialogue combine to maintain interests, and hence attention, even over long stretches.

Remedy for third weakness is to be sought in learning the correct pronunciation of each word. This is possible with the help of pronouncing dictionary like Daniel Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary (EPD)* & by listening to recordings, broadcasts and dialogues in films.

The teacher can deal with the fourth weakness by adjusting his speech and clarity to the capacity of the class and gradually speeding up. When the context means vivid the meaning, it becomes easy for the students to follow even fast speech. This fact and the interest of the action that sharpens attentions in plays and films, for instance, enable people to follow fast speech without difficulty.

Practically it is very important for everyone in this electronic age to listen with understanding against background noise. So the fifth weakness has to be dealt with seriously ; tape-recorder and specially prepared recordings are indispensable for this, unless the whole thing is left to chance experience. A tape-recorder is even otherwise a valuable aid in much of the remedial work connected with the teaching of the four language skills.

There are many exercises which the teacher himself can devise for doing remedial work. One such exercise for developing all-round efficiency in listening skills is the answering of multiple-

choice types of questions on texts that have been heard. It can be reread two or three times if it is necessary. One can start by setting single questions on single spoken sentences and work up through pieces of steadily increasing length.

Now go through the listening text, 'How a Polish Doctor Created An International Language' given in the Appendix and say how you will make your learners want to listen to the text. In other words how will you prepare them for the listening activity?

**Discussion :** You can begin by asking them questions regarding a language/mother tongue/ history of the formation of their mother tongue (for example, if their mother tongue is Bengali, you can ask, "Do you know which language is the origin of Bengali?") they are interested in; what is the importance of English in a multilingual country like India etc. Then they may be asked hypothetical questions like what they would do if they are left before a group of people who don't know their mother tongue and vice versa; how they would communicate with that group of people; which language they should use as a common language. This can be followed by a discussion as to what is the proper thing to do a person caught in such a situation. You can round off the discussion by asking them a question, "can you imagine, a person dreamed of a universal tongue?" The learners curiosity, by now would have been aroused and they would just jump to know who this person was. Which country did he belong to? What did he think of inventing a universal tongue for? At this point you could tell the learners that you are reading the passage aloud/playing cassette and they should find out the answers to the questions they have raised. Till this stage the activity is called the prelistening activity.

In order to expedite their further listening, the learners can be given a set of questions before starting reading out the passage and these questions should be global in nature. The questions are quite helpful for the learners in getting an overview of the passage. After listening to the passage, they will answer the global questions. Then they will be provided with another set of questions meant for detailed understanding and you can make them listen to the text again. Even after answering the second set of questions if they want, you can read the passage for the third time. But make sure that they answer all your questions. However, you must have a consideration that the learners may not have sufficient time for making detailed notes while listening. In that case it will be wise to provide them with some kind of framework so that all they have to do is to choose the appropriate answer when multiple choice questions are given or say whether the given statements are true or false. These activities are called *while-listening activities* as these are done by the learners while listening you can ask them to read the passage and correct their answers themselves. Afterwards each of them can be asked to write a letter to his/her friend advising him/her to read the story of Ludwik Zamenhof and his dream. Or you can ask them to write down their views on Zamenhof. These activities are known as *post-listening activities*.

The advantage of these types of activities, during the lesson, is that the learner can have practice in the other language skills in addition to listening. First we made them speak, then listen to the passage, read it and ultimately write a letter. In real-life situation any of the four skills cannot be studied in isolation. Let's take an example of a cricket match between India and Pakistan. Before the match starts we discuss or speak about the possibilities of the result of the match, then we listen



to the commentary during the match and after it finishes, we read it in the newspapers and magazines and sometimes we write letters to the editor giving our views on the match. There we would like to discuss about two effective methods for teaching listening : They are—

**6.1. Story-based Method :** A teacher can at ease come out with his/her own listening activities if s/he finds the text books inadequate for teaching listening skills. For example s/he can tell his/her students interesting stories, real or imaginary and pause frequently while narrating the story and s/he activates them to guess what is going to happen next. For e.g.

A few months ago, I was asleep at home as usual. At about three O'clock in the morning (what happened?).....I was suddenly awakened by a noise.....(what noise).....of rushing water....(what was it?). It came from the bathroom. So I got up and went to investigate (what was it?). I found to my dismay that the cold water pipe had burst and water was pouring all over the floor.....(so what did I do?) So I got a bucket and put it underneath.....(what should I have done?). Then I realised what I should have done. I went out into the hall and turned off the main tap.

[Doff, 1988 : 205]

See another example :

Once in the evening I was relaxing in my bed-room. Suddenly my younger brother rushed to my room and he was just trembling.....(what was the cause of his trembling?).....He informed me something that scared me.....(what might he inform ? why did it scare me?) .....He informed me that someone was shouting in one of our rooms at the back portion which was looked outside.....(who might be that person? How could he enter into?).....sometimes he was making peculiar sounds.....(what type of sound?).....Then I opened the door.....(what did I see)...I found the sound to come out of the almirah.....(how could it be possible?).....I opened the door.....(what did I see?).....I found my small transistor radio inside and its switch was on.

Actually when we listen to an interesting story, we listen very carefully. We are always eager to know what will happen next. From that point of view, these questions are quite relevant and natural. But the teacher must notice whether each and every student is careful and is giving answer. This technique enables students to predict, a subskill of listening.

**6.2. Task-based method :** It has come into vogue in the last decade. In this method learners have to listen to the speaker(s) and are supposed to carry out the tasks given by the speaker(s). For example, after listening the text, they can fill in a table/label a diagram/list the main points. Successful performance shows the full comprehension of learners. Learners get motivated to do these tasks because they resemble natural language use.

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## 1.8 Materials for the Development of Listening Skills

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**Listening Skills :** Teaching materials, like methods, have a great role for the development of four skills of English language. Teachers must be conscious about proper material designing to

develop the listening skill for the learners, specially for those who learn English as a second language. Here in this section our focus is on the materials which could be used for teaching skills. So far as materials are concerned teacher must concentrate on the text book and supplementary materials, first of all.

### **8. 1. Text-book and Supplementary materials :**

Our first question which we should be asking ourselves is about the weight given to the listening component in the test book. Does it give the learners enough practice in listening? Or do we have to supplement it with additional practice material? Then comes the question, should it be authentic material or graded material?

It is true that we should expose our learners to authentic material, if we want to prepare them for real life listening. However we can grade the tasks based on the material to suit our learners' level of competence.

Grading is for the purpose of raising their motivation and they will be able to do the tasks with confidence. It is possible to have two or three tasks of different levels of difficulty on a single text. Authentic materials can be used as long as the tasks/activities are designed at a level appropriate for the students. For example, you can have two levels of activities based on a single text.

- (i) Teachers may ask the learners to listen to a real conversation and to note how many participants are taking part in the conversation and also the topic of conversation.
- (ii) If the teacher wants to make it difficult, s/he can ask them to guess where the conversation took place, what the attitudes of the speakers were angry, friendly, happy, sad etc. who said what; etc.

Brown and Yule suggested the following four factors which could determine the difficulty level of the task.

- (a) Speaker : number of speakers, speed of speech, accent.
- (b) Listener : eavesdropper/participant, required level of response, individual interest in the topic.
- (c) Content : grammar, vocabulary, information structure, assumed background knowledge.
- (d) Support : Physical objects, visual aids (including video) and printed texts.

[Anderson & Lynch, 1988 : 94]

### **1.8.2. Criteria for the Design of Classroom Materials :**

From the above discussion, it is certain that there are some criteria for designing materials for the use in our classroom. Let's take an attempt to list these criteria.

- (1) First of all we should clearly know the situation where the learners listen to English and for what purposes.

- (2) Then we should be familiar with the process involved in listening. Only then we can prepare tasks relevant to our learners' needs and help them in developing the processing skills.
- (3) We should decide whether the listening component included in the text book is sufficient for giving our learners the needed practice or whether we should supplement it with some more practice material.
- (4) We should also decide whether the practice material should be graded or not. If yes, should the task be graded or the text material?
- (5) The tasks should help the learners get practice in mastering listening skills. They should not aim at testing their listening skills.
- (6) The materials should help the learners to face the real world confidently and successfully.

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## 1.9. Exercises for Teaching Listening Skills :

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A list of exercises for teaching listening skills, may not be exhaustive but quite helpful or designing exercises, are given here. Exercises where the student is asked to :

- (i) listen to an incomplete story and guess the remaining part ; then listen to the actual story and see how much of it accords with his/her guess.
- (ii) listen to the lecture of an expert on a topic and then read about it in a book and check how much of the latter matches with the experts' lecture.
- (iii) listen to one side of a telephone conversation and guess what the other person's responses could be ; then listen to the actual conversation and compare both.
- (iv) go through a list of jumbled key points to be covered in a talk and then listen to the talk and number the key points in sequence while listening to the talk.
- (v) listen to a conversation and say at what point the purpose of the conversation was interactional and at what point it was transactional.
- (vi) look at some pictures & listen to some descriptions : identify the pictures from their descriptions and arrange them in the order in which they are described.
- (vii) look at the diagram of an object (e.g. a flower, a small machine) given to him/her ; listen to an oral description of the object and label the part of the object.
- (viii) listen to an advertisement for a job on the radio and note the eligibility requirements.
- (ix) draw a diagram with the help of an aural description.
- (x) assemble an item with the help of oral instructions.

(xi) listen to a piece of information and identify the setting of the conversation.

[Adapted from Richards, 1988]

We hope that the above list will help you a lot to design your classroom materials for teaching listening. Most of our English text books, throughout our country are quite indifferent about listening and about including tasks based on this skill. We, therefore, have emphasized in this section, on this topic to help you develop your own materials.

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## 1.10. Some examples of listening activities :

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### Listening Text-1

C = Caller

R = Receiver

- R: Good afternoon, Quest consultancy
- C: Hello, can I speak to Mr. Rakesh Malhotra ?
- R: May I know, who's on the line ?
- C: Mr. Subir sen, Marketing Manager of G.D. Pharmaceutical Ltd., Kolkata. Is Mr. Malhotra there ?
- R: I'm afraid, he's not available at present. Would you like to leave a message ?
- C: Who am I speaking to ?
- R: I'm his personal secretary, Leeza Gomes.
- C: O.K. tell him I'll call him later. When will he return ?
- R: He should be back within an hour.
- C: Thanks.
- R: Welcome.

### Listening Task-1

Listen to the text-1 and answer the following questions :

- Can you tell me what type of conversation it is ?
- Who are the people taking part in the conversation ?
- What does the man in the conversation do ?
- What is Mr. Rakesh Malhotra ?
- What can you say about Leeza Gomes ?
- Can you guess whether Mr. Sen would meet Mr. Malhotra ?



### Listening Text-2

1. The Shatabdi Express will leave platform No.-1 a few minutes.
2. Santro car No. WBM 3478, do not cross the yellow line.
3. Mr. Shanti Raghavan, who has arrived by IC 175 from Chennai—you are requested to contact the reception please.
4. Passengers travelling to London by AI are requested to proceed for security check.
5. Mr. and Mrs. Kharbanda, your daughter Sakshi is waiting for you at the police bunk near the Eastern Gate, next to stall No. 197.

### Listening Task-2

As you listen to the text-2 write down the answers to the following mentions :

(i) Who is making the announcement ? (ii) Whom does he address it to? (iii) Where is the announcement being made? (iv) What would the person(s) addressed to on hearing each of the announcements ?

### Listening Test-3

1. Papiya Ghosh, who is twenty nine, lives in her own house in Kolkata. She is a school teacher.
2. Goutam is a doctor. He works in All India Institute of Medical Science in New Delhi. He is forty-four and lives in a flat by himself.

### Listening Task-3

Listen to the listening text-3. As you listen, fill in the personal details about Papiya and Goutam in the table below :

Name :

Name :

Age :

Age :

Occupation :

Occupation :

Place of Work :

Place of Work :

### Listening Text-4

Tourist : I am an American tourist. Which is the best way a visitor can see Varanasi ?

Guide : I think, the best way is to take a boatride at dawn, along the great three-mile curve of the Ganges. This curve faces east.

Tourist : What'll the view be like ?

Guide : At 5-30 in the morning a grey mist covers the river. As it clears high above the bank you will see the splendid outlines of Maharaja's Palaces, ashrams, temples & Mosques.

Tourist: Is that all?

Guide: No, leading down to the water are wide steps & platforms. These are the famous ghats.

### Listening task-4

Listen to the text 4 and match the word in column A with the words related to it in column B.

#### A.

1. dawn
2. mist
3. bank
4. splendid
5. ghats

Example: dawn

#### B.

- a. River Ganges.
  - b. Maharaja's palaces, ashrams etc.
  - c. 5-30 in the morning.
  - d. wide steps and platforms.
  - e. clears.
- 5-30 in the morning.

### Listening test-5

Abacus is a device for counting. Here beads are strung on wires and fitted to a frame. It is used for teaching small children to count. The Chinese use them for computing and devices of pebbles and movable counters were known in antiquity to Egyptians, Greeks and Romans as well as the Chinese. Its great advantage in simplifying adding and subtracting Roman numerals is obvious.

### Listening Task-5

Listen to listening text 5. As you listen, draw the thing that is being described.

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## 1.11. Let's sum up

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In this unit, we have discussed what listening is, what its sub-skills are and how we can help our learners develop listening skills. We have also discussed the importance of teaching listening and also the criteria for developing listening materials. We also looked at some examples of listening activities. We hope you will be able to produce your own materials for teaching listening (in case the text book you follow does not have the listening component) or supplement the existing material in your text book.

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## 1.12. Appendix

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### How A Polish Doctor Created An International Language

Growing up in 19th Century Poland where constant tension arose between four ethnic groups speaking Polish, Russian, German and Yiddish, Ludwik Zamenhof dreamed of a universal tongue. He believed that if people could speak a second common language in addition to their wons international understanding would be encouraged and a new, more peaceful world would be created.

Zamenhof spoke Russian, Polish and Yiddish with his family and learned Latin, German, Greek, French, English and Hebrew at school. He had qualified as a doctor when, in 1987, he

published his first book in the new language he had devised, under the pen name 'Dr. Esperanto.' 'Esperanto', meaning, 'One who hopes', was also the new language's name.

Zamenhof based his grammar on English, but for his vocabulary he drew on all the major Western European languages. He created an extensive system of prefixes and suffixes which linked with root words, give shades of meaning. The largest Esperanto dictionaries contain roots from which 1,50,000 words can be made. English speakers are likely to recognize about 70.75% of Esperanto words. Slav speakers about 50%.

There are twenty-eight letters in the Esperanto alphabet, and each is sounded in only one way. To make things easy, all words are spelt as they are pronounced and the emphasis falls on the last syllable but one. Adjectives end in 'a', nouns in 'o' and plurals of these are made by adding 'j'. There are six simple verb endings—for example, *lerni* ('to learn'), *lernas* ('learns'), '*learnis*' ('learnt'), *lernos* ('will learn'), *lernus* ('could learn'), and *lernu* ('learnt').

Esperanto has its own literature. There are more than 30,000 books written in or translated into Esperanto and hundreds of thousands of people world wide still speak in the Esperanto language.



## **Unit 2 □ Oral/Speaking Skills**

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### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.2.1 Nature of Communication**

##### **2.2.2 Communicative Competence and Actual Communication**

##### **2.2.3 Components of Communicative Competence**

#### **Review Questions I**

#### **2.3 Nature of Oral Communication**

##### **2.3.1 Pedagogical Implications**

#### **Review Questions II**

#### **2.4 Approaches of Teaching Oral Communication**

##### **2.4.1 Part-skill Practice**

##### **2.4.2 Whole-task Practice**

##### **2.4.3 Task-based Approach**

#### **2.5 Techniques of Teaching Oral Communication**

#### **Review Questions III**

#### **2.6 Summing Up**

#### **2.7 Glossary**

#### **2.8 Books Recommended**

## 2.0 Objectives

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This unit will introduce you to some of the theoretical considerations and issues in communication, and relate these to the practical concerns in developing oral skills in classrooms.

In this unit we will look at

- The theoretical framework of communication
- Nature and components of communicative competence
- Pedagogical implications of the above
- Approaches in developing oral skills
- Techniques of teaching oral skills

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## 2.1 Introduction

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The goal of language teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively and appropriately. The activities teachers of English engage in the classrooms are geared to this goal. The question that we will try to deal within this unit is : How do we teach oral skills for communication ?

For long in the second language teaching the assumption was that *knowledge* of the second language leads to effective communication in actual situation. We may name this approach *knowledge-oriented*. It emphasised controlled drills of grammatical structures and explanation of grammatical rules. However, such approaches did not prepare the learners to use the language in real-life situation as they did not provide them with the *opportunities and experience* in handling such situations. The learners failed to master the necessary *skills* in using the language. A speaker of a second language repeating the same errors, correcting them, faltering and failing to perform effectively points to the fact that mere knowledge of the rules is not sufficient to make one an efficient communicator. We need a *skill-oriented* approach to make the learners proficient in communication.

However, we need to emphasise that to develop effective performance (communication) skills, we need both knowledge-oriented and skill-oriented activities. Consider this example. You cannot learn to play football just by memorising the rules of the game and by watching a few video films on developing the necessary skills. To be a good footballer you must get down to the field and learn the skills of kicking and passing the ball and scoring, among many others. The same is true of the development oral skills. You should know the rules of grammar, vocabulary formation, pronunciation, and so on, but you must also have the skills of using them in appropriate situations to be an effective communicator.

However, before we talk about the practical considerations of teaching oral communication, we should take a brief look at the theoretical framework in the area of communication because absence of such a framework in the area of communication leads to chaos and confusion in research and application in the field of second language pedagogy.

In the next section we will examine the essential aspects of the theoretical framework of communication.

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## **2.2 Theoretical Considerations**

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In this section we will consider the following :

- A. The nature of communication
- B. The distinction between communicative competence and actual communication, and
- C. The main components of communicative competence

### **2.2.1 Nature of Communication**

According to Keith Morrow, Henry Widdowson and others, communication:

- is a form of social interaction which we normally acquire and use in social interaction.
- is unpredictable and creative in nature both in form and message. In other words what we are going to say and how we are going to say it cannot be predetermined or predicted.
- takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which determine the appropriate language use and also helps to correctly interpret the utterances.
- is influenced or limited by psychological and other conditions, such as memory constraints, fatigue, distractions, and so on
- always has a purpose, for example, we promise persuade, threaten, establish social contacts, etc.
- involves the use of authentic language as opposed to language contrived in text books
- is considered effective/successful or otherwise depending on the outcome or result

Communication takes place between two or more individuals using verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral or written modes and production and comprehension. For the present study, we will focus on the oral mode of production using verbal symbols.

### **2.2.2 Communicative Competence and Actual Communication**

Very simply, communicative competence may be defined as the "underlying system of knowledge and skills required for communication." (Canale & Swain, 1980), for example,

knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the sociolinguistic conventions in a given language. Actual communication, on the other hand, is the realisation of such knowledge and skill under psychological constraints and environmental conditions like nervousness, fatigue, interfering background noises, and so on.

Communicative competence then refers to both knowledge, and skill using the knowledge. When interacting in an actual communicative situation, knowledge refers to what one *knows* about the language and about the other aspects of communicative language use, and skill refers to how well one can *perform* using the knowledge in actual communication.

### 2.2.3 Components of Communicative Competence

The theoretical framework proposed by Canale includes four areas of knowledge and skill : grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

**Grammatical competence** includes features and rules of language, such as, vocabulary and meaning, word and sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics. Such knowledge and skill are required to understand and express accurately the *literal* meaning of utterances.

**Sociolinguistic competence** consists of expression and understanding of appropriate social meaning in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on the contextual factors, such as, status of the participants, purposes of interaction, etc. Appropriateness covers both meaning and form. For example, you cannot *command* your doctor to prescribe you a certain medicine even if you express the command grammatically because in this situation this particular communicative function (command) and attitude (politeness and formality) are inappropriate. Then again, the given meaning has to be represented in a (verbal or non-verbal) *form that is appropriate in a given sociolinguistic situation*. This is called Register. Certain words and gestures are considered inappropriate in a given situation.

**Discourse Competence** refers to how *unity* of a text is achieved. Cohesion deals with how utterances are linked structurally and thus helps us to interpret a text, eg. Use of pronouns, synonyms, conjunction, etc. establish relations between individual utterances and serve to establish a group of utterances as a text. Coherence refers to the relationship among the different meanings in a text. So, even if there is no explicit signal among the utterances, they may form a coherent discourse.

**Strategic competence** is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal strategies which we use either to compensate for the breakdown in communication (eg. when we cannot recall an idea or a grammatical form, or we lack the knowledge altogether, we paraphrase), or to enhance the effectiveness of the communication (eg. we use deliberate slow speech to emphasise certain words or phrases).



## Review Questions I

Do these tasks with reference to the above section.

1. Here is a summary of the nature of communication with some words missing. Supply the missing words to make the summary complete.

Communication is a form of-----interaction which is-----and ----- in ----- both ----- and -----, It always has a ----- and involves the use of -----language. Communication is considered-----when it achieves the desired outcome.

2. Four areas of communicative competence are : ----- competence, ----- competence, ----- competence and ----- competence.
3. Each of the areas of communicative competence cover different language contents. We have suggested some items under each area. Suggest a few more items that you may include under each category.

(i) Grammatical competence :

- (a) Vocabulary : *Common* vocabulary related to learners' communicative needs and interests, .....
- (b) Word formation : Nouns for number, verbs for .....
- (c) Sentence formation : Form of a given structure in the context, literal meaning of a structure in the context.
- (d) Phonology : Pronunciation of lexical in connected speech, stress-both----- -- and ----- and ----- patterns in connected speech.

(ii) Sociolinguistics competence :

- (a) Both expression and ----- of appropriate social meanings.
- (b) Both ----- and understanding of appropriate grammatical ----- for different communicative functions.

(iii) Discourse Competence

- (a) Lexical cohesion devices in context like use of----- and repetitions.
- (b) Grammatical cohesion devices like----- in place of nouns and-----



- (c) Cohesion expressed by means of logical progression of meaning in oral discourse.
- (iv) Strategic Competence :
  - (a) Use of paraphrase
  - (b) Requests for-----
  - (c) Slow-----
  - (d) Use of non-verbal symbols like-----, -----, etc.

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## 2.3 Nature of Oral Communication

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We have already briefly referred to the nature of communication (in 1.2.1). We would like to restate the same from the point of view of teaching oral communication as a skill and talk about its pedagogical implications.

- (a) Oral communication is two-way process between a speaker and a listener/listeners involving the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding, or more precisely, listening with understanding. It is not a static process. Both the speaker and the listener have a positive function to perform. The speaker has to *encode* the message to be conveyed in appropriate language. The listener has to *decode* or *interpret* the message he receives.
- (b) In normal speech the message itself contains a great deal of linguistically 'redundant' information, ie, it conveys more information than the listener needs. So the listener does not need to follow the utterance of the speaker with utmost attention for every detail.
- (c) The listener also receives help from the prosodic features, viz, the stress and intonation which accompany the spoken utterance and form part of its meaning. At the same time facial expressions, body movements like gestures also help the listener to interpret the message.
- (d) Speech is characterised by incomplete utterances, sometimes ungrammatical utterances, and also by false starts and repetitions. In contrast, written language almost typically has well-structured sentences which are carefully linked together (unless it is spoken language in a written text (eg. dialogue in a play).

### 2.3.1 Pedagogical Implications

How does the information we got in 1.3 influence classroom practices ? We list them below aspectwise.

### (a) Listening Comprehension

In classrooms the emphasis is chiefly on the ability to speak. But we saw that oral communication is not just production or speaking, but reception or listening as well. Moreover, as teachers, we cannot guarantee that as the learners are listening, they are able to understand. Understanding of the spoken language cannot be left to take care of itself. If we do, the results are : (i) the learners have no longer any control of what is said to them, and (ii) poor understanding often gives rise to nervousness which in turn further inhibits ability to speak.

Learners' ability to understand has to be more extensive than their ability to speak because they have no control on what is or will be said to them. Also, the listening models (eg, dialogues) in the classrooms are contrived in such a way that they facilitate oral production but they do not always contain sufficiently large number of features of natural speech [as mentioned in 1.3 (d) above]. In order to cope with real-life language situations, learners need regular and frequent training through a programme of listening comprehension so that they are exposed in the classroom to suitably varied models of natural speech from the earliest stages of a language course. In other words, they actually have to *learn to listen* just as they learn to speak.

### (b) Oral Productions

The main goal of teaching the productive skill of speaking will be *oral fluency* which means ability to express oneself *intelligibly, reasonably accurately and without hesitation*. This last named aspect is important because frequent hesitations may lead to breakdown in communication as the listener may lose patience and interest under such a condition.

The way to ensure fluency will be to guide the learners through (i) the stages of imitation of a model to (ii) when they respond to cues to the final point (iii) when they can express their own ideas. It requires two complementary levels of training : (a) practice in the manipulation of fixed elements of the language, viz, grammatical patterns and lexical items, and (b) practice in the expression of personal meaning without cues from the teacher. What it implies is that, to develop oral skills dialogues and passages may serve as a *starting point* but the teacher cannot depend on the written text only, if communication in authentic situation is the goal. Audio-visual aids, on the other hand, provide at all levels a powerful way of stimulation and developing oral ability without recourse to written language.

### (c) Intelligibility : Phonology

Intelligibility is often defined in phonological terms (eg, able to discriminate between /i/ and /i:/.) But for the purpose of *oral fluency* this term needs to be extended to include a mastery of the other areas of language : of grammar, vocabulary as well as phonology. The teacher has to concentrate on essential features such as, differences between weak and strong forms, key sounds, basic stress and intonation patterns, etc. More importantly, focus should be on the *reception* rather on production. However, given the limited time that the teachers have for oral skills, attention should be on a balanced approach.

#### **(d) Oral Ability and Motivation**

The development of oral ability itself is a good source of motivation. A beginner derives immense satisfaction when he is able to say even a small number of sentences and this element of satisfaction must be sustained. As opposed to free expression, practice in a controlled situation without excessive correction helps to sustain motivation. It can also be improved by placing greater emphasis on the receptive skill of listening which has the added advantage of getting the learners understand language without reference to written texts, as well as providing opportunities for meaningful repetition of known materials.

#### **(e) Interdependence of Oral Skills in Communication**

Oral communication is a two-way process involving a speaker and listener. In a normal communication, a speaker does not always initiate : he also responds to what he has heard (eg. answers a question/makes a comment). The listener does not always remain silent : he is expected to make some sort of response which may not always be verbal (eg. carries out an instruction). In the classroom, therefore, appropriate provision has to be made to see that the two oral skills are integrated through situations which permit and encourage authentic communication.

#### **Review Questions II**

1. Consider the following task you may have set your learners.

##### **Procedure :**

Ask your learners to take a piece of paper and write down the following :

##### **a. Three places**

- your favourite holiday place
- a place you would really like to visit
- a place you would rather forget

##### **b. Three persons**

- your favourite person/relative
- a person you would like to know
- a person you find most funny

(You may choose some other categories)

Next each learner finds a partner and exchanges the sheets. Then they ask each other questions about any of the information that is of interest to them.

2. Your task is :

- Suggest a few questions like the following that your learners may ask.  
Why do you like.....  
Tell me about.....
- What is the aim of such activities in terms of form and meaning ?
- How useful is this activity in terms *oral production* and *motivating* the learners ?

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## 2.4 Approaches

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In view of the above information we would now like to see how oral skills may be developed in the classroom.

William Littlewood mentions two models of language learning :

**Skills learning** associated with controlled activities for pre-selected items leading to more independent form of practice in using language for communication, and

**Natural process or creative construction** associated with situations where language develops naturally through exposure and use. The first model uses a set of mechanism which enables us to learn in a conscious way whereas the second set enables us to learn in a subconscious, natural way. Stephen Krashen calls the conscious process *learning* and the subconscious process, *acquisition*.

The question now is : Can there be an overall framework which will accommodate both kinds of learning ?

The advantage of following the skill-learning model only in a classroom is that it can provide the special kind of situation needed for such learning and it also takes less time. Natural learning takes a long time in the classroom and is not very effective. So we should try to develop the special kind of *controlled learning* that the classroom can support more effectively. This is the kind of approach used in audio-lingual or situational language teaching methods, for instance. It helps learners avoid making errors.

However, it is argued that language learning is different from other kinds of learning and will take place more efficiently if we create contexts in the classroom where learning can take place through natural communication.

We can see that neither of the processes by itself leads to universal success and that each has its useful contribution to make in the classroom. So we should try for a broader framework integrating the two.



### 2.4.1 Littlewood's Framework

This framework consists of two components : part-skill practice for mainly skill learning and whole task practice which combines the skills into operation fluently and correctly for meaningful communication.

### 2.4.2. Part-skill Practice

In all the steps mentioned below the activities are controlled in terms of grammatical structure, vocabulary and information.

- **Internalising the language system** involves learning or mastery of the aspects of the foreign language system. In traditional approach it would involve learning and practising different tenses, sentence patterns and all components of grammar, understanding and employing rules to constructing sentences, etc. With the emphasis on communication as the goal, teachers today tend to reject such grammar-oriented activities. However, grammar plays an important role in communication. Therefore, active links should be maintained between grammatical choices and meanings they convey so that the linguistic system can be easily integrated into the communication system.
- **Exchanging shared knowledge** is to help learners link the language forms with their literal meanings they are asked to focus on some area of knowledge they share and to use the new language to describe it. The information that the language carries is already familiar to everybody (eg. describe the classroom situation, where somebody is sitting etc). These activities may be criticised for being 'artificial' and not performing acts of communication. However, they are useful as they help learners to 'learn' to communicate.
- **Exchanging literal information—Information gap** when the teacher distributes the information among the learners and gives them a reason for exchanging the information (one learner develops the outlines given into a story and others ask him questions to elicit more information).
- **Practising communicative functions** using communication oriented activities when the control is relaxed to some extent with the focus on meaning. However, the grammatical structures used are known and controlled in terms of the functions (eg. making suggestions, offers, requests, etc. relating to cues or pictures given by the teacher : Would you like a cup of tea ?). The language use still cannot be called 'communication' as the learners are not expressing their own communicative intentions.

We should remember that there is no one-to-one link between language forms and communicative functions. The same functional meaning can be expressed by a variety of forms and the same forms can be interpreted differently in different situations. Our goal as teachers is to get the learners choose appropriate forms to express their own meaning.



- **Through role-playing** the learners move closer to expressing their own communicative intentions rather than those determined by the teacher or by the materials. Role-playing provides the contexts through which this progression takes place. (eg. You are in a clothes shop. Greet the assistant, ask for a shirt, specify size and colour, and so on.) As you can see the communicative intentions are specified in detail and they are not the learners' own.
- We can give the learners more scope *by giving them a looser framework* when they create their own communicative intentions (eg. greet the assistant, ask for what you want, if the item you want is sold out, ask for something else, and so on).
- **By combining the principle of role-playing with the principle of information exchange** we can create contexts when one learner has to find information from another who has it (eg. Greet the assistant—Respond, ask what he/she wants ; Ask for a shirt/pair of shoes/leather bag—Ask what size/colour/shape, etc.). The more you make the framework looser, the choices the learners have.

### 2.4.3. Whole Task Practice

The progression from controlled skill-based activities to completely free communication is gradual. Along this progression, the control over the language and meanings that are expressed *vary in degrees*. As we move towards the whole task, the interaction becomes less tightly controlled and the learners themselves decide what meanings they want to express at different stages of interaction. Even at the later stages of part-skill practice, some learners may take their role-playing cues only as the starting point and exercise more freedom by creating their own interaction around them. Thus they themselves move into the domain of whole-task practice.

The tasks suggested in the previous section consist of mainly predictable sequences of language linked to concrete facts and situations. However, real communication is unpredictable.

- This dimension of unpredictability is introduced by adding an element of *problem-solving*. (eg. Instead of giving them a set of pictures to describe, we may give the learners the pictures in a jumbled order for them to discover the sequence themselves by working out how the pictures can be combined to tell a coherent story). The learners in a group have to negotiate the problem-solving element. This aspect depends on each learner's active contribution and cannot be predicted.

It is 'information gap' that normally motivates the exchange of sample information, though in this case the initial information is given because the problem itself creates the communicative purpose. In case of problem-solving, the learners need to overcome the 'opinion gap' because a problem may have many solutions, and the learners will need to put forward their own opinions.

- **In creative role-playing and simulation** we loosen control so that the learners have the scope to choose what they want to say. So the specific cues are replaced by more general information about the situation and the participants' roles and purposes within it. The learners now enjoy more scope to interact through personal meaning of their own and become personally involved as communication takes place.

The concept of role is useful provided that the learners are able to identify with the roles assigned to them. Role-playing provides the opportunities for them to assume the behaviour they need to produce outside the classroom and integrate these behaviour patterns with their own personalities.

The next logical step is for the learners to create the situations from the resources actually present in the classroom and use language. In other words, they develop their language skills by engaging in real experiences which require these skills.

#### 2.4.4 Task-based Approach

Gillian Brown et al (Teaching Talk, 1984) talks of task-based approach which allows the teacher to offer the learners an opportunity to attempt a task similar to the one they have already performed but which is different in detailed content. In this case the learner can put the lessons learnt from a first performance into practice. The tasks are graded in terms of difficulty and have information-gap which is functional, ie, the listener does not know something but which he needs to know in order to achieve a desired result.

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## 2.5 Techniques of Developing Oral Skills

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In the current scenario when the emphasis is on using language in authentic communicative contexts, oral skills are taught using appropriate tasks where the learners negotiate the problem-solving element. The tasks are graded from simple (with a lot of support knowing what it is they need to express) to complex both in terms of form and meaning. There is a gradual progression from very controlled activities at one end to completely free communication at the other. It is a continuum.

### 2.5.1 The Role of Teachers

The role of teachers is important in developing oral skills. Donn Byrne says the role of the teacher is to provide the best conditions for learning (Byrne, 1981). However, the role differs at different stages. At the *presentation stage* the teacher is the *informant*. S/he selects new materials and presents in a way that the meaning is clear and memorable. At the *practice stage* the teacher is the *conductor*. As the learners do most of the talking, the teacher provides the maximum amount of practice. In the *production stage* the teacher is the *guide*. No real learning has taken place until the learners can use language in a real situation. The teacher as a guide provides the activities for free expression.

You are aware by now that in communicative language teaching the teacher addressing the whole class from the front does not serve any useful purpose. Now the teacher uses pairwork and groupwork to give the learners more autonomy so that they take the responsibility of their own learning. The learners need not sit in their own desks all the time neither does the teacher to be at his/her table throughout the lesson. For developing oral skills they need to move around the class finding new partners or groups so that they can practise and use their language skills in varied situations.

Before the learners begin to learn to speak, they need to be made aware by the teachers of certain rules that they need to follow. These are as follows according to Nolasco and Arthur :

- Only one person speaks at a time ;
- The speakers change ;
- The length of any contribution varies ;
- There are techniques for allowing the other part or parties to speak ;
- Neither the content nor the amount of what we say is specified in advance.

Teachers need to be aware of these characteristics of native-speaker performance in conversation if oral skills of the learners have to develop effectively. They also need to consider which of the functions of the conversations are relevant to the learners according to their levels and needs. Generally the learners will need to give and receive information, collaborate in doing something, share personal experiences and opinions with a view to building social relationship.

### 1.5.2. Techniques for Controlled Activities

Within the classroom, learners feel shy and/or threatened to speak they lack confidence. Controlled activities help by developing their confidence and by reducing individual's treat perception of himself or herself. As the learners develop their ability to participate and carry on simple conversation using controlled activities, they grow in confidence. 'Getting to know you' activities promote trust and 'articulation' activities which give the learners the opportunity to use English sounds in a safe and undemanding environment are useful in this context.

The learners also need to develop their ability to take part in sustained conversation. Activities which give them controlled practice use dialogue building techniques such as close dialogues, by paying attention to exchange structures and short responses as well through grammar practice.

Here are a few examples of 'getting to know you' activities :

- **Chain names** when the learners sit in a semi-circle and a learner introduces him/herself (eg. I'm Reena). The next one has to repeat the first name and add his/her name (eg. Reena, I'm Sunny). The third one has to continue in the same way (Reena, Sunny, I'm.....) and so on.

- A more advanced version uses a slightly longer structure (eg I'm Reena. I'm from Darjeeling/She's Reena. She's from Darjeeling. I'm Mohan. I'm from Bhubaneswar. etc.)
- **Find someone who** enables the learners to find out more about each other using task sheets like this : Find someone who can sing/type/swim/drive a car, etc. The learners go round the class and asks questions like 'Who can sing/type/swim ? Or Do you swim/sing/drive a car ? And so on. The activity is linguistically very simple but helps the learners to develop confidence as the structures they use are known.
- A variation is *Guess who?* When the learners write down some information about themselves in pieces of paper and pass them anonymously to the front of the class. These are collected and redistributed. The learners go round the class asking questions like, 'Who was born in Chennai/Singapore? Who has a pet dog called Jerry ? Who is/are fond of Chinese food ?' and so on.

When the learners feel more confident to handle forms (grammatical structures), the practice should be made more meaningful by building in some element of personalisation or information exchange into the tasks. Here are a few ideas.

#### ● The Best Years of My Life

Aim : To give practice in simple past forms.

Ask the learners to list five particularly personal significant dates on a piece of paper.

Divide the class into pairs. The pairs exchange information using the following basic model (introduced by the teacher before they start).

I remember 19----- When I-----

Do you remember -----?

Yes, I do. It was the year when I-----?

No, not really. Etc.

#### ● The Old Days

Use old picture cards, photographs, prints of the town where the learners live.

Group work using 'used to' form.

Articulation activities may take the form of practising individual sounds of English and using in single words or short phrases like *What ? A big black book, A colourful cat, etc.*

Then the learners may be asked to memorise short dialogues and repeat the dialogues as best as they can. Or they may be asked to repeat a dialogue that they have heard for the first time



on the tape recorder. They may at a later stage be asked to repeat a dialogue maintaining the same rhythm, intonation, stress and pronunciation.

An important aspect of communication is to produce an appropriate response or 'gambit' that help to maintain the conversation. These responses may indicate agreement with the speaker (eg. Yes, that's right/Of course, it is/Yes, I do, etc.), or may express polite disagreement (eg. Well, not really/Em, I don't really know, etc.), or encourage confirmation or more information (eg. Is that right ?/Really ?) These responses need to be built into the drills together with the right stress and intonation for authentic use.

### **2.5.3. Techniques for Developing Awareness**

The learners need not only to develop the ability to produce but also the ability to interpret the meanings of what they hear leading to interaction. For this they need to develop the awareness of as to what is appropriate in conversation and of strategies to further conversation to facilitate interaction in the target language. They need to learn the strategies to encourage the speaker to say more or the different uses of repetition in spoken language, how to interrupt (politely) and how to deal with interruption, and so on. They need to develop the awareness of

- the use of the weak forms
- the use of encouraging noises like Really ? Do you ? Is it ? Uhuh!
- the use of fillers like, Well, So, Er, Anyway, etc.
- the use of gestures like, nodding/shaking head (to agree or disagree), raises/lowers eyebrows (to show annoyance/disbelief), using hands to emphasise, etc.
- the use of stress and intonation (eg. I asked for a red *woolen* dress, not a red silk dress).

### **1.5.4. Techniques for developing Fluency**

The most important purposes of fluency activities are that they

- lead to authentic response ;
- maintain and develop social relationship ;
- information exchange ;
- lead to co-operative problem-solving ;
- lead to expressing ideas and opinions ;

In these activities the learners initiate and decide what they want to say. The teacher keeps a low profile to allow the learners to take the responsibility of their own learning and get involved in using the language beyond the level of producing isolated sentences.



The teacher needs to give the learners a reason for using the language to complete the task. The tasks set are relatively easy and stretches over a short period of time. To encourage, the learners are praised for their efforts. They are told that errors are not important for these tasks.

Here are some ideas for conducting fluency activities.

- I hated Maths—did you?

Aim : To introduce learners to fluency activities.

A task sheet with a list of school subjects on it is given to each learner. Working individually for five minutes they choose one of the subjects they liked and list three reasons for liking the subject. Then they choose one of the subjects they particularly disliked and three reasons for disliking the subject.

Next they go round the class and find out if anyone liked or disliked the same subjects as them and the reasons for their liking or disliking this subject. They make a list under the following headings.

Reasons for liking a subject

Reasons for disliking a subject

- Exchange

Aim : to encourage the learners to find out about each other by asking questions.

On a large sheet of paper each learner write down the following (You may use other ideas/topics).

a. three books

- the first book you remember reading
- the name of the last book you read
- the name of a book you will always remember

b. three hobbies

- something you enjoy doing
- a hobby you want to start doing
- a hobby you never want to start

You may add to this list.

Next each learner finds a partner he or she does not know well and exchange sheets. They ask each other questions about any of the information that is of interest to them. They may ask questions like :

Why do you like.....?

What is.....?

Tell me about.....etc.

They need not go through the whole sheet.

After five minutes they change partners. At the end of the session the learner may be asked to if they found anything interesting about the others in the group. These activities provide the opportunity for using English language in real time, the chance to express their own opinions and ideas and using the language for a specific purpose.

### Review Questions III

Now that you have learnt some of the techniques you may use to develop your learners' oral skills, think about the following ideas and figure out how many different ways you may use them in your class. Identify the areas of competence (eg. grammatical/sociolinguistic/discourse, etc.). Suggest the procedure you would like to follow. Your (lesson) plan should have the following points : Level, Time needed, Aim, Preparation, if any, Procedure including steps.

1. Play an audio tape of a short conversation, or you may use a video tape with the picture covered. It should not be longer than two minutes.

Here are a few hints for your use. Ask the class or groups to build up a mental picture of the people talking.

These prompts may help : Young/old ? Male/female ? Now add to the list.

What activities can you use in groups or pairs on the basis of the learners' speculations ?

How will you wind up the lesson ?

2. Prepare a list of simple utterances : (eg) I'm going to a party tonight. My brother is a lawyer, etc.

Now divide the class into small groups. Give each group a simple utterance.

What will you ask your groups to do with these. (Hint : Think in terms of meaning and intonation)

Which class level will your activities be good for ? How long will you spend on the activity ? Can the activity lead to a discussion ?

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## 2.6. Summing up

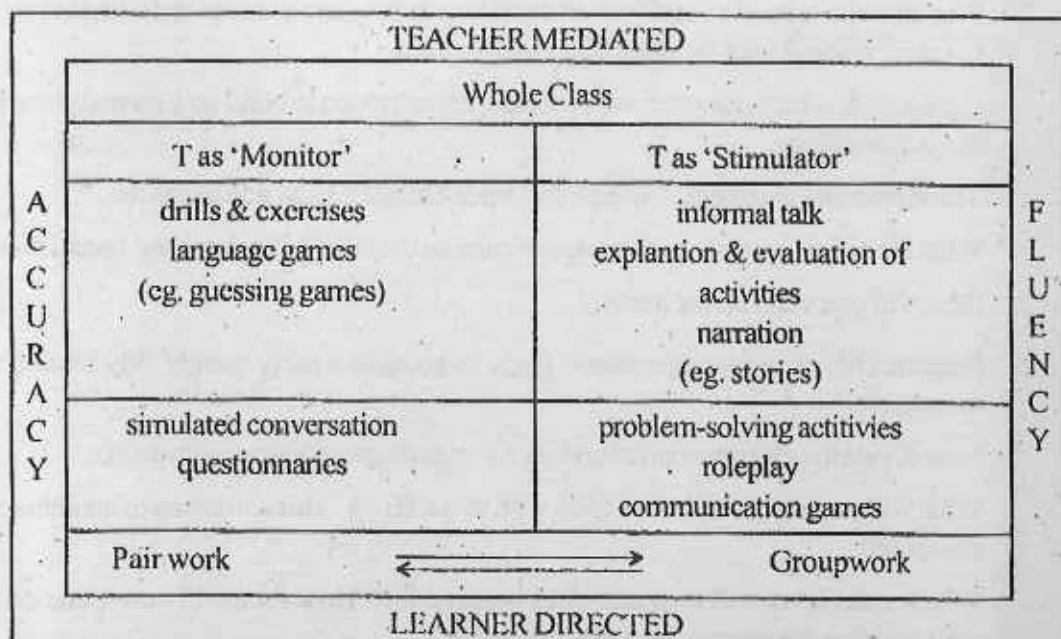
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Now we need to sum up what we have dealt with so far.

- We realise that oral skills are neither learning the grammar rules of the language nor is it ignoring grammar altogether.

- To develop confidence in the learners and giving them practice in using the language, we should begin by using controlled activities in the class.
- The activities are controlled in terms of both grammar and content (ie. The message they mean to convey).
- The learners should be made aware of the appropriate use of language depending on the context.
- Such use will include, besides appropriate words and structures, appropriate stress, intonation, gestures, short expressions for encouragement, agreement, disagreement, and so on.
- The focus in the classroom should be on the use of authentic language in authentic situations.
- The teacher's role changes depending on the learners' level of competence and confidence until they can act without the teacher's intervention.

This is Donn Byrne's process model for the organisation of classroom activities.



## 2.7 Glossary

**Acquisition :** The process of picking up a language without formal instruction and without conscious effort to learn the language.

**Decode :** The process of trying to understand the meaning of a message.

**Discourse :** A general term for examples of language use, language which has been produced as the result of a act of communication.

**Encode :** The process of turning a message into a set of symbols, as part of the process of communication.

**Fluency :** The features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and so on.

**Information gap :** (In communication between two or more people) a situation where information is known only by some of those present. Without such a gap the communication activities and exercises will be mechanical and artificial.

**Pedagogy :** The study of teaching practices.

**Problem-solving :** A learning strategy which involves selecting from several alternatives in order to reach a desired goal.

**Role-play :** Imitates real-life situation and consists of activities in which the learners play parts and practise language appropriate to situations they are placed in. It does not include group discussion.

**Simulation :** Classroom activities which reproduce or simulate real situations and which often involve dramatisation and group discussion. In simulation activities, learners are given roles in a situation—a task or a problem to be solved and are given instruction to follow. They later discuss their actions, feeling and what happened.

**Semantic :** The systematic study of meaning in Language.

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## 2.8. Books Recommended

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Anderson, A., Brown, G., Shillcock, R. & Yule, G. 1984, *Teaching Talk*, Cambridge University Press.

Byrne, D. 1981, *Teaching Oral English : Longman Handbook for Language Teachers*, Longman Group Ltd.

Byrne, D. 1984, 'Oral Ability' From *Focus on the Learner* (ed.) Holden S. Modern English Publications.

Canale, M. 1984, 'From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy' in Richards, Jack C. & Schmidt, Richard W. (ed) *Language and Communication*, Longman

Littlewood, W. 1992, *Teaching Oral Communication : A Methodological Framework*, Blackwell, London

Nolasco, R & Arthur, L. 1991, *Conversation*, ELBS Edition, Oxford University Press.

## **Unit 3 □ Theories of Reading Skills**

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### **Structure**

- 3A.0 Introduction—What is Reading**
  - Is reading a process or a product ?
  - Reading as a multidisciplinary skill
- 3A.1 Assumptions about Reading**
  - Reading in L1 and L2
- 3A.2 The Cultural Hypothesis**
- 3A.3 The Schema Theory**
  - What is Schema
- 3A.4 Impact of Schema on Reading**
  - Types of Schema
  - Reading in L1 and L2
- 3A.5 Application of Schema Theory**
  - The text and its interpretation
- 3A.6 Problems in Reading**
  - Differences in interpretation
- 3A.7 Application of Schema Theory to the Teaching of Reading**
  - Activities & Reader Strategies
  - Extensive Reading & Intertextuality
  - Vocabulary & Schemata
  - Limitations
- 3A.8 Research and Case Studies in Developing Attitudes Towards Reading**
- 3A.9 Reader Strategies— Theories and Implications**
- 3A.10 Let's sum up**
- 3A.11 References**

### **EXERCISES**



## 3A.0 Introduction

In Module 1 of this paper you have been introduced to various approaches, methods and techniques of language teaching. Also you have had a detailed analysis of the principles of language teaching in the third module of paper I of this course. You may once again refer to these modules as you study this unit. It is important for us to recall the information gathered earlier in order to understand this unit which deals with the significance of *Reading as a skill*.

### OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to :

- understand what is meant by Reading in L1 and L2 *and* the theories underlying the interpretations of Reading
- appreciate the importance of Reading In ELT
- describe effective and ineffective readers *and* their problems and attitudes
- familiarize yourselves with various research and case studies on Reading
- relate computers with the reading development.

### What is the skill of Reading ? A process or a Product ?

Perhaps the best way of defining Reading is by referring to two major elements : (1) the *Reader* and (2) the *Text* because Reading undeniably and uncontrollably involves the two. A third element is the *writer*.

Reading, whether in a first or second language context, involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the reader and text (Rumelhart, 1997).

The ability to read is acknowledged to be the most stable and durable of the language modalities (Bernhart, 1991). What a reader reads is the *Product* but *how* he reads is the *Process*. And this is true both of reading in the first and the second languages.

Several studies have been conducted to establish the process of Reading as a series of *sub skills* which offer us insights into *how* the reader arrived at the meaning of the text or *what* exactly the reader got out of the text.

Although reading in the L1 shares numerous important basic elements with reading in a second or foreign language, *the processes* differ greatly. Intriguing questions involve whether there are two parallel cognitive processes at work, or whether there are processing strategies that accommodate both first and second languages. Despite these interests, second language research on reading, is frequently dismissed as being marginal and derivative from first language reading.

Reading in a second language, for example, was often viewed as merely a slower version of doing the same task in the native language.

While it is true that the L1 and L2 reading process have similarities, it is also important to recognize that many factors come into play, which in turn make second language reading a phenomenon in itself.

Different variables have been considered time to time by different researchers, such as different cultural background, different motivation, different background knowledge. Some of these actually cast doubts on an attempt to describe the skill of Reading exclusively as either a Process or a Product.

While the meaning the reader makes of the text i.e. the *Product* is important, because it helps us to get different interpretations of the same text, the *Process*, i.e. *how* he arrived at the interpretation, underlies the product.

It is therefore possible to say that Reading can be viewed both as a Process and a Product. While the product gives us different levels of meaning, the Process varies from reader to reader, purpose to purpose.

Reading, in the twenty-first century in most cultures, is a private activity. Several definitions have been arrived at :

Widdowson's definition "*Reading is the process of getting linguistic information via print*" is a useful one. This is a traditional view and is very often linked to other skills. Fries (1963) held the same view which implies the relationship between Listening and Reading i.e. the information that can be transferred through Listening could also be done through Reading.

Sticht (1972) also established a strong parallel between the two skills.

Urquhart (1981) specified a number of mental operations in particular reading situation, thereby focusing on the *cognitive* aspects.

Reading comprehension is understanding a written text. Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. (Francois Grellet, 1991 : 3).

The view of reading as a cognitive activity is quite old. Thorndike (1917) had argued that reading was similar to mathematical solving.

It follows that Reading is a complex activity and that the study of Reading must be interdisciplinary. Any satisfactory definition of Reading becomes all-embracing : it also implies that readers can go on becoming better readers. Mere learning of translation rules will not suffice but far more.

What is important is how to relate what is being processed to one's existing knowledge emotions etc. and to do so with an appropriate degree of flexibility. If the ability to read involves so many aspects of language, cognition, life and learning, then no one academic view of language skills can claim to have the correct view of what is involved in the definition of Reading.

Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, cognitive psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, communication theory, the study of communication systems and other disciplines related to real life all have a bearing on the study of Reading as a Process or a Product.

*Review Exercise : Pick up the day's newspaper. Read a few of the headlines. Before you actually read the reports, think of the information these reports might include. Jot them down. Now read the reports and compare your notes.*

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### 3A.1 Assumptions about Reading

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Let us examine how reading in the L1 is different from and similar to reading in the L2. More specifically, factors of cultural differences : content (background knowledge) schema, formal (textual) schema, linguistic (language) schema, will be examined.

Schema theory is based on the belief that *"every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well"* (Anderson et al. in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983 : 73). Thus, readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of *"combining textual information with the information a reader brings to a text"*. (Widdowson in Grabe 1988 : 56).

Readers' mental stores are termed 'schemata' (after Bartlett in Cook 1997 : 86) and are divided (following Carrell 1983a) into two main types : '*content schemata*' (background knowledge of the world) and '*formal schemata*' (background knowledge of rhetorical structure). Theories on the contribution of *schemata and culture* to the reading process are discussed in this section.

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### 3A.2 The Culutural Hypothesis

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If we are to consider the aspects of background and culture as contributory factors to the process of Reading, it is imperative to view it from a *pedagogic* point of view. In this section we will look at the processes of reading in L1 and L2 and also investigate how the *culture* factor influences the process and the product of reading.

Despite the similarities between reading in an L1 and reading in an L2, a number of complex variables make the process of L1 different from L2. Because the reading process is essentially "unobservable" teachers need to make significant efforts in the classroom to understand their students' reading behaviours and be able to help students understand those behaviours as well. It is therefore important that teachers know as much as possible about the cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds of their readers since many of these factors influence reading in an L2 context.

While examining how reading in the L1 is different from or similar to reading in the L2., the factors of cultural differences that become important are :

*content (background knowledge) schema,*

*formal (textural) schema,*

*linguistic (language) schema.*

Based on such a discussion, a profile of a biliterate reader or a reader who is proficient in Reading both in MT and a second language is provided.

A great deal of literature is available on the research in this domain. It cannot possibly be covered in its entirety here. However, the discussion that follows will provide you with an overview in this area.

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### 3A.3 The Schema Theory

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#### What is Schema & Types of Schema

The notion of **schema** must be defined. Schemas, or schema as they are sometimes known, have been described as "*cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory* (Widdowson, 1983).

Cook (1989) states, "*the mind, stimulated by key words or phrase in the text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema*" (Cook, 1989, p. 69).

Widdowson & Cook both emphasize the **cognitive** characteristics of schema which allow us to relate incoming information to already known information. This covers the knowledge of the world, from everyday knowledge to very specialized knowledge, knowledge of language structures, and knowledge texts and forms they take in terms of genre, and organization.

In addition to allowing us to organize information and knowledge economically, schemas also allow us to *predict* the continuation of both spoken and written discourse. The first part of a text activates a schema, that is, calls up a schema which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows. For e.g. a text that begins with the words "*Once upon a time.....*" almost at once suggests that a story is about to follow. At the same time there is sufficient indication that it is going to be a story for children to read. In the process of reading, "*comprehension of a message entails drawing information from both the message and the internal schemata until sets are reconciled as a single schema or message*" (Anderson et al. in Hudson, 1982 : 187).

Although It is also claimed that "the first part of text activates a schema.....which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows" (Wallace 1992 : 33), the process begins much earlier than this :

According to Swales (1990 : 88) "*The environment sets up powerful expectations : we are already prepared for certain genres but not for others before we open a newspaper, or a scholarly journal.....*"



The reading process, therefore, involves identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all of which activate schemata and allow readers to comprehend the text (Sales 1990 : 89).

In this, it is assumed that readers not only possess all the relevant schemata, but also that these schemata actually are activated. Where this is not the case, then some disruption of comprehension may occur. In fact, it is likely that "there will never be a total coincidence of schemas between writer and reader" (Wallace 1992 : 82) such that coherence is the property of individual readers. It follows then, that there will be some differences in interpretation of a text between reader and reader.

***Review Exercise :** Read any story written in your mother tongue with an interesting ending. Ask a friend from some distant area to read it. Discuss the story together. See where you agree or differ.*

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### 3A.4. Impact of Schema on Reading

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Research on the theory of schema has had a great impact on understanding reading.

Researchers have identified several types of schemata.

**Content schema**, which refers to a reader's background or world knowledge, provides readers with a foundation, a basis for comparison of what one reads with what one knows. (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983 ; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989).

**Formal schema**, often known as **textual schema**, refers to the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts. It can include knowledge of different **text types** (novels, poems, one-act plays, reports, notices etc.) and **genres**, and also includes the understanding that different types of text-use-text organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar, level of formality/register differently. Schooling and culture play the largest role in providing one with a knowledge base of formal schemata.

**Linguistic or language schemata** include the decoding features needed to recognize words and how they fit together in a sentence while formal schemata cover **discourse level** items.

First language readers, may through repeated examples, be able to generalize a pattern or guess the meaning of a word, which may not have initially been part of their linguistic schema. The building of linguistic schema in a second language can proceed in the much the same way.

From the above discussion it is evident that schema plays an important role in text comprehension, both in the L1 and L2 context. For example, whether reading in a first or second language, one can assume that both native and non-native readers will understand more of a text when they are familiar with content, formal, and linguistic schema.



An L2 reader, however, who does not possess such knowledge can experience **schema interference**, or lack of comprehension. Relevant research in this area will be discussed in the next section.

Schema theory *describes the process* by which readers combine their *own background knowledge* with the information in a text to comprehend that text. All readers carry different schemata (background information) and these are also often culture-specific. This is an important concept in ESL teaching, and pre reading tasks are often designed to build or activate the learner's schemata.

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### 3A.5. Application of Schema Theory

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This section summarises some of the research into schema theory and its applications to ESL reading. Some of the limitations of the use of the schema-theoretic approach are also discussed. The importance both of developing the learner's vocabulary and of encouraging extensive reading will also be highlighted.

Carrell, Devine and Eskey (1988 : 4) claim that schema theory has provided numerous benefits to ESL teaching and, indeed, most current ESL textbooks attempt schema activation through prereading activities.

For e.g. Students might be asked to look at a visual, listen to a song or watch the opening scene of a film and try and guess what they are going to read in the following session.

Schema-theoretic research highlights different kinds of **reader problems**. These relate to *absent or alterante* (often culture-specific) *schemata*, as well as *non-activation of schemata*, and even *overuse of background knowledge*.

However, there may be limits to the effectiveness of such activities and there may even have been some over-emphasis of the schema perspective and neglect of other areas (Eskey 1988 : 93 ; McCarthy 1991 : 168).

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### 3A.6. Problems in Reading

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There are basically three problems in the literature on Reading research today.

1. **The Processing Problem**—aruges that L2 learners may be proficient in the language, but they still have problems in reading. Therefore, the core of the problem is the failure to transfer reading strategies from the L1 and L2.

2. **The Language Problem**—states that L2 reading is very different from L1 reading. It aruges that the L2 reader has problems with memory span, mistakes are likely to lead to hesitation and there is a possibility of L1 interference.

**3. The Short Circuit Problem**—aims to strike a balance between the first two and states that L2 readers bring a great deal with them to help in the reading process, but it concedes that the language problem is of fundamental importance. In other words, good L1 readers are theoretically able to transfer their reading skills, but when language competence is limited there is a short circuit. There is no conclusive evidence for this theory as yet, but the idea is intuitively appealing. Readers, who do not know enough of the language, can not transfer skills from their L1 because they need to be more proficient in the L2 to activate the skill.

### **Schemata and Differences in Comprehension**

The writer of a text usually has a reader in mind and this reader is his model reader, one who will understand his writing, his intention and also appreciate the more observable aspects of his writing like, style, linguistic features etc.

Differences between **writer intention** and **reader comprehension** is most obvious where readers have had different life experiences to the writer's '*model reader*'. Readers sometimes also feel that they comprehend a text, but have a different interpretation to the author (see Hudson 1982 : 187).

Humour is particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation as was discovered when a text entitled '*It's a mugger's game in Manhattan*' (Grecnall and Swan 1986 : 197-8) was given to advanced L2 readers (Japanese). Although the text appeared humorous to the native-speaker teacher, it was found "scary" and "shocking" by the Japanese students.

As Carrell and Eisterhold (1983 : 80) point out, "*one of the most obvious reasons why a particular content schema may fail to exist for a reader is that the schema is culturally specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background.*"

It is thought that readers' cultures can affect everything from the way readers view reading itself, the content and formal schemata they hold, right down to their understanding of individual concepts. Some key concepts may be absent in the schemata of some non-native readers (such as '*lottery*' in Carrell and Eisterhold (1983 : 87) or they may carry alternate interpretations.

For e.g. the concept of '*full moon*' in Europe is linked to schemata that include horror stories and madness, whereas in Japan it activates schemata for beauty and moon-viewing parties (for ordinary people not werewolves!).

Some alternates may be attitudinal : '*gun*' activates both shared schemata on the nature of guns and culturally distinct attitudinal attachments to those schemata. (Wallace 1992 : 35-6).

For learners with limited linguistic abilities, "*if the topic... is outside of their experience or base of knowledge, they are adrift on an unknown sea*" (Aebersold and Field 1997 : 41). When faced with such unfamiliar topics, some students may overcompensate for absent schemata by reading in a slow, text-bound manner ; other students may overcompensate by wild guessing (Carrell 1988a : 101). Both strategies inevitably result in comprehension difficulties.

Research by Johnson (in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983 : 80) suggested that a text on a familiar topic is better recalled than a similar text on an unfamiliar topic.

Swales (1990 : 87) believes that this and other research "supports the common sense expectancies that when content and form are familiar the texts will be relatively accessible."

Next, some of the applications of schema theory to the **teaching of reading** are summarised for you.

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### 3A.7 Applications of Schema Theory to the Teaching of ESL Reading

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As described in the previous section, "some students" apparent reading problems may be problems of insufficient background knowledge" (Carrell 1988b : 245). Where this is thought to be topic-related, it has been suggested that 'narrow reading' within the student's area of knowledge or interest may improve the situation (see Carrell and Eisterhold 1983 : 86). Similarly, where schema deficiencies are culture-specific, it could be useful to provide local texts or texts which are developed from the readers' own experiences (op. cit. : 85).

On the other hand, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983 : 89) also suggest that "every culture-specific interference problem dealt with in the classroom presents an opportunity to build new culture-specific schemata that will be available to the EFL/ESL student outside the classroom. "Thus, rather than attempting to neutralise texts, it would seem more suitable to prepare students by" helping them build background knowledge on the topic prior to reading, through appropriate prereading activities." (Carrell 1988b : 245).

Carrell (1988b : 245) lists numerous ways in which relevant schemata may be constructed, including lectures, visual aids, demonstrations, real-life experiences, discussion, role-play, text pre-viewing, introduction and discussion of key vocabulary, and key-word/key--concept association activities.

Examples of such **contextualisation** include, for example, showing pictures of a city before asking the students to read a text about that city, or playing a video clip from a film adaptation of the novel the class is about to study. Although helpful, these prereading activities are probably not sufficient alone and teachers will need to supply additional information.

Reading problems are not just caused by schema deficiencies, and the "relevant schemata must be activated" (Carrell 1988a : 105). In other words, non-activation of schema might be a problem. This means that readers may come to a text with prior knowledge but their schemata are not necessarily activated while reading so "prereading" activities must accomplish both goals : building new background knowledge as well as activating existing background knowledge" (Carrell 1988b : 248). Particularly useful and popular here are questioning and 'brainstorming', where

learners generate information on the topic based on their own experience and knowledge (Aebersold and Field 1997 : 71). For example.

*You are going to read a passage about a women's encounter with a bear while hiking in an American national park.*

*Before reading, answer the following questions :*

- (a) Do bears live in the wild in your country ? What kind of bears ?*
- (b) How would you feel if you met a bear while hiking ?*
- (c) What do you think we should do if we encounter a bear in the wild ?*

Previewing the text (particularly the title, subheadings and figures) also "helps readers predict what they are going to read" and this, hopefully, activates their schemata (Aebersold and Field 1997 : 73). For example.

*You are going to read a passage about a man's bad experience on a camping trip in the north of England.*

*Before reading, do the following exercises :*

- (a) Write down five problems the man could have had when he was camping.*
- (b) Look at the title of the passage and the list of words. What do you think might have happened ?*

**TITLE :** 'Our Terrible New Year'

**WORDS (in order) :** holiday, happy, drove, far, camped, beautiful, night, freezing, snow, morning, engine trouble, help, no phone, ran, ice, slipped, cut, disaster.

The use of the mother tongue is a very useful pedagogic device to activate schemata. Lower level students may have the schemata but not the linguistic skills to discuss them in the L2. So the first language could be used to access prior knowledge but teachers must introduce the relevant vocabulary during the discussion, otherwise a "schema has been activated but learning the L2 has not been facilitated" (Aebersold and Field 1997 : 77).

Although pre reading activities, such as those above, are potentially beneficial, there is evidence that their usefulness is limited. Let us discuss this in greater detail.

### **Limitations in the Use of Schema Theory in ESL Teaching**

#### **Problems with Schema Theory Applications**

Despite the current popularity of pre reading activities, there may be limits to their use in ESL teaching and they may not always function as intended. Carrell & Wallace (in Carrell 1988a : 105-6) found that giving context did not improve recall even for advanced ESL readers suggesting that their schemata were not activated.



Hudson (1982 : 186) claims that, by encouraging students to use the good reader strategy of "touching as few bases as necessary," they may "apply meaning to a text regardless of the degree to which they successfully utilize syntactic, semantic or discourse constraints."

The reading process has famously been described as a "*psycholinguistic guessing game*" (Goodman in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983 : 74) in which "efficient readers minimize dependence on visual detail" by utilising background knowledge to make predication and checking these against the text (Goodman 1975 : 12).

Such top-down models (moving from general knowledge to specific details) have unfortunately given the misleading message to teachers that ESL reading tuition is "mostly just a matter of providing [learners] with the right background knowledge....and encouraging them to make full use of that knowledge in decoding.....texts" (Eskey 1988 : 97). It is now recognised that "*language is a major problem in second language reading*" (op. cit. : 97).

### **Vocabulary and Schemata**

ESL readers need "a massive receptive vocabulary that is rapidly, accurately and automatically accessed" (Grabe 1988 : 63).

Carrell (1988b : 244) suggests a "parallel" approach in which vocabulary and schemata are developed by "preteaching vocabulary and background knowledge concurrently for sets of passages to be read at some later time. "Furthermore, since learners "need to see a word many times in different contexts before it is learned" (Aebersold and Field 1997 : 139), they may need to read a great many more texts than is usually the case in reading courses.

This so-called 'extensive' reading (after Palmer in Bamford and Day 1997 : 6) is discussed next.

### **Extensive Reading and Intertextuality**

+ Encouraging students to read for pleasure is advocated by several authors (Bamford and Day 1997 ; Carrell and Eisterhold 1983 : 85-6 ; Wallace 1992 : 68-9) and will hopefully lead to the kind of extensive reading learners need to do if they are to gain any 'automaticity' in their *word and phrase recognition* abilities (see Eskey and Grabe 1988 : 235).

As Bamford and Day (1997 : 7) state, "*until students read in quantity, they will not become fluent readers.*" Learners may be motivated to read extensively by being allowed to choose their own texts based on their own interests.

Another reason for extensive reading is related to the concept of '**intertextuality**' where "*all texts contain traces of other texts, and frequently they cannot be readily interpreted-or at least fully appreciated—without reference to other texts*" (Wallace 1992 : 47). McCarthy and Carter (1994 : 114) point out that "many common, everyday texts assume that the receiver will be able to pick up.....allusions and perceive the cultural references [to deep-rooted common cultural stores of allusions, sayings, idioms etc.]. "For example, an article on the death of Princess



Diana (by Roxanne Roberts in The Washington Post, 14 September 1997) refers to Diana as "the face that launched a thousand tabloids" alluding to the line about the beauty of Helen of Troy from Marlowe's 'Faust' (1588): "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?". Here it is perhaps assumed that any reader will be in a position to associate Princess Diana with Helen of Troy.

Sinclair (1990: 16) claims that "in general people forget the actual language but remember the message." The fact remains, though, that textual memory is important because texts do carry references to other texts and, although not always crucial to the overall message, these references enhance the understanding of the text.

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### 3A.8. Research Studies on Content Schema

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Content schema or cultural orientation in terms of background knowledge is also a factor that influences L2/FL reading and has been discussed by Barnett (1989), Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), and Johnson (1982).

The assumption underlying their research was that content schemata is more effective than formal schemata. That is to say, familiarization with the content or information helps understanding more than does familiarization with the form or organization of the text.

*Let us refer to a study that involved 28 Muslim Arabs and 24 Catholic Hispanic ESL students of high-intermediate proficiency enrolled in an intensive English program at a midwestern university. Each student read two texts, one with Muslim-oriented content and the other with Catholic-oriented content. Each text was presented in either a well-organized rhetorical format or an unfamiliar, altered rhetorical format.*

*After reading each text, the subjects answered a series of multiple-choice comprehension questions and were asked to recall the text in writing.*

Analysis of the responses to the questions suggested that schemata affected the ESL readers' comprehension and recall. Participants better comprehended and remembered passages that were similar in some way to their native cultures, or that were deemed more familiar to them.

Other studies have shown similar effects.

For example in Carrell's (1987) study described above, subjects remembered the most when both the content and rhetorical form was familiar to them.

However, when only content or only form was unfamiliar, unfamiliar content caused more difficulty for the readers than did unfamiliar form.

Steffensen and Joag-Dev (1984) conducted a study using two descriptions of weddings both written in English. One was a description of an American wedding, while the other was of an Indian (subcontinent) wedding. Both the Indian students, for whom English was an L2, and the

American students, for whom English was the L1, read the descriptions and were asked to recall the descriptions.

It was found that readers comprehended texts about their own cultures more accurately than the other. While the readers indicated that the words were easy to understand, the unfamiliar cultural protocol of an Indian wedding was not easily comprehended by the Americans.

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### 3A.9. Reader Strategies—Theories and Implications

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We have already said that Reading is a multidisciplinary skill. Most EFL teachers would agree that the overt processes involved in language—the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking—which have been, in the past, “treated somewhat in isolation, in fact have so much in common with each other, that it makes much more sense to treat them holistically,” (Wray & Medwell 1991 : 3). It has been noted that the links between reading and writing, for example, have been emphasised to such an extent that it is now normal to see them referred to as “literacy”. Similarly, the term “oracy” is commonly used to denote the skills of speaking and listening.

This is no doubt true, even unavoidable, in the practical classroom situation. However, it is also argued that to look at the four skills individually, in order to look for parallels between the processes is in theoretical terms, far more useful for those who strive to learn from these theories and use them in a constructive way. Thus, the sum of the parts may be greater, and more practically helpful, than the whole.

Each of the “four skills” in itself composed of component sub-skills. Grabe (1992 : 50-3) notes six in particular in the case of **reading**. These are :

1. the perceptual automatic recognition skill ;
2. linguistic skills ;
3. knowledge and skills of discourse structure and organisation ;
4. knowledge of the world ;
5. synthetic and critical evaluation skills ;
6. metalinguistic knowledge and skills.

These sub-skills are, to a greater or lesser extent, also sub-skills of writing, speaking and listening. This suggests that basic strategies used are similar, if not exactly the same, in each of the four skills.

Although the four areas impose different constraints, at many different levels, they encourage a unique emphasis on particular combinations of strategies on each occasion.

In reading, the notions of “**bottom-up**” and “**top-down**” processing, (also known as “**outside-in**” and “**inside-out**” processing), are not without their problems.

*Review Exercise : Consider this sentence (Wray & Medwell 1991 : 98) "iF yuo aer a fluet reodur yuo wll hve on pRblem reOdng ths sNtnce". Write it out after making necessary correction. Now think of all that you did to get the message.*

A purely bottom up strategy, which is essentially a code-cracking activity, simply cannot account for the comprehension of this sentence. Top-down strategies must have come into play to help you find "meaning" in these symbols.

There is a clear parallel here with listening skills. EFL students who have only ever heard standard R.P. English spoken, when they find themselves listening to a speaker from inner-city Dublin would find it difficult to comprehend. Indeed, this is a difficult task for many native English speakers ; however, meaning may still be found by both groups.

Language learners often report that they do not catch every word spoken, but that they, nonetheless, manage to understand the meaning of the sentence. Conversely, it is also common that the language learners report that they "understand" every word, but can not grasp the meaning of the sentence.

Oakhill & Garnham (1988) assert that while good readers, and, by extension, good listeners, may indeed "have greater contextual awareness, they do not, in fact, need to use it."

Samuels and Kamil (1988 : 32) sum this up by saying that "if a skilled reader can generate predictions, the amount of time necessary to generate a prediction may be greater than the amount of time the skilled reader needs to simply recognise the words."

So, a total reliance on top-down processing, while initially attractive, may later lead to some practical and theoretical conclusions that are less than satisfactory ; for example, it might be felt that the language learner does not need to develop much conscious knowledge of the features of written language. Therefore, the clause, or even the sentence, would be the most significant linguistic units, rather than the word. Previous research has shown that this is not always true.

This is particularly problematic in reading theory. L1 studies in phonological awareness, by Goswami (1994) and others, have clearly linked early ability to segment words into their constituent phonemes with latter reading proficiency.

So, it seems that comprehension, of written and spoken discourse, relies on a symbiosis of top-down and bottom-up strategies. Thus, the perceptual-automatic recognition skill noted by Grabe (1992) above seems psychologically real and theoretically plausible, following Underwood's (1982) assertion that "attention can only be diverted to higher-level activities, such as comprehension, when lower-level activities have become skilled through practice."

"Though recent finding...[by Danks & End (1985) and Lund (1991)] on language processing....are still tentative, they suggest that basic strategies focusing on the most important

words in a text for example, and activating background schemata are the same in listening and reading.

However, since the two modalities impose different processing constraints, they encourage the emphasis of different strategies" (Strodt-Lopez : 1996 : 35-6). Thus, listeners tend to rely more on top-down processing, from "background knowledge to the particulars," while readers tend more towards bottom-up strategies, from "the particulars of the text to background knowledge" (ibid : 35-6).

### 3A.9.1. Facilitating Reading Comprehension in the classroom

In giving the L2 student both as much input and practice as they can reasonably manage, and a strong metalinguistic awareness, teachers give the student the tools to learn a language proficiently. It is in equipping the student with both *declarative knowledge*, as well as the *procedural knowledge*, that they not only understand the information in the text, but also appreciate its subtle intricacies.

This is an extension of the issue of reading as a product or a process.

**Review Exercise : HOW DO WE READ ? Match the column on the left with the definition on the right and decide which are most applicable to the above categories.**

<i>Skimming</i>	<i>reading shorter texts to extract accurate detailed information</i>
<i>Scanning</i>	<i>quickly reading a text to get the gist of it</i>
<i>Extensive reading</i>	<i>quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information</i>
<i>Intensive reading</i>	<i>reading longer texts, usually for pleasure.</i>

#### Readers in a Specific Classroom Context

In this section we will consider some practical ways of helping a particular group of students, in becoming more proficient readers. In the process we will get an opportunity to link theory with practice. But let us first investigate who exactly are the effective readers and who are not so effective as readers ?

#### EFFECTIVE READERS

An effective reader is one who can select the correct strategy for the purpose and text. Studies have shown that most effective readers :

- discover the distinctive features in letters, words and meaning.
- try to identify meaning rather than letters or words.



- use their knowledge of the world.
- eliminate unlikely alternatives through inference and prediction.
- have a clearly defined purpose.
- locate topic sentences.
- distinguish main points from subordinate ones, and fact from opinion.
- are aware of cohesion and reference.
- are aware of explicit and implied relationships between sentences and paragraphs.
- are aware of the importance of argument, tone and function.
- are able to work out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from context.
- have confidence in their own ability and take chances.

### INEFFECTIVE READERS

On the other hand, ineffective reading is often caused by :

- mouthing ;
- word-by-word reading ;
- inappropriate translation ;
- inaccurate linguistic analysis ;
- paying attention of unfamiliar words which are not relevant to the purpose of reading
- panic

and therefore these students do not take chances.

### WHAT SKILLS DO WE NEED TO READ SUCCESSFULLY ?

- \* Recognising the script of a language.
- \* Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items.
- \* Understanding explicitly stated information.
- \* Understanding conceptual meaning.
- \* Understanding the communicative values of sentences and utterances.
- \* Understanding relations within the sentence.
- \* Understanding relations between sentences through grammatical and lexical cohesive devices.
- \* Interpreting text by going outside it.



- \* Identifying main points in a discourse.
- \* Extracting salient points to summarise.
- \* Basic reference skills (contents, index, abbreviations, ordering)).
- \* Skimming.
- \* Scanning.
- \* Transcoding written information to tabular or diagram form and vice versa.

*You will get practical suggestions on these areas in the next unit on Techniques for Reading skill development.*

Next, we will imagine a situation where a group of readers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds will be taken through a process of Reading development.

This imaginary group consists of about ten or so students, of varied nationalities, in their early to mid-twenties. Let us say that they are of upper-intermediate standard. They are in England on an intensive four week course ; this course consists of four hours tuition daily, and two two-hour workshops each week. On the other days, there is an extensive, and carefully structured, social and cultural programme, which they are free to attend and participate in.

The notion of **needs analysis** is absolutely central in any teaching situation. There are certain things that we can assume about this group. First, it is reasonable to assume that many of them will be students ; their needs in English will most predominantly lie in the area of reading. They have been exposed to the grammar-translation method of language teaching, where, as often as not, English is only taught as a means to accessing literature, be it classical, technical or otherwise. Any of the group that actually work, will almost certainly be trying to improve their English, as a means of improving their job prospects or job performance ; their needs will be much broader, but, nonetheless, the skills in written language are likely to be of most concern to them.

Second, given the age group of our clients, they are almost certainly attending the course of their own accord. It is also worth noting that the clients have opted for intensive courses, over and above the already taxing four hours a day tuition.

Third, the group is literate. In terms of their English, being of upper-intermediate level, their skills in English language literacy are probably quite proficient in certain ways. This does not mean, however, that they do not ever make mistakes. In other ways their L2 capabilities are severely restricted.

Each of the client's individual learning styles and preferences, his past experiences in learning language, his linguistic aptitudes, this personalities, perhaps even his views on life, are probably all quite different. They now find themselves on a (reasonably) level field, culturally, linguistically and in many other ways too. It is this that the teacher must take advantage of.

**Reivew Exercise : In the above situation, Will they have any problems as readers ? If so, what kind of problems will there be ?**

If the topic is unknown, with a class, it is often extremely beneficial to make additions to the text : adding pictures, a title, or perhaps even a short summary at the beginning. This permits, and even forces, the individuals to build up some hypothesis or schema, of what the text is likely to consist of. This aids in **top-down processing**.

On the other hand, we also need to encourage **bottom-up processing**, and on occasions, this may be achieved by pre-reading exercises ; for example, a short brainstorming session by the class, after reading the short summary suggested above, can often yield a whole whiteboard of material, without any intervention by the teacher. In this way the "collective consciousness" of the class may be tapped and focused.

Study aids are another useful aid to comprehension facilitation. Activities such as note-taking, underlining, summary writing and so on, can all help the student to reinforce what they have learned. However, they play a very helpful dual role : that of comprehension fostering and comprehension monitoring simultaneously.

An extension of this is the notion of **reciprocal teaching**. It has been in the communicative classroom for many years, and has proven itself to be an extremely effective way of fostering the strategies of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting, this too is both comprehension fostering and monitoring.

The significance of this form of instruction is the lack of **passive inattention**, that often accompanies reading. Here the students take turns being the "teacher" being interactive with his or her students. For example, a number of students read some short passages aloud, and then the "teacher" asks questions, and leads a discussion, on the text. All the students are expected to "chip-in" whenever they can. At upper-intermediate level this can get quite noisy. The "teacher" asks for clarifications on any of the points raised and finally, the "teacher" summarises the section of the text, and makes predictions about what is likely to occur in the following sections. Reciprocal teaching is not only very effective, but it is also very popular with the students, too.

### **Why does it work so well ?**

There are four main ideas behind it—**scaffolding** and **learner autonomy**, which surprisingly, are not actually at odds with each other, but rather complimentary : **active involvement** and not passive inattention, and **feedback**. It is in becoming acquainted with these ideas, consciously and sub-consciously, in declarative and procedural terms, that the learners in our imaginary group may flourish.

With these skills, they may recreate this experience, even when reading alone ; it is only by doing this that they may develop their proficiency in the skill of reading.

In this very simple classroom procedure we can see some of the theory outlined in this unit put into practice.

### 3A.9.2. Developing Attitudinal Changes towards Reading

A general assumption about reading is that students improve their reading ability by reading a lot. Research on native speakers of English and students of English as a second language has shown that the amount of time spent reading is related to students' reading comprehension and vocabulary growth.

Studies have been conducted to show that students also develop more positive attitudes towards reading after the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) programs. The effects are more prominent when the students are allowed to select their own reading materials and the SSR programs are run for 6 months or more.

A Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) program has been implemented in schools through the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme in English, which has been initiated and developed by the Education Department for 10 years. The aim of the SSR is to help students develop a good habit of reading and improve their English proficiency in the long run.

In SSR (sustained silent reading), students read silently in a designated time period every day in school. They select their own reading material and are not asked to answer comprehension questions or write book reports. SSR is nothing new. The term **Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading** was introduced as early as 1960, McCracken (1971). Since then, it has been implemented in reading classes at all grade levels.

According to several research studies, effects of SSR on students' reading include improvement in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition, as measured by reading test scores, developing a **positive attitude towards reading and cultivating a better reading habit.**

Since SSR involves substantial amounts of natural reading, it is probable that this practice fosters vocabulary growth. The researchers state that the findings indicate that reading is a most effective way to produce large-scale vocabulary growth. This supports the hypothesis that incidental learning from context during free reading is the major mode of vocabulary acquisition during the school years.

A study (Ozburn, 1995) of 60 ninth grade students in remedial classes produced similar findings. Students read a self-selected book for the first 10-15 minutes of each daily 55-minute class. They also checked the books out and were encouraged to read to home. The A Reading Test was administered before the study and 9 months later.

Results show that all students have improved in their reading level.

In the Project READ, which includes the use of SSR, conducted in the Washington D.C. public schools, Coley (1983) reported that over the 6-month period of the project, gains in reading achievement occurred in both 7th and 8th grades.

The effect of non-stop reading on improved comprehension is evident in achievement scores. Compared with the control groups, students participating in the object demonstrated better reading strategies when having trouble reading a book. Coley thinks that the result of Project READ lends strong support for the inclusion of a period of non-stop reading daily.

Attitude changes towards reading have also been observed. Attitude shifts occurred in both attitude towards reading and attitude towards paperback books for students in project READ(5).

Ozburn (1995) reported that the students checked out over 2000 books during SSR program. Wiesendanger and Birlem (1984) noted that nine of the eleven research studies they analysed presented evidence that students develop more positive attitudes towards reading in schools with SSR.

Valeri-Gold (1995) incorporated SSR in her reading classes and found that the majority of students felt that SSR had a positive influence on their attitudes about reading. They had read a lot more since SSR was implemented into their reading classes.

In addition to gains in achievement and shift in attitude, Grubaugh points out that the kind of wide reading that students engage in during SSR should broaden their background of information, thus providing them with a better knowledge base with which to relate to their subject area textbooks and lectures.

Another study that shows significant results was conducted in India (Aranha), a school in the suburbs of Bomaby that uses English as its medium of instruction. SSR was introduced twice a week in one fourth grade class. Attitudes towards reading and reading achievement of the children in the experimental class were compared to those children in a control class that used the same language program without SSR.

The results of the study show a high gain in reading attitudes in the SSR group and a loss in attitude scores in the control group. Girls of the experimental SSR group showed significant improvement in achievement scores compared with girls in the control group. Aranha concludes that SSR is a suitable classroom procedure for schools in Asia and Africa since it attempts to improve students' attitudes towards reading and their achievement in reading.

***Review Exercise :***

*Are you primarily a top down or bottom up processor ?*

*Or is there a healthy mixture ? Why ? Why not ?*

*Should we make students aware of their own reading processes ? Why ? Why not ?*

*How can an awareness of the theories above help us as teachers ?*

### **3A.9.3. Research in Computer based Reading Programmes**

Lastly it is absolutely imperative in the global cyber scenario today that we explore the development of **computer-based reading curricula**. As far back as late 1970s the microcom-



puters were in use. The relative difficulty in using mainframe computers for educational applications led developers to consider the more practical and affordable microcomputers. The availability of such computers encouraged exclusive programs designed for a single reading skill (Reinking & Bowles, 1996).

The first major computer-based reading curriculum was the work of Richard Atkinson in 1964 at Stanford University which was supported by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education. The project was a first-grade reading curriculum aimed to lessen the need for classroom teachers (Atkinson, 1974).

Computer-based reading curricula continued to develop but were of a commercial nature. Though some research, primarily evaluative, was conducted, most computer-based reading curricula studies have been sponsored by the companies marketing them (Reinking et al, 1996).

These research attempts were exclusively for L1 reading.

Only during the past ten years has the use of computers in the field of teaching second language reading been increasing. A variety of studies have shown the importance of using computers in ESL reading (Willet, 1992).

Chun & Plass (1996) investigated how reading comprehension can be facilitated with a multimedia application for language learning. They studied the effects of a dynamic visual advance organizer on the macro level and the effects of multimedia annotations for single vocabulary items on the micro level.

Furthermore, they examined the relationship between vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. The results of their study indicated that the visual advance organizer does aid in overall comprehension and that annotations of vocabulary items consisting of both visual and verbal information help more than verbal information only.

Also, a moderate correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension was found. Chun & Plass claimed that the results support the dual coding theory and its extension to multimedia learning and emphasize the significance of visual information in addition to verbal information to support both top-down and bottom-up processing in reading in a foreign language.

In another study to improve reading speed and comprehension of ESL students using computers, Culver (1991) implemented a computer reading program to determine the exit and entrance scores of ESL college students and to find out if their reading speed and comprehension would improve. The results showed some improvements for the majority of students in the target group with an overall increase of 3.9 grade level in reading rate. The results show important information about the effect of increasing reading speed on student comprehension as a result of employing computers.

It was concluded that the computer was a good tool for improving students' reading rate despite the fact that increased speed did not lead to increased levels of comprehension for some students.



Chun D. & Plass J. (1997) based on underlying theories of L2 reading comprehension and text comprehension with multimedia discussed "how L2 reading research is focusing increasingly on the cognitive processes involved in reading, that is, the interaction of lower-level, bottom-up processes such as vocabulary acquisition with higher level, top-down processes such as activating prior knowledge" (p. 60). They merged this understanding with existing research on learning with technology to find out how students with different learning abilities put together "verbal and visual information". Their goal, in this study, was not to determine the effectiveness of multimedia on reading comprehension, but rather the learners who may benefit from multimedia instruction.

Whereas Chun & Plass used the underlying theory of L2 reading comprehension with multimedia. Preisinger, R. et al., (1988) used the schema theory as a basis to evaluate reading software programs. They developed criteria and questions to evaluate:

- (1) interactive capabilities of reading software (e.g. its flexibility, response to student errors, and ability to make a distinction between major and unimportant errors),
- (2) information processing (e.g. support of the use of prediction and problem solving strategies, use of text-based activities in the context of a reading passage, and encouragement of analyzing tests),
- (3) background knowledge (e.g. building schemata through pre-reading activities), and
- (4) general software construction and implementation. The goal of this study was to develop an evaluation tool based in light of a theory to help teachers choose the right reading programs for their students.

In drawing conclusion about the use of computers for reading instruction, previous research clearly supported the idea that computer-based instruction facilitates students' reading comprehension and increases their reading speed.

This conclusion is supported by the results of the preceding studies and a series of other studies conducted by Kulik, Bangert, & Williams, 1983 who found significant increases in students' reading speed and comprehension across studies of computer-assisted reading instruction.

These results should encourage ESL reading teachers to use computers in their classrooms not because they are "new technology" as reported by Wellington, 1995, but rather because of the positive results they bring to students' achievements.

After examining the previous research that dealt with computers and reading, it was found that computers were very useful in many aspects of literacy instruction. Using computers in teaching ESL reading, however, did not get the attention it deserved. Most studies and software in the field were conducted and designed for L1 reading instruction.

*You are now ready to move on to the next unit where you will have practical suggestions on techniques to be used in the classroom to develop Reading skills in our students. This unit*

*will help you find a rationale for these classroom techniques and thereby consolidate your own teaching repertoire.*

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### **3A.10. Let us sum up**

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*This unit has outlined the skill of Reading both as a product and as a process. It has given you insights into :*

—THE DEFINITION OF READING as a skill, as a process and a product

You must have understood that Reading is a symbiosis of all these.

—THE PROCESS OF READING and the SCHEMA THEORY

The schema theory says that comprehension depends on the activation of schemata. These are pictures or frameworks of a situation which help us to understand the situation. In other words, as soon as we begin to read, we form a schema triggered by the title, format, first sentence etc and based upon our previous knowledge. This schema will be reinforced, adapted or discarded as we continue to read. This model has profound implications for the process of reading.

—BOTTOM-UP PROCESSING

This process reflects the old models of reading as a simple process of decoding words into thoughts. However, it accepts that words must first be recognised and, having been decoded, the thoughts must then be remembered. It is an approach which works from the parts to the whole, building up gradually in a process of growth.

—TOP-DOWN PROCESSING

This model states that readers begin with expectations and ideas about a text, based on its title, format and style, before they begin to look for words that will substantiate or refute these expectations. It is an approach which begins with a picture of the whole and deals with the parts in terms of this.

—EFFECTIVE and INEFFECTIVE READERS

A familiarity with effective and ineffective reading strategies can help the teacher look for effective reading behaviours in learners, encourage wider use of these strategies, and be on the lookout for learners using less effective strategies.

—RESEARCH STUDIES in reader strategies and Attitudes.

Several projects undertaken in different countries have been referred to record attitudinal changes in readers at different levels.

Several theories of reading have been effective in establishing the fact that computer-based instruction facilitates students' reading comprehension and increases their reading speed.

## GLOSSARY

*Cognitive process*—mental processes as opposed to mechanical repetition and drills.

*Interdisciplinary skills*—skills involving different disciplines like sociology, psychology,

*Schemata*—Mental stores which the reader brings into play as he processes information in a text—first suggested by Bartlett in the thirties.

*Reading behaviour*—the way one reads and processes information on the basis of his educational, educational and sociocultural backgrounds.

*Biliterate reader*—a reader who is proficient in Reader both in MT and a second language.

*Genre*—a literary or non-literary form of spoken or written discourse.

*Schema interference*—a situation where over use of background knowledge tends to Interfere with the process of understanding of a text.

*Schema—theoretic approach*—An approach in which the notion of schema and studies leading to various hypotheses forms the basis of classroom instruction.

*Pre reading activity*—Any activity that can stimulate the reader's mind to the text before the process of reading begins.

*Narrow reading*—Reading that does not demand going beyond the knowledge of the reader.

*Top-down model*—A process of reading that moves from understanding general to specific details included in the text. The reader moves from the top-level of discourse organization (*inter-sentential, clause, phrase*) to the level of letters.

*Bottom-up processing*—Building up meaning from the smallest textual units at the bottom (*letters, words*) to the larger units at the top.

*Receptive vocabulary*—Items of vocabulary that are not in active use but are within the knowledge of the reader.

*Automaticity*—independent recognition and understanding of a text.

*Intertextuality*—where "all texts contain traces of other texts, and frequently they cannot be readily interpreted—or at least fully appreciated-without reference to other texts."

*Reader strategies*—skills and processes the reader uses in order to understand what he is reading.

*Metalinguistic knowledge*—knowledge of the codes used to refer to certain language operations, knowledge of the language used to describe language.

*Code-cracking activity*—activity designed to stimulate comprehension of the language of the reading text through a decoding process.

*Declarative knowledge*—knowledge of the code, rules of language operations (What).

*Procedural knowledge*—knowledge of the process of understanding (How).

*Skimming*—fast reading to extract the main idea of a text.

*Scanning*—reading in detail to get the specific details of a text.

*Reciprocal teaching*—A process of teaching that has been in the communicative classroom for many years, and has proven itself to be an extremely effective way of fostering the strategies of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting ; this is both comprehension fostering and monitoring. Here the students take turns being the “teacher” being interactive with his or her students. For example, a number of students read some short passages aloud, and then the “teacher” asks questions, and leads a discussion, on the text. All the students are expected to “clip-in” whenever they can.

*Passive inattention*—No active involvement of the reader resulting in lack of attention to the text and therefore, poor understanding.

*Scaffolding*—support from the teacher in providing active involvement and not encouraging passive inattention, and feedback.

*Learner autonomy*—In declarative and procedural terms, the learners in our imaginary group may become acquainted with these ideas, consciously and sub-consciously. With these skills, they may recreate this experience, even when reading alone ; it is only by doing this that they may develop their proficiency in the skill of reading.

*Speed Reading*—Skimming to get the gist or main idea of the text. Reading speed can be calculated on the basis of the number of words read per minute. Speed reading is dependent on the number of eye fixations made per second. There is research evidence to prove that speed readers can read up to more than 1000 words per minute.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Reading’ ?
2. Mention some of the ways in which researchers have defined Reading.
3. Why is Reading referred to as an interdisciplinary skill ? Which other disciplines are associated with Reading ?
4. What do you understand by a reader’s ‘schemata’ ?



5. Mention the different types of schemata. How do they influence the reader?
6. What are the different views on
  - (i) the culture factor in process of Reading
  - (ii) the biliterate reader
7. Mention some of the sub skills of Reading that have been identified by researchers. Do they anything in common with the other skills of language learning?
8. "The text has no meaning in it as its intrinsic property. It is only the reader who breathes meaning into it. "Do you agree? What are the views of researchers?"
9. Explain with suitable examples what you understand by *top-down and bottom-up processing*.
10. What is SSR? How have researchers benefited from SSR?
11. Write short notes on
  - (a) Reader strategies and Problems
  - (b) Intertextuality
  - (c) Computer based Reading
  - (d) Effective and ineffective readers
  - (e) Reader attitudes

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## **Unit 3B □ Techniques for Reading Skills Development**

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### **Structure**

**3B.1 Defining Reading and the reasons for reading**

**3B.2 Manner of Reading**

- Increasing and varying reading speed

**3B.3. Selecting a Text**

- What makes a text difficult
- Choosing the right text

**3B.4. Reading Skills and Strategies**

**Review Questions**

**3B.5. Style of Reading (The sub-skills of reading)**

**3B.6. Task types**

**Review Questions**

**3B.7. Asking Questions (forms of questions)**

**Review Questions 1 and 2**

**3B.8. Classroom strategies (approaches to reading)**

**Review Questions**

**To sum up**

**Bibliography**

### 3B.1 Defining Reading

Reading is the most useful language skill. It is a process whereby one looks at, reads and understands what has been written. The key word here is 'understanding'. Merely reading something aloud without understanding does not count as reading. Asking the students to read something aloud, if the teacher already knows that they can read, is an activity which is of very limited value. If the objective is to teach pronunciation, then there are far better ways of practising pronunciation. Of course reading aloud can be made a useful activity at the early stage of reading. Reading aloud by one student at a time is a wasteful classroom technique. It makes all the other pupils sit still and feel bored. If the pupil is a poor reader, his reading forces a bad model on the rest of the class. Oral reading is very slow and takes a lot of class time. In fact, loud reading is a special skill which needs to be acquired separately for special purposes. It hardly helps reading comprehension which is basically silent reading.

A reader ought to be trained in silent reading from the beginning. Most adult reading is done silently. Silent reading is very much faster and more efficient than reading aloud. A reader can read much faster than he can speak as reading is the fastest means of receiving information. A reader visualizes words like pictures which is then transferred to the brain where they are transformed into messages. But running one's eyes through a page without any understanding is no reading at all. This does not mean that a foreigner learner or any reader needs to understand everything in a text. Understanding is not an "all or nothing" process, and from that it follows that reading is not an "all or nothing" either. Reading can often be a struggle after understanding, especially where language learners are concerned. Therefore, part of the teacher's job in the classroom is to develop within the learner, strategies that will help him in this struggle.

Although reading has been defined as a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written, the reader does not necessarily need to look at everything in a given piece of text. The reader is not simply a passive object, fed with letters, words and sentences, but is actively working on the text, and is able to arrive at understanding without looking at every letter and word. Research has proved that efficient readers generally read in groups of words, not word by word, and certainly not letter by letter.

Written texts, therefore, often contain more than we need to understand them. The efficient reader makes use of this to take what he needs, and no more, to obtain meaning. Most of the time the readers keep guessing about the text, what to expect and what it could be. Kenneth Goodman (1967) refers to reading as a 'psycho-linguistic guessing game'. The guessing however is far from random. It is principled guessing which draws upon two sources to guide it. First the text itself and second, what the reader brings to the text.

Different people use the term reading in different ways and a lot of confusion can take place from consequent misunderstandings. So it would be better to make sure of what we think when we refer to the word *reading*.

**Task-1 :**

Before you read further, write in a sentence or two a brief definition of the term '*reading*'. You will get only five minutes.

In your definition, you must have used words from the following groups :

- (i) decode decipher identify etc.
- (ii) articulate speak pronounce etc.
- (iii) understand interpret meaning sense etc.

If you have used words as given in (i) above or similar words, you have probably wanted to include the basic thing about reading i.e. unless we can correctly recognize the words we meet in print, we can not even begin to read. The process of identifying written words is mainly the concern of the teacher of early reading i.e. at the elementary stage.

If you have used words as given in (ii) above, you are probably drawing on your own experience as both a student and a teacher. In several classrooms the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation, encourage fluent and expressive speaking, and so on. We already know that for early readers, reading aloud is an important aid. Beginners have to discover how writing is associated with the spoken words which they already learned to use. But this stage last two to three years the most and after that, reading aloud has a limited function.

Now, let us consider words in (iii). As we move on from the early stages of reading, reading becomes an interactive and interpretative process where understanding plays an important role.

Reading is getting from the text what the author intended. It is a receptive skill and involves assimilating the written word. To sum up, *reading* is the visual aspect of learning and contains the following steps :

- (a) **Recognition** : This step takes place almost before any physical aspect of reading begins.
- (b) **Assimilation** : In this process words are received by the eyes and transmitted to the brain where they are transformed into meaning.
- (c) **Intra-integration** : Which means linking of all parts of information being read with all other appropriate parts.
- (d) **Extra-integration** : This refers to the reader's analysis of the text, criticism, appreciation, selection and rejection. This is the process in which the reader brings the whole body of his previous knowledge to the new knowledge he is reading, making appropriate connections.



- (e) **Retention** : The information received needs to be stored. This step refers to the basic storage of information. But storage is not enough in itself, it must be accompanied by recall.
- (f) **Recall** : This step refers to the ability to get back out of the storage that information which is needed, preferably when it is needed.
- (g) **Communication** : This step refers to the use to which the information is immediately or eventually put. It includes the very important subdivision—'Thinking'.

**Task 2** : Say whether the following sentences are right or wrong. Give reasons for your answer :

- (a) Words must be read one at a time.
- (b) Reading faster than 500 words per minute is impossible.
- (c) The faster reader is not able to appreciate.
- (d) Higher speeds give lower concentration.
- (e) Average reading speeds are natural and therefore the best.

1. The first statement saying that words must be read one at a time is wrong because good readers do not read one word at a time. Their eye-span is wide and they are able to read chunks of words at a time. We, as readers must read for meaning rather than reading single word at a time. Fixation of the eye movement is the width of the span of vision. Our span of vision has to be wide enough to cover larger phrases, or larger chunks of language. In fact a good reader can take in as many as six words per fixation and the fact that we can make four fixations a second which means that speeds of 1000 words per minute are perfectly feasible, therefore, a reader reading at the speed of 500 w.p.m may be called a good reader. A faster reader is able to appreciate better because he will be understanding more of the meaning of what he reads. He will be concentrating on the material more, and will have considerably more time to go back over areas of specific interest and importance.

Fast reading can give better concentration because the faster we go, we can gather more impetus and therefore more concentration. Average reading speeds are not natural. They are the result of incomplete initial training and inadequate knowledge of how to read.

### Why do we read ?

People generally do not read unless they have a reason for reading, i.e. they need to know something of some kind and that can be satisfied through reading. The purpose for reading may not be the same for all kinds of texts.

**Task-3 :**

Before we proceed any further, make a list of all the things that you read during the seven days. You will get only 2 mins. to do that.

You will notice that your list might contain things like : letters, notices, advertisements, novels, stories, instructions, poetry, drama etc.

Now, look at the things you have listed. What made you read each one of them ? What did you want to know from it ? Did you read only for information ? What about the letter that you read ? Why did you read it ? Did you read a novel or a story ? Why did you read it ?

As you answer these questions, you will find that there has been varied reasons for reading. When you read your text book or compare your note with your friend, you will find that again the reason has been different.

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### **3B.2 Manner of reading :**

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The purpose of reading will determine the style or manner of reading. In the case of a good reader, his reason for reading will also influence his style of reading. Study the extracts from various sources given below and decide :

- (a) What kind of text each one comes from ?
- (b) Why should anyone read it ?
- (c) How should it be read ?

Of course there are no definite answers to all these questions, but there could be a few possibilities :

**Text 1** Suggests warning. A reader would not have any conscious reason for reading this unless he is driving car as such warnings are normally found along the roads or where there is danger. Here seeing and reading occur at the same time in the case of an effective reader. Such involuntary reading are meant for rapid reading for a purpose.

**Text 2** is a set of instructions. A reader would read this information only if the person was using the machine for the first time. He would perhaps read it very carefully and slowly, perhaps checking back from time to time. This is *intensive reading*. Again if he wanted to be sure of a particular stage he might *scan* the text for that stage. When he would become perfectly familiar with the machine he would not bother to read the text at all.

**Text 3** is from the personal column of a newspaper. A reader would go through this very rapidly just to find out whether there was anything of interest in it. This type of general reading is called *skimming*. Of course, all readers may not read the text in a general way. Some might *scan* it for a particular information in mind.

**Text 4** is an extract from a railway time-table. A reader will not read all of this, but he will look for a particular train time when he needs it. Looking for a particular piece of information is called *scanning*.

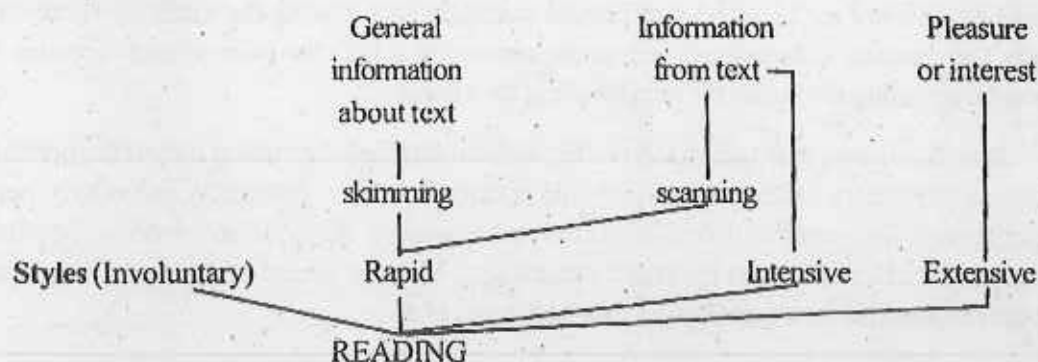
**Text 5** is a report from a local newspaper. A reader might either skim through the headlines, or possibly read through the report for interest in an *intensive* manner. However, if he lived in Kolkata and was interested in the information, he would probably read intensively, to make sure he got all the details.

**Text 6** is an extract from a text. A reader would probably read for information or for pleasure at a fairly rapid rate. This average reading speed of long-texts is called *extensive reading*. This type of reading is important for all language learners specially while reading long texts like novels or simplified readers.

With the study of the above texts we come to a conclusion that there are different styles of reading, and that these are determined, not by the text, but by the reader's purpose for reading. A good reader is one who is able to adapt his style to his purpose, and does not read everything slowly and intensively.

Sometimes a text may not be read for information, interest or pleasure, but to learn English Language. The reader may then consider the appropriate style for his reading which could be slow and intensive to make sure of not missing any words. If the text is difficult for the reader this may be the only style that the reader will use. Reading in order to learn or practise language is a perfectly valid reason for reading. But, confining the reader to the slow and intensive reading only, will not make an effective reader, who is able to adapt his style of reading according to his purpose. The ultimate aim of language learning would be to use the language appropriately and this can be achieved only through practice of the different styles. The following diagram summarises the reasons for reading and accordingly the different styles of reading.

## Reasons :



## Increasing and varying reading speed

Improving one's reading speed does not depend on one's IQ, his background, or his education. It depends on breaking one's old, slow reading habits, and adopting new fast ones.

Reading speed and comprehension are closely linked. A slow reader is likely to read with poor understanding. A lot of work has been done on the improvement of reading speeds. Research has found that good readers do not read word by word. We also know that a good reader makes fewer eye movements than a poor reader, which means, his eye takes in several words at a time. Not just random sequences of words, but he has the ability to chunk a text into sense units, each consisting of several words, and each taken in by one fixation of his eyes.

For example, a good reader may chunk in the following manner :

When Shetty promised to build a basic coronary care unit in Siliguri and provide specialist service free, state officials agreed to participate in the experiment.

So the larger the sense groups a reader can take in, the more easily he can turn them into coherent messages, instead of taking in a number of smaller chunks.

The problem lies with a reader who does not know the language well enough to chunk effectively. He therefore reads word by word, particularly when he finds the text difficult. So to develop good reading habits, it is essential to give a lot of practice with easy texts. This can be done in an extensive reading programme by using supplementary reading materials.

Reading speed would be worthless if the reader does not understand what he has read. What matters is that speed should not be emphasized so much that comprehension is forgotten.

There are plenty of ways of improving reading speed. Teachers must treat with care some of the early reading habits that are alleged to slow down reading as they persist into the later stages of reading. One such habit is subvocalizing (i.e reading by speaking the words silently and even murmuring them aloud). Good readers do not subvocalize. Reading aloud is much slower than



silent reading as our eyes move faster than our tongue. If a reader subvocalizes he tends to read word by word instead of reading in sense groups and therefore it would be difficult to improve reading speed. So this habit should be eliminated.

Similarly another faulty habit of finger pointing can slow down the reading process. One way to help such readers to get rid of this faulty habit is to choose easy texts with large type if possible, or to ask the readers to hold the book while reading so that the hands may be kept occupied.

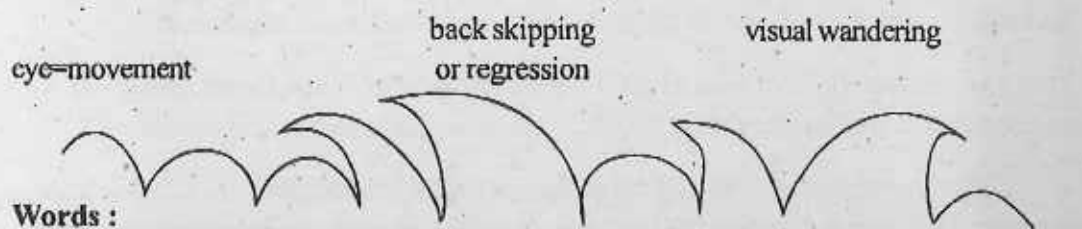
Another reading habit which is faulty is the occurrence of regressive eye movements. This means, the eyes move back to check previous words instead of sweeping steadily forwards. So, it would be quite natural for reading to slow down rather than it would be if eye movements were continually advancing. However, this is not the only factor to be considered. Very often it is seen that even a skilled reader continually modifies his interpretation as he reads according to his requirement. He may have to return to earlier parts of the text to interpret information in the light of what has followed. Therefore, regression can be a sign of an efficient reader rather than of an incompetent one. But pointless regression has to be eliminated by practice with easy materials.

It is seen that readers who are insecure develop faulty reading habits. Efficient readers do not have these habits. In a reading programme, one should try to develop confidence in reading.

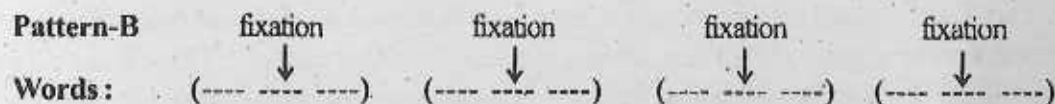
#### Task-4

1. Study the following eye-movement patterns. State the differences between the two patterns and the implications of these differences for reading efficiency.

##### Pattern-A



##### Pattern-B



2. Examine the following facts. What do they imply ?

- It takes about  $\frac{1}{4}$  second to move from one fixation to the next. This seems to vary little from person to person.
- The length of a fixation varies from  $\frac{1}{2}$  second to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  seconds, depending on the material being read and the reader's skill.
- The brain can register from 3 to 5 words in  $\frac{1}{10}$  th of a second.



- (d) The brain needs between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  second to process and recognize an item; the eyes have sent.

### 3B.3 Selecting a Text, What makes a text difficult ?

Text here refers to any piece of written language. So reading material to be used in the classroom may be selected from integrated text books ; supplementary readers ; authentic texts from real life ; simulated authentic texts that are simplified and graded or extracts from original writings.

The time that we need to read a text depends on its linguistic difficulty and the density of the information given in it. (A text is said to be dense when a lesser number of words contain a maximum amount of information.) When the reader needs to develop the skills of skimming and scanning, he must practise on simple text materials to begin with. In other words the material should not contain any difficult words at all at the beginning. Gradually the level of difficulty of the text may be raised.

The reader must learn to accept a few unknown words which they can skip while reading and yet comprehend what the text is about. Once the readers realize that they can get the gist of the text without reading each and every word, they can move on to more difficult material. Occasional difficult vocabulary should hardly be a bar to comprehension. If the text material is difficult, containing complex sentences and difficult ideas it would be dangerous to try to read it fast with understanding.

Text materials for comprehension practice must be chosen with the following points in view : readability ; suitability of content ; exploitability ; and at the same time interesting.

It would be easy to assess a text if we know the level of the target readers. If we do not know their level then we have to find out how much language they already know.

The proportion of new words or phrases that would be acceptable in a text would depend on the reader's purpose for reading it. If it is only to get the gist of it, several words may be skipped. But if the text is meant for intensive reading which is slow and careful anyway, then it may be acceptable to have quite a lot of new words i.e. atleast 2 or 3 per cent or 10-15 words well spread out on a page. For extensive reading, the reader should be able to read the text with tolerable ease without any distractors. In this case if there are too many difficult words in text, the aims of a reading programme will be defeated.

A text may be difficult structurally which is also a very important point to be considered, it is difficult to assess. New grammatical forms can also cause problems. But a more likely cause of structural difficulty beyond the elementary levels is sentence length and complexity, which can make the relationships between the various parts of the text difficult for the reader to understand. One way to find out whether a text is structurally difficult or not, is to work out its readability index.

There should be a variety of reading texts that would appeal to the students. Various studies have been made about learner's reading tests. But it is dangerous to come to a generalization when there are so many variations of age and nationality to be taken into consideration.

### What makes a text difficult ?

To answer this question, let us study a few texts that might seem difficult.

#### Text A

c'est aujourd'hui jeudi. Sous les arbres du jardin du Luxembourg, autour du kiosque, les chaises, bien rangées, paraissent attendre quelque chose.

The above text will be difficult if you are not familiar with the code in which the text is written. In other words, if you do not know that particular language. So one of the requirements for satisfactory communication is that the writer and the reader must share the same code.

#### Text B

Heat transfer is a result of the movement of a substance is called convection. The movement of a substance sometimes occurs when heat is applied to its lower layers. In this case, the parts of the substance that are nearest the source of heat expand and become less dense.

The above text would be difficult to a reader who knows nothing about science. Looking up the meanings of certain words will not help. The reader needs to have a knowledge of science. So, the main difficulty about such a text would depend on the amount of background knowledge that the reader has.

#### Text C

The preponderance of pain over pleasure is the cause of our fictitious morality and religion.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

In the above text, vocabulary is the only hurdle. It would be difficult for readers whose vocabulary is limited. If the message conveyed by the sentence is simplified, it would become easy to understand.

#### Text D

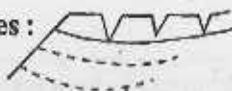
Education is the leading of human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them ; and these two objects are always attainable together, and by the same means.

—John Ruskin

The words used in the above text do not seem to be difficult, though the concept would be difficult for some readers. The message needs to be explained clearly unless the reader has read widely on the subject.

Hence we find that a reader may find words in a text difficult if he is unable to relate them to his background knowledge or previous knowledge of a similar text. Reading something of an unfamiliar cultural background can cause problems.

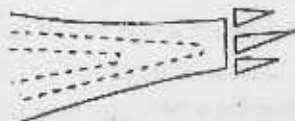
**Example:** (a) **Best man.** (b) (i) **Clip inner curves:**



(ii) **notch outer curves**



(iii) **trim corners:**



Sentences in themselves do not carry meaning. People carry meaning, and linguistic inputs only act as clues. Both linguistic knowledge and background knowledge are important in reading.

### **Choosing the right text :**

Texts should be carefully chosen to give practice in particular reading skills. These texts should be followed by well conceived questions or other exercises. Passages should be chosen from various sources to give the readers a wide range of material. The following is a guideline for selecting text materials. While selecting the text, the following questions may be helpful.

#### **1. Will the text—**

- (a) tell the readers things they don't know?
- (b) introduce them to new ideas and make them think about things they haven't thought before?
- (c) make them understand the feelings of other people belonging to different background?
- (d) make them want to read further and find out more about the subject/topic they read?

#### **2. Whether the text challenges the student's intelligence.**

#### **3. Are there new lexical items that might be helpful to the readers?**

#### **4. Is the text suitable for an intensive reading programme? Is there any scope for devising challenging tasks? A text would be of no use if there is no scope for exploitation of the text in order to develop student's competence, even if they enjoy reading it.**

The focus of interest in a reading programme is neither merely knowledge of the language but also the content. As teachers we would want them to develop the skills of reading in order to extract the content. An ideal reader would be one who is able to extract the content from any text. So, we have to exploit different kinds of texts effectively to develop all the interpretive skills of reading. Therefore while choosing a text one has to be very clear about the sort of interpretive skills each text demands, and what methods to apply in order to help the readers to develop them. Besides, the text should interest the readers to read further.

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### 3B.4 Reading skills and strategies

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The following is just a broad outline of the skills and strategies of reading that may be developed through the exploitation of texts :

(i) Skills involving increasing and varying reading speeds i.e skimming, scanning, study reading etc. Which has already been dealt with earlier.

(ii) Skills exploiting the background knowledge of the students through reference apparatus, graphic conventions, illustrations and charts etc.

(iii) Word-attack skills to develop the ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words in context or the ability to use a dictionary etc.

(iv) Text-attack skills of interpreting the text as a whole, using all the necessary clues or reference words given including cohesion and rhetorical structure etc.

#### Utilizing non-text information

Very often it is seen that graphic conventions like layout, punctuation marks, the type-face, use of symbols help a lot on the understanding of a text.

The title of a text, the index, the blurbs etc. help the readers to locate information or predict what the text contains. These could be used as reference apparatus.

Then again, non-verbal information such as maps, illustrations, diagrams, charts, etc can aid in the understanding of text.

(a) A line of a few dots (.....) indicates

(i) an incomplete utterance, e.g. 'I could hardly believe.....' she said with a sigh.

(ii) hesitation (in a dialogue) or an omission from a quotations : 'I.....I was about to open the envelop when.....rescue.

(b) Use of quotation marks : ('.....') or ('.....').

- (i) The basic function of quotation marks is to indicate words spoken by a character.
- (ii) The marks indicate a word or a phrase which the writer would not use, but which is commonly used.

(c) Other than punctuation marks, there are other *symbols* that have their own functions in a text which help readers to interpret a text, e.g. symbols that indicate footnotes ; such as the use of asterics (\*) or a dagger (†) to draw the reader's attention to a note that may need explanation or reference.

(d) The title of a text can also help in selecting a reading material. It serves as an indicator of content. Readers can predict from the title what is likely to be the content.

(f) The blurb given on the back of the cover can also help and guide the readers to select the right book for reading.

There are many other reference apparatus which readers need to be aware of before reading a book, such as : appendices, notes, bibliographical references, list of symbols, abbreviations, glossaries, diagrams, graphs etc.

Such types of non-verbal information can be of specific help to the reader to learn to read effectively and to interpret the text easily. The verbal and non-verbal information used together is of great assistance in interpreting a text.

Two sample exercises are given below :

### Activity-1

Match the words to the symbols.

(a) pets



(b) handicapped



(c) boating



(d) hunting



(e) cycling



(f) skiing



(g) horseriding



(h) fishing

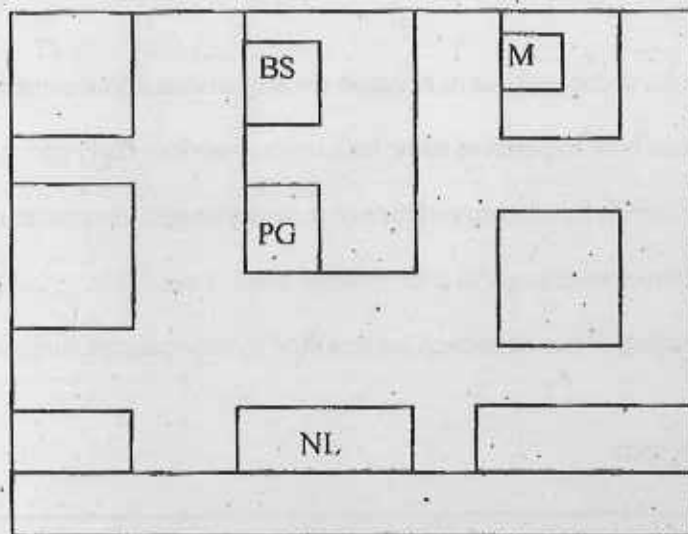




### Activity-2

Read the following text and show the route in the map using an arrow.

To travel around the city you would have to take bus No. 27 which goes from the bus station to the museum three times a day. The bus comes out of the bus stand and turns left. The first place of interest you pass by is the public gardens at the end of the road. Then the bus turns left again at the crossing, and drives slowly as it passes the National Library. Then it turns right and stops at the promenade along the river. It waits for half an hour and then turns back along the same road till it reaches the museum.



B.S = Bus station

P.G = Public Gardens

N.L = National Library

M = Museum

### Review Questions :

According to Williams (1984), the purpose for reading is :

- (a) getting general information
- (b) getting specific information
- (c) for pleasure and for interest.

### Activity-1

Think about all the materials that a reader would read in English or in the mother tongue, listing them according to William's categories :

For general information	For specific information	For pleasure and interest

### Activity-2

Think about your own student's reading purposes in relation to the points given below. Which ones are similar/different?

- to obtain information for some purpose or because we are curious about some topic.
- to obtain instructions on how to perform some task for our work or daily life.
- to keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letters.
- to know when and where something will take place or what is available.
- to know what is happening or has happened (as reported in newspapers, magazines, reports etc.
- for enjoyment or excitement.

## 3B.5 Styles of Reading (The sub-skills of reading)

We already know that an efficient reader who is versed on several ways of interacting with various types of text, is flexible and chooses appropriate reading strategies depending on the particular text that he intends to read. An efficient reader is able to 'switch' styles according to the type of text. So a reader has to match reading skills to reading purpose. We would not, for example, read an extract from a 17th century novel in the same way as we would read the entertainment page in the newspaper to look for a particular TV programme. Skilled readers can scan to locate specific information in a text and skim to extract general information from the text.

The main ways of reading that the reader may adopt is as follows :

- **Skimming** : i.e quickly running the eyes over a text to get the gist of the context.
- **Scanning** : i.e. going through a text quickly to find a particular information.

- **Extensive reading** : i.e. reading longer texts for pleasure mainly for global understanding.
- **Intensive reading** : i.e. reading shorter units of text to extract detailed information. This is more an accuracy activity.

In real life, our reading purposes often vary and so we have to devise varied exercises for practice according to the type of text and the purpose for reading it. Efficient readers interrogate materials of different types by looking for 'clues' in titles, sub-titles and within the passage itself. Pre-reading questions can be useful because they focus the reader's attention on the kind of information that the reader is expected to come across in the text. When working on a page of classified ads, for example, it would be highly artificial to work on exercises requiring detailed comprehension of ads. Such activities would be boring and would only discourage the students.

Reading involves a variety of sub skills. The main ones are listed below. (This list is taken from John Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design*.)

- Recognizing the script of a language.
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding explicitly stated information.
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning.
- Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.
- Understanding relations within the sentence.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesive devices.
- Interpreting text by going outside it.
- Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse.
- Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.
- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc.)
- Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
- Basic reference skills.
- Skimming.
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

In order to develop these skills, several type of exercises can be used. These question-types can have two different functions :

1. To clarify the organization of a piece of writing. The question can be about :
  - the function of a passage.
  - the general organization (e.g. argumentative).
  - the rhetorical organization (e.g. contrast, comparison).
  - the cohesive devices (e.g. link words).
  - the intrasentential relations (e.g. derivation, morphology etc).
2. To clarify the contents of the passage. The questions can be about :
  - plain fact (direct reference)
  - implied fact (inference)
  - deduced meaning (supposition)

The above skills, question-types and question-functions are constantly related, since a given exercise uses a certain type of question, with a certain function, to develop a particular reading skill.

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### 3B.6 Task types

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The following is a list of task types that may be used in order to develop the various sub-skills of reading. Some of the task-types demand non-linguistic responses, whereas some demand linguistic responses.

- (a) Task-types that demand *non-linguistic response* :
  - Reading and following instructions and doing something or following instructions and showing directions using a dotted line or an arrow.
  - arranging (sequencing) by using symbols.
  - completing a map/drawing.
  - putting a tick mark (checking).
  - making a graph.
  - underlining/circling/putting in a box.
  - labelling a diagram.
  - tracing a route on a map.

— matching.

(b) Task-types that demand linguistic responses :

Reading and.....

- filling in columns/matrix (using short responses).
- labelling tree-diagrams/flow charts.
- filling in gaps (with words/sentence/parts of sentences). Cloze type.
- making free notes.
- labelling paragraphs/functions of sentences.
- inserting headings/logical connectors
- inserting missing information.
- answering short questions (open-ended : wh/-qsts/, closed types; multiple choice type; True-false type etc.).

**Deducting the meaning of unfamiliar words in context**

Words do not exist in isolation. Their meanings are defined through their relationships with other words and it is through understanding these relationships that we arrive at our understanding of words. Some of these relationships are seen in word association tests eg. a word or a list of words may be given and students may be asked to provide words associated with those words by forming a list.

Example :	words (as stimulus)	response
	accident	car, truck, etc.
	alive	dead, etc.
	baby	mother, crawl, etc
	born	die, create, etc.
	house	cottage, tent, etc.

There can be a number of different ways in which associative links between words can be organized. An important part of reading is to be able to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. To prove this, here is an experiment using a nonsense word. Try to understand the general meaning :

'The children were *bleebing* all over the playground.'

(Guess what the nonsense word 'bleebing' means.)

You already know : — it is a verb (from the form).



- it involves movement (because of the expression *all over*.)
- it is something that children do e.g. playing or running.

In this activity you had to use knowledge of the language system.

## Experiment No. 2

Read the next and try to understand the general meaning of the story. The underlined words are all nonsense words.

### My Father's Watch

In our village, there were only six good clocks. The biggest clock was in the church *stram* where everybody could see it. My father owned one of the others. It stood in our kitchen. He wound it every night before he went to bed.

Once a year, the clock *marret* came from Winchester. He came on his horse. He cleaned the clock in the church *stram* first. Then he cleaned ours, and he set its hands to the correct time.

My mother always gave him something to drink, and they talked together. He told her about his life in Winchester. This was our nearest town. It was very old. Some people say that English kings once lived there, in a *jurrip*. That was a long time ago; but parts of the *jurrip* still remain.

My father was a *barlim* and he was a busy man. When the clock had been cleaned, he always left the room. 'Women can *taddle* their time with stories,' he said, 'but men have work to do.' And he went back to his *bárl*.

But my father's greatest *fastam* was not the clock. It was a watch. It was fixed to a *wol* so that you could wear it on your *prad*.

My father kept it in a locked *dimp* in his desk. He only brought it out on special days. Then he fixed the *wol* round his *prad* and he wore the watch for a few hours. After that, he locked it in its *dimp* again.

*The White Mountains* pl, John Christopher

The experiment will prove that it is quite possible to understand a text without understanding every word and it is possible to deduce the meaning of many unknown words from their context or from clues such as the position of the word in the sentence.

Here are a few example task - types that develop other sub-skills ;

## **I. Skills involved :**

### **Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances**

Several language functions often appear within a text. It is easy to recognize the function.e.g. through the use of indicators. Here is an example :

Read the following dialogue and indicate the function for each utterane from those given below :

Mita : Hullo, Rani !

Rani : Hullo Mita ! How're you ?

Mita : Fine. Well, I'm leaving the Boarding soon as my holidays will start next week.

Rani : Why don't you come along with us. We're planning to go to P:uri.

Mita : But, I've never liked sea-side. I think Darjeeling would be better.

Rani : That's a good idea ! It'd be pleasant there.

**Functions :** 1. Expressing opinion

2. Enquiring

3. Greeting

4. Inviting

5. Giving information

6. Agreeing

**II. Skilled involvled :** Understanding relations between parts of a text.

This helps the readers to find out how the text is organized. It develops the ability to rebuild a passage whose different parts are given out of order.

Read the following sentences. There are two very short stories, but the sentences of the two stories are jumbled. Separate the sentences belonging to Story-1 and those belonging to Story-2 and then rebuild the sentences to form two meaningful stories :

- (a) His friend was upset and told him to hurry up.
- (b) When I make out my report it will be easier to write "King Street" as the place of occurrence.
- (c) 'Whatever are you doing that for ?' asked a by stander.

- (d) Two burglars broke into a bank.
- (e) He replied, 'Don't worry, it will take a bit longer, but we'll drive the finger print department crazy.'
- (f) The policeman replied with a knowing look.
- (g) One went up to the safe, took off his shoes and socks and started moving the combinations with his toes.
- (h) A horse had dropped dead in a street named Nebuchadnezzar Street and a policeman was laboriously dragging it round the corner into the next street.

**III. Skills involved :** Identifying the main idea. Inferring and connecting. Predicting from headlines or titles what to expect in the reading text that follows can help readers to infer information from clues given or by using background knowledge.

Study the following texts and do the tasks that follow :

**Text A**

Don't take chances. Take precautions. Ensure greater safety with fire resistant.

**Text B**

Leave a better earth for our progeny

**Text C**

Add inches to your savings.

**Text D**

Avoid wastage of water. Preserve every drop of drinking water. Water is life.

- Task - 1**
- (i) Which of these texts do you think is an advertisement for a commercial product ?
  - (ii) What do you think the product is ?

2. Complete the table below to indicate a brief information (in a sentence or two) that each text provides :

Text	Information
A	
B	
C	
D	

IV. Skills involved : Understanding relations between parts of a text. It is important to encourage students to draw tree diagrams. Visualize the information in the text to distinguish the main idea from subordinate ideas.

[The following task is taken from 'Developing Reading skill' by F. Grellet]

**Task :** Read the following text and complete tree-diagram that follows with words given below.:

### **Anthropology**

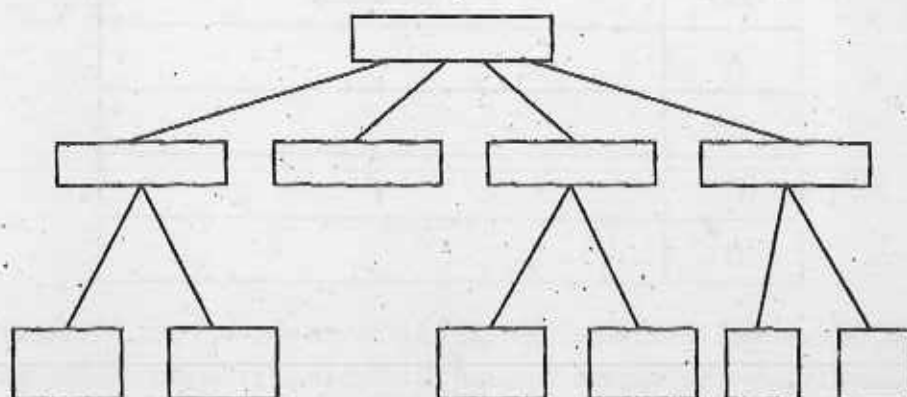
We shall outline the four major subfields of anthropology that have emerged in the twentieth century physical anthropology, archeology, linguistics and cultural anthropology.

Physical anthropology deals with human biology across space and time. It is divided into two areas paleontology, the study of the fossil evidence of the primate (including human) evolution, and neontology, the comparative biology of living primates, including population and molecular genetics, body shapes (morphology), and the extent to which behavior is biologically programmed.

Archeology is the systematic retrieval and analysis of the physical remains left behind by human beings, including both their skeletal and cultural remains. Both the classical civilizations and prehistoric groups, including our prehuman ancestors, are investigated.

Linguistics is the study of language across space and time. Historical linguistics attempts to trace the tree of linguistic evolution and to reconstruct ancestral language forms. Comparative (or structural) linguistics attempts to describe formally the basic elements of languages and the rules by which they are ordered into intelligible speech.

Cultural anthropology includes many different perspectives and specialized subdisciplines but is concerned primarily with describing the forms of social organization and the cultural systems of human groups. In technical usage, ethnography is the description of the social and cultural systems of one particular group, whereas ethnology is the comparison of such descriptions for the purpose of generalizing about the nature of all human groups.



*ethnology*  
*archeology*  
*structural linguistics*  
*physical anthropology*  
*neontology*  
*anthropology*

*historical linguistics*  
*cultural anthropology*  
*linguistics*  
*paleontology*  
*ethnography*

V. Another very important subskill is understanding the relationship between sentences and clauses. This is possible when the reader has the ability to identify (i) *the logical connectors* and (ii) *the referene devices*.

Logical connectors are the conjunctions and adverbs placed between sentences and clauses to show their relationship, for example :

(i)

Relationship	logical connectors
cause and effect	thus, therefore, so, consequently, as a result etc.
contrast and concession	but, yet, however, although, whereas, etc.
time	then, while, after, when, etc.
addition	what's more, besides (that), in addition to this, etc
exemplification	for example, for instance, such as, etc.
conclusion	to conclude, in brief, in short, etc.
rephrasing	in other words, that is to say etc.



Here is an extract showing the reference device ;

(ii) Photographs serve many purposes, and nearly everyone has a camera, but some photographers see deeper and show more than others. Like artists and sculptors, they are deeply concerned with form, shape and texture as they touch the human spirit. Such a one was Dorothea Langer who .....

Famous Women of the 20th Century by Carol Christian and Diana Christian.

### A few sample exercises :

#### Task-1 :

Read the following text and fill in the gaps with the most appropriate link-words from the list given below in the box :

Television was invented by John Logie Baird,  when he was young he built an aeroplane,   he tried to fly in it, it crashed down below.  Baird was fortunate not to be killed.  it did not discourage him. When he was older he tried to make diamonds from coal

when	although	yet	so
then	however	but	and

#### Task-2

Read the following text and indicate the references by using arrows. (One is done for you).

It is quite another thing to produce a proof of the correctness of that idea. Darwin thought he had that proof in his notebooks. He saw that all animals had a struggle to survive. Those which were best at surviving their environment passed on the good qualities which had helped them to their descendants. This was called 'the survival of the fittest.'

### Review Questions :

1. Here is a list of situations for reading. Study each of the situations and identify the sub-skill(s) that a reader might use in each case. Give reasons for your answer :

#### Situations :

1. Reading the instructions given on a medicine bottle or a medicine carton.
2. Reading the headlines of a daily newspaper.
3. Reading an article on "The Importance of Communicative English." today.

4. Finding the timings of a train in a railway time-table.
5. Reading a novel that is prescribed in the syllabus.
6. Going through the content page and the blurb to find out what the book would be like.
7. Reading an advertisement as a person belonging to an advertising agency.
8. Reading a novel while travelling or waiting for a connecting train.
9. Going through the telephone directory for a friend's telephone number.
10. Reading the instruction manual to assemble a gadget.

II. Here is a list of strategies that a reader might adopt :

- (a) **skimming** : reading to get an overall information.
- (b) **scanning** : reading quickly for specific information.
- (c) **intensive reading** : reading carefully for detailed information.
- (d) **extensive reading** : reading for pleasure.

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### 3B.7 Asking Questions :

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Reading comprehension, traditionally meant being able to answer a set of questions based on a text. The questions were framed in such a way that they reflected on the reader's understanding and often the readers were able to answer these questions by fluke without even understanding the text. Such questions did not produce understanding. They were mainly testing type of questions rather than the teaching type.

In recent years the focus is mainly on *teaching*. Therefore there is a shift in the approach for teaching reading comprehension. Developing types of questions are devised and the techniques for using them are taught as these are primarily intended for teaching rather than testing. Readers use their own strategies to understand the text.

The questions that help the reader to understand are the ones that make the reader work at the text, i.e. the reader needs to go back again and again to the text to make sense of it. They make the reader realize which bits of the text are not clear so that the reader can concentrate on those particular bits. Even a challenging question can become useless if not properly dealt with. Every student must actively try to answer the question to understand the text. For example, in multiple-choice question, just accepting the correct answer will be fruitless without asking for reasons why it is right and why the others are inappropriate. Yet multiple-choice questions in the hands of an efficient teacher can be highly effective for training interpretive skills. The technique for using them effectively is very important.

The purpose of questioning should be to make the students aware of the way language is used to convey meaning of the text.

Some straightforward questions based on the content of the passage may be asked at the beginning of the work on the text. When there is a chance that students would struggle to find answers, it is only then that the real work of developing understanding can begin. Accordingly questions may be devised that will help students to interpret the text.

### Forms of question :

Questions are classified according to their form. Each form in turn should be used in questions on reading texts. Whether a question is easy or difficult is usually found in the response rather than the question itself.

1. Yes/No questions :

e.g. Was the stranger waiting at the door ?

Response

{ Yes, (he was)  
No, (he wasn't)

2. Alternative questions :

e.g. Did the stranger have cut marks on his face or was he fair and good looking?

Response : He was good looking.

3. Wh-questions- (beginning with who, which, what, when, where) etc.

e.g. When did the incident take place ?

Response : It was late at night.

4. How/Why questions :

e.g. How did the stranger escape ?

Response : He swam across the river and disappeared in the woods.

You will find that the students are not required to compose a sentence while responding to Yes/No questions. But How/Why questions often require full sentence answers which are totally different in structure and content from the question.

The form of the question should be chosen according to need and suitability, though the form is not as important as the response. Openended questions are questions in which the students are

free to compose any suitable response. 5. True/False questions present the student with a statement. The student has to decide whether it is *true* or *false* in accordance with the text. T/F questions are useful in promoting discussion. Good comprehension questions always require skilful devising. They should force the students to think things out for themselves.

### Types of questions :

Reading comprehension questions can be of different types. (1) Questions of literal comprehension are those whose answers are directly and explicitly available in the text. Questions of this kind could often be answered in the words of the text itself. (2) Then there are questions involving reorganization or reinterpretation. Such questions require the students to obtain literal information from various parts of the text and then put them together, or to reinterpret information. Such questions are useful for making the students consider the text as a whole. (3) Questions of inference type are those that oblige the student to read between the lines to consider what is implied but not explicitly stated. Such questions are considerably more difficult because they require the students to understand the text well enough to work out its implications. (4) There are questions of evaluation. Such questions involve the reader in making considered judgement about the text in terms of what the writer is trying to do or say in the text. Questions of this type are most sophisticated of all, as they ask the reader not merely to respond, but to analyse his response and discover the objective reasons for it, as well as measuring it against the presumed intention of the writer. (5) The next type is a question of personal response. The answer to this type depends on the reader and least on the writer. Here the reader simply records his reaction to the content of the text. (6) The cloze procedure is another device for teaching as well as testing. It is quite familiar in the field of testing but it can also be used for teaching. A cloze text is easy to prepare. It involves the deletion of words from a given text at usually regular intervals of between five to ten words. No deletions are made in the first one or two sentences, so that the reader can get an idea of the topic. Choosing the right word to fill in the gaps may require using inference as well as understanding of what is directly stated.

### Review Questions :

Study the following passage and the tasks given. Analyse the different task types or question types and the sub-skill(s) involved in each task.

In Mother House, as it is popularly known, the day begins at 4.30 a.m. The nuns foregather for a two-hour session of prayers and meditation followed by Mass. Then they get to work. There is an enormous amount of washing to be done as all the clothes and linen of the Home for the Dying, the Children's Home (Shishu Bhawan), the slum schools and the leprosaria are washed by the nuns. Each sister has her own bucket which, apart from her sari and books of prayer, is her only other possession. The hand pump in the courtyard is their main source of water. The bare slabs of the cement floor are their wash tub. After the washing is done, they have a quick breakfast. Just as the eastern horizon turns grey they set out on their jeeps, by tram-car, bus or on foot with supplies of powdered milk and medicine to their school dispensaries, home for unwanted children, lepers

and Home for the Dying. Parties also go into the city's innumerable slums and railway stations looking for abandoned children, the hungry, diseased, destitute and the dying. So it goes on all day till late in the evening. They have an early supper followed by more prayer and meditation. The nuns retire to their dormitories and the lights are switched off at 10 p.m.

**Task :**

1. Complete the following statements with information given in the text.

(a) The nuns have to do a lot of washing in the Mother House because

.....

(b) The earthly possessions of a sister of charity are.....

.....

**Task Type :** .....

**Sub-skill(s) involved :** .....

2. Read the summary of the passage and fill in each of the blanks with one word only.

The day begins-----at the Mother House. After----they get ready for work. They have a lot of-----to do. After washing and breakfast they go to work at-----places where people are in-----, They come back in the-----, have ----- and then go to-----.

(i) Task type : .....

(ii) Sub-skill(s) involved : .....

3. Study the following sentences and write (T) for true, (F) for false or (DK) for don't know if not stated in the text. Find supporting statements from the passage for each answer.

(a) The nuns work very hard. ( )

(b) The nuns only work in school. ( )

(c) The nuns live a life of luxury. ( )

(i) Task type : .....

(ii) Sub skill(s) involved : .....

4. Tick the correct answer from the choice given :

The nuns stay at .....

(a) Shishu Bhavan



(b) Home for the Dying

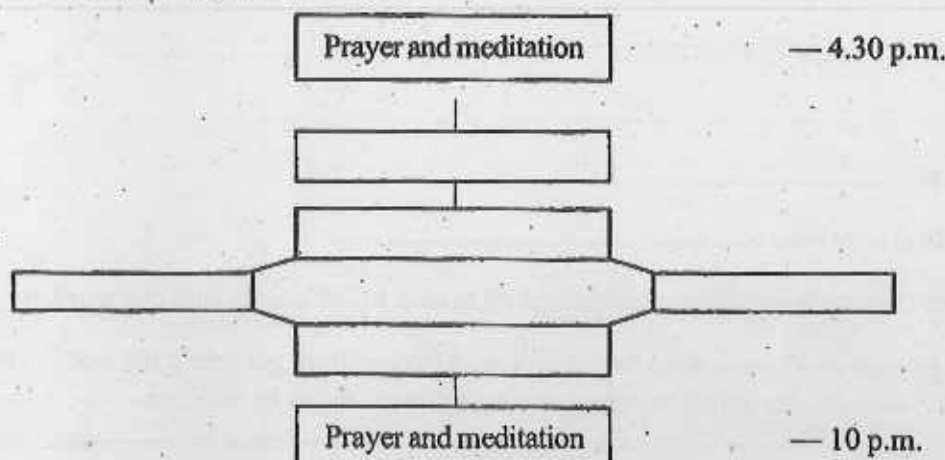
(c) Mother House

(d) Leprosaria

(i) Task type : .....

(ii) Sub-skill(s) involved : .....

5. Complete the following flow chart with information from the text on 'A Typical Day of a Nun' at the Mother House.



(i) Task type : .....

(ii) Sub-skill(s) involved : .....

**Review Questions :**

2. (Levels of questioning)

Get into pairs. Read through the following passage and study the questions that go with it.

Find out :

(i) The text type : Whether it is (i) a story, a novel etc.

(ii) Narrative, descriptive, reflective, etc.

(ii) Whether each question is a :

(a) Word-level question i.e. directed to meaning or linguistic form.

(b) Sentence level question i.e. focus on sentence (s)

(c) Text level question i.e. focus on whole text.

(d) outside the text question i.e focus on Reader's Knowledge of world (background knowledge).

**Text :**

He was a hefty man in his mid-fifties. He had a large stomach which looked just right behind the wheel of his thirty-ton lorry.

One day, driving along a bendy country road, he saw a bridge over the road ahead of him. 'Maximum height : 14ft' he read on the notice.

He stopped and got out. He looked from his lorry to the bridge, scratching his head thoughtfully.

'My lorry's 14 feet 1 inch' he thought to himself. 'It'll never get through there.

Just at that moment a motor-bike policeman roared up and asked, what the problem was.

'Can't get through, the trucker told him.

'Easy, said the other, 'Just let your tyres down an inch or two and have them re-inflated on the other side.

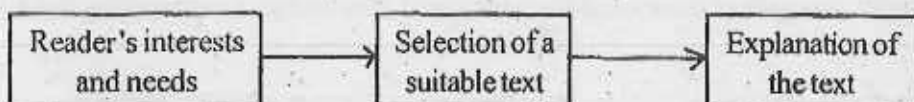
The driver thought about this attentively for several minutes. 'No use', he said weightily. 'It's at the top it won't get through, not at the bottom.

**Read the passage and then Answer the following Questions :**

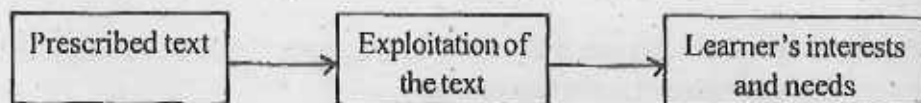
1. What kind of text is it ?
2. How many characters are there in the passage ?
3. The story is about :
  - (i) a problem
  - (ii) a disaster
  - (iii) an accident
4. Pick out words and expressions that describe the man to be huge and bigbuilt.
5. Find a word in the story which says that the road he was travelling on was not a straight road.
6. Why did he stop when he came to a bridge ?
7. Why couldn't he cross the bridge ?
8. Why do you think a policeman came up ?
9. What does the expression 'roared up' suggest ?
10. What advice did the policeman give him ?
11. Did the man take the policeman's advice ? Why ?

### 3B.8 Classroom strategies : approaches to reading.

In a reading class, *motivation* is a most crucial point that needs to be considered. Readers must be motivated to read. An ideal starting point for motivating would be to find out first the reader's wants, needs and interests, and then to select the reading matter and devise activities that will make them want to read. This may be represented in the following manner :



However, often it happens that the teachers find themselves obliged to use a prescribed textbook. The starting point then becomes the text rather than the reader's needs, and therefore exploitation of the text becomes all-important in motivating the readers. Such a situation may be represented in the following manner :



In such a case, exploitation of the text becomes most crucial. It refers to what is done in the three phases in reading, i.e. the *prereading phase*, the *while-reading phase* and the *post-reading phase*. These three phases help not only with the problem of motivation, but also with other problems of language.

#### The three phases :

**Pre-reading :** This phase aims to : (i) introduce and arouse interest in the topic of the text. (ii) motivate readers by giving a reason for reading, (iii) provide some language preparation for the text.

Not all of these aims would be relevant for all kinds of texts. In some cases, there may not be any language problem or such, or, the language might already have been introduced. Of course this does not mean that each and every unknown word needs to be explained, as long as the reader is able to tackle the text and the tasks that go with it, with ease.

To help prepare for a pre-reading work, the following points may be kept in mind :

- (i) What background knowledge the reader already has about the content of the text and how can that knowledge be exploited ?
- (ii) Why should anyone want to read the text, and can the same or similar reasons be generated in the readers ?

Answers to these questions will provide clues for ways of introducing the text and motivating the readers. For this, visuals, maps, diagrams or a set of questions could be used.

### **While-reading phase :**

This phase draws the focus of readers to the text and aims to :

- (i) help understanding the writer's purpose.
- (ii) help understanding the text structure.
- (iii) clarify the text content.

The following questions may be considered when preparing while-reading tasks.

- (i) What is the function of the text ?
- (ii) How is the text organised ? (e.g. a narrative, a descriptive, a reflective, argumentative, etc.)
- (iii) What information or idea needs to be exploited ?
- (iv) What information can be inferred or deduced ?
- (v) What language can be learnt from the text ?
- (iv) What reading styles may be practised ? (e.g. skimming, scanning, intensive, etc.)

As a rule, while reading work should begin with a global understanding and then move on to smaller units such as paragraphs, sentences and words. The reason is that larger units provide help to understand the smaller units—a paragraph or sentence and thus to understand a word.

### **Post-reading phase :**

The aim of this phase is to :

- (i) consolidate or reflect upon what has been read,
- (ii) relate the knowledge just acquired to the reader's own knowledge, interests, or views.

The work does not refer directly to the text, but 'grows out' of it. Post-reading may also include the reaction of the readers to the text. Post-reading work should therefore contribute, in a coherent manner, to the writing, speaking and listening skills that the programme aims to develop.

To prepare for a post-reading phase, the following questions may be kept in mind :

- (i) Do the readers know of a similar situation as given in the text ?
- (ii) Does the text provide a situation that is good enough to be recommended ?
- (iii) Does the text present a situation that needs to be completed ?

(iv) Does the text provide ideas or views that need to be counter-balance ?

The work that the questions lead to may be writing, interaction, drawing diagrams etc. Motivating the learners need not necessarily take place in the pre-reading phase. It may occur in the while-reading phase as well using an interesting task. The interactive work in the post-reading may develop the reader's communicative skills. This may also lead on to working on projects by developing the reader's reference skills. The three-phase approach therefore leads to integration of the skills in a coherent manners.

### Review Question

Read the following text on '*A black and chestnut acrobat*', and study the questions that go with it.

#### A black and chestnut acrobat

As the weather turns colder the mountain streams become quieter and flow at a gentler pace. The water is freezing cold and in the higher reaches you can see chunks of ice floating down. The White-capped Redstart takes the changing temperatures in its stride and just flies down a few thousand feet to be at the right stream at the right time.

Found in the Himalayas from 6,000 to 14,000 ft, the small black and chestnut bird has a sparkling white cap on top of its head and this headgear sets it apart from its cousin the Black Redstart. You will see its snow-white cap on almost every mountain stream which is cold, clean and full of aquatic insects. It will perch on a rock right in the middle of the gushing water and search for food.

In summer when the streams are at their roaring best, the White-capped Redstart will leap like an acrobat over the torrents of water to catch the unwary insect swimming past at high speed. After every successful dive, it will call out loudly and you can hear its triumphant whistle rising clearly above the raging waters. The many winged insects that hover above the stream are also caught deftly and swallowed with a gulp of chilled spring water.

To get from one end of the stream to the other, the Red start hops nimbly on the slippery stones instead of flying, because when it travels like this it can keep an eye on the food matter flowing below the stones. Sometimes the bird stops for a moment to display its bright chestnut tail and opens the feathers out like a fan and then swiftly closes them again.

The White-capped Redstart breeds during the summer when the stream has enough water and insects for its family. Since the parents do not want to spend too much time commuting between the nest and the stream, they build their home close by the water. The nest is a cup of moss and ferns which is very difficult to spot even though it is usually placed at ground level. Even the eggs are a shade of pale green and merge into the dancing reflections of the stream, and only the birds know for sure where their homes are.



- I. (a) Think about a stream in the Himalayas—what words can you think of to describe it?
- (b) What other words can you think of to describe a fast-running stream?
- (c) What do you find in a mountain stream?
- (d) List what you would expect to find out about birds living beside a stream in the mountain region with reference to (i) HABITAT (ii) FEEDING HABITS (iii) BREEDING.

II. Read the passage quickly and say :

- the name of the bird referred to
- where is it found
- how many varieties are there
- what are these birds compared to

III. Read once again and find :

- words that refer to the cold winter.
- words that describe the water and have almost the same
- words that describe the movement of the birds meaning
- words that describe the insects.

IV. Look at para 1—what does the expression 'higher reaches' refer to?

In para 3—what does 'its' refer to?

In para 4—what does 'food matter' refer to?

In para 5—who are 'the parents'?

What does the word 'which' refer to in the second last line?

V. Read once again and choose the right answer to complete the following statements :

(a) When winter comes the birds.....

- fly away to warmer land
- fly down to a lower level
- don't come out of their nests

(b) The birds are called 'acrobatic' because.....

- they can fly.

- they can eat insects quickly
- they can change position very quickly and easily

(c) When the bird is able to catch an insect.....

- it screams loudly
- it becomes quiet
- it whistles

(d) The bird hops from one end of the stream to another because.....

- it can easily look for insects
- the rocks are slippery
- it prefers hopping to flying

(e) These birds breed in summer because.....

- it is warm in summer
- the stream is full of water and insects
- it is very cold in winter

VI. Answer the following questions :

- (i) How do the birds eat the insects ?
- (ii) Why are the insects called—'unwary insects'?
- (iii) There are some insects that swim and others that hover above the stream. Does the word 'hover' remind you of anything-else ? What is it?
- (iv) Where do these birds build their nests?
- (v) Why are these nests not visible?

VIII. Read the passage and complete the following chart :

Habitat ?	Appearance ?	Food?	Breeding habit ?	Nesting habit?	Eggs?
	black and chestnut in colour and white in top of head				a shade of pale green

VIII. Say whether the following statements are true/false/don't know about the birds :

- (a) The bird is quite small.
- (b) The birds can't fly very high.
- (c) They live in caves in the mountain.
- (d) They are swift and clever birds.
- (e) They are very happy when they find an insect.
- (f) They like to display their feathers.
- (g) They hide their nests under the ground.

IX. Think of a bird that you see everyday and write a description about its :—

- Habitat
- Appearance
- Food habit
- Breeding habit
- Nesting habit

X. Collect names and information about other birds of the Himalayan region and make a wall chart. Try to add pictures to make the chart look attractive. Make use of an encyclopedia for information. You may work in groups.

Now, categorize the above questions under the following headings :

Task	Phase	Focus	Reader strategies or style of reading	Activity type or Task type
I				
II				
III				
IV				
V				
VI				
VII				
VII				

**Hints :**

1. **Phase** : Pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading
2. **Focus** : (Levels of questioning) : Content, text, word, sentence.
3. **Reader-strategies** : skimming, scanning, predicting, inferring, evaluating, reacting, recognizing, etc.
4. **Activity type or task type** : Underline, label, insert, multiple-choice type, T/F type, wh-questions, information transfer type etc.

**To sum up :** In this part of the module we have discussed the definition of reading and the various reasons for reading and also the styles we adopt for effective reading. Reading involves a number of sub-skills that need to be developed to make an efficient reader, the various task-types and questions that may be used to make a reader want to read. The selection of an interesting text has been discussed and the classroom strategies that a teacher may adopt in an effective reading class.

**Bibliography :**

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2. Teaching Reading Comprehension—T. H. Cairey
3. Developing Reading Skills—F. Grellet
4. Reading in the Language Classroom—E. Williams
5. Communicative Syllabus Design—J. Munby.

# **Unit 3C □ Reflective Skills : Study Skills, Reference Skills, Thinking as a Skill**

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## **Structure**

### **3C.0 Objectives**

### **3C.1 Introduction**

### **3C.2 Reading Efficiently**

#### **3C.2.1 Reading with a Purpose**

#### **3C.2.2 Aspects of Efficient Reading Process**

#### **3C.2.3 Skimming a Text**

#### **3C.2.4 Surveying**

#### **3C.2.5 Scanning**

#### **3C.2.6 Graphics**

### **3C.3 Note-taking**

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#### **3C.4.1 Dictionary**

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## 3C.0 Objectives

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This unit will introduce you to ideas to help your learners to be efficient readers. To be read efficiently your learners should

- learn to read with a purpose
- learn to look up different types of reference books
- develop the habit of thinking as a skill

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## 3C.1 Introduction

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Every day we come across a lot of reading materials. Some of these we read consciously—we even look forward to reading them, like reading the newspaper early in the morning. Some we read without paying conscious attention, like reading the publicity hoardings or signboards of shops as we drive past them—unless we are particularly interested in the message on the hoarding or we are looking for a particular shop.

The fact is that we read for different reasons—we read for information, or for meaning, or we read for pleasure. Accordingly, we read different kinds of materials, eg. textbooks, instructions, advertisements, storybooks, magazines—the list is endless. Depending on the purpose, we read fast (just to have an overall impression of the text, or to spot a specific information) or more slowly (to understand and/or enjoy). We will deal with all these at length in this unit.

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## 3C.2 Reading Efficiently

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What is reading efficiency? At one level, it is reading with a clear purpose in mind, which leads to a better and fuller understanding of the text (we are reading). At another level, it involves adopting the *correct reading process* which helps us to read at a faster speed, again leading to better comprehension.

### 3C.2.1. Reading with a Purpose

**Before** you start reading a text (a book, an article, a poem, etc.), it helps if you ask yourselves *why* you are reading it and *what* you hope to learn from it. If you do not start with a clear answers to the above questions in mind, you may fail to understand the text, misinterpret it, lose interest, in short, waste your time. Accordingly, when you have finished reading, you should ask yourselves, 'what have we learned? Have my purposes in reading been served?'

Michael Wallace (Study Skills, 2001) suggests that we read *actively* which is *reading with a clear purpose in mind*. Active reading also involves *selective* reading because

all that we read may not be relevant to our purpose we may skip or skim over these parts. Other parts which are highly relevant will need to be studied in detail. Sometimes, the information that we are looking for may not be there in the text at all. In such a case we need not waste our time reading it. When we read *selectively*, we concentrate only on what is relevant to our purpose.

### 3C.2.2. Aspects of Efficient Reading Process

Next question we are going to deal with is : What is an efficient reading process ?

What actually happens when we read ? We may think so, but our eyes do not glide smoothly from one word to the next, and then from one line to the next. Our eyes progress by little "jumps." They move, stop, move again. At every pause, our eyes focus on a short or long phrase, even a sentence. How many words our eyes take in at a time, constitutes our 'eye span.' The bigger our eye span, the faster we read. This habit is what you have to inculcate in your learners.

How will you achieve this ? For a start, see that your learners do not move their lips, follow the lines with their finger or with a pen or pencil while reading. Each of these habits slow down the reading process. To increase their eye span, you may show them a card with a short phrase on it for a very short time (two or three seconds) and ask them to repeat it. Gradually use longer phrases, as you reduce the time span. The idea is that they learn to take in a long phrase or a short sentence at a glance. Remember, slow readers are not necessarily better readers.

At the same time, remember that the reading speed will depend on the learner's familiarity with the language and the topic of the text or the difficulty of the topic and the language used. It also depends on our purpose of reading : sometimes we need to read slowly to understand the material (eg. a textbook).

### 3C.2.3. Skimming or Surveying a Text

So you should read actively, ie, with a purpose, so that you do not waste your time reading something not relevant to your purpose. You should read at a speed suitable to your purpose. Therefore, you should know where to look for the information you want. For that you should know and practise various *surveying* techniques.

Surveying is a form of skimming which means you do not read every word in a text. You survey to get an overall impression of, or the general information in the text.

#### ● Surveying a book

Now let us see how to survey a book to find out whether the book is relevant to the topic you are interested in, whether it is relevant only in part/s, and if so, which part/s, whether the author is a reliable authority on the subject, and so on.

The following are the parts of the book that help you in this matter.

- a. **The publisher's blurb** : The publisher's description of what the book is about, usually printed on the cover of the book. eg. *This book contains a useful general introduction on reading and outlines the ideas behind the content and organisation of.....*
- b. **The reviewer's comments** : Also often quoted in the back cover or book jacket. Eg. *A first-class book, attractively produced, it is full of clear and step-by-step, practical and varied exercises, with some interesting ideas....* But remember only the good reviews are generally quoted.
- c. **The foreword or the preface** : *It is often hard to imagine when reading this collection of papers, .....that it is only some ten years ago.....that those engaged in the applications of linguistics to language teaching and learning announced a concern with the promotion and development of learners' communicative competence as a key concept in their new thinking. ....It is in this... atmosphere that there is a special need for a coherent collection of specially written papers.....* The preface tells you what the book is about and perhaps its strong points are.
- d. **Contents page** : A typical contents page looks like this :

#### CONTENTS

Introduction to the ideas behind the content and the organisation of the course	1
How to use the book	2
Section One	
Reading for Information    Unit 1	12
Unit 2	16
Unit 3	20

The contents page tells us about what topics have been covered in the book and at what length and also on which pages you will find the topic you want to know about.

- c. **Index** : Here is part of a typical index that you will find at the end of the book

#### INDEX

Abelson, R. P., 165  
 address forms, 60, 64-68, 110  
 Allen, J. P. B., 7, 14, 15, 20  
 apologies, 68-70  
 appropriateness, 7-9

The index helps you in cross references, to locate the author and the topic easily, and also tells you which topics have been dealt with at a greater length (eg. compare the coverage of 'address forms' and 'apologies' in the index above).

- f. **Bibliography** : It is a comprehensive list of books that have been referred to in the book, or those recommended for further reading. It is also alphabetically arranged, beginning with the author and sometimes indicating multiple reference to the works of the same author. It not only names the publisher but also the year of publication, the name of the source book or journal if the article is not an original one or the author has referred to a previous article by himself or someone else.

Here is part of a typical page from a bibliography :

Jefferson, G (1972). 'Side sequence', in Sudnow, D. (1972), 294-338. argumentative text is likely to have the following organisation : problem-argument for/against author's opinion---justification--- conclusion.

If you know how a text has been organised, you will have a better idea about where to look for the information you need. It also helps you to write a summary of the text.

### 3C.2.6. Graphic Presentation

Some common methods of graphic presentation are : diagrams, tables, charts and flow charts, and graphs of different types. In academic writing, writers often present their data using these graphics. For the presentation of statistical data graphic presentation are almost obligatory. For describing a process in scientific writing flow charts are often used.

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## 3C.3 Taking Notes from a Text

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Why do we take notes ?

We take notes :

# to record writer's main ideas.

# to help you remember when revising the text.

# to make what the writer says part of your own knowledge.

Remember while taking notes, we do not copy every word.

You may follow these steps to take notes :

The first thing you do is to survey the text to get acquainted with it, so that you can quickly find out what the *writer's main points are*.



The next step is to read the text again quickly making a *note of the main points and how they are related to each other*. You may do it mentally (if the text is short), may underline the points in the text itself or write the points in your notebook.

If you are making notes in a notebook, put them down in a way that relates them to one another. You use a diagram (one of the graphic presentations) which is a most convenient method.

### 3C.3.1 Listing Systems

There are various *listing systems* that you may use. Choose a system and follow it throughout. Here are examples of some of the listing system.

Arabic Numerals : 1, 2, 3, .....

Decimal System : 1.1, 1.2, 1.3,.....2.0, 2.1, 2.2.....

Large Roman Numbers : I, II, III;.....

Small Roman Numbers : (i), (ii), (iii);.....

Capital Letters : A, B, C.....

Small Letters : (a), (b), (c);.....

Jespersion, O. (1951), *The Philosophy of Language*, London, Allen and Unwin Johnson, K. and Morow, K. (1979), *Communicate : The English of Social Interaction*, Cambridge University Press.

**g. The printing history :** It is usually printed on one of the early pages and tells you when the book was first published, reprinted, new editions/s issued. The information helps you to look for the current or latest development in the field.

#### ● Surveying a chapter

It is a good idea to survey a chapter as it is to survey a book. It is specially important when the topic is unfamiliar. By quickly surveying the chapter, we can make ourselves familiar with its general drift. This helps us to *read* it more efficiently.

Here are some useful hints for surveying a chapter :

■ Read only the first sentence of each paragraph. Generally the first sentence contains the main idea of that paragraph. By reading only the first sentence of each paragraph in a chapter, you may have a summary of the whole text.

■ Often the first and the last paragraphs are important because the writer may state what he intends to write about in the first paragraph or he may summarise what he has been saying in the last paragraph.



### 3C.2.4. Scanning

When we want some specific information from a book or text, we scan it. In this case we may get help from the index or the list of contents.

Here is an example of how we scan.

In each line of the word below, one word is printed on the left hand side, and the same word is repeated on the right hand side. Do this task. Scan for that word and circle it. You have 3 seconds.

mane / name man main mane maim

glacier / glacier glazier glaciél glance glassy

humour / humble humph bumble humber humour

How long did you take to do it? Did you *read* every word? You did not. You did not even read. You scanned the list and stopped the moment you came across the right word.

### 3C.2.5. Organisation of the Text

When we read, especially when we scan, it helps if we know how the text has been organised. For example, a scientific text often has this type of organisation: Problem—hypothesis—Experiment—conclusion. And these systems can be, and are often used in combination.

### 3C.3.2. Semantic Markers

These words or phrases serve as signals for the meaning and the structure of the text. They tell us how the text has been organised. So look for them while surveying or reading. The following are some of the semantic markers along with their meaning.

1. Listing: Firstly, secondly, in the first place, finally, lastly, etc.
2. Cause and effect relationship between ideas: so, therefore, because, since, etc.
3. Illustrating: for instance, for example.....
4. Opposition: but, nevertheless, yet, on the other hand.....
5. Summarising: to summarise, in other words, to sum up.....
6. Time relationship: then, next after that.....

There are only a few examples of the semantic markers.

### 3C.3.3. Using Abbreviations

As has already been mentioned, we do not copy every word from a text while taking notes. If you use symbols and abbreviation, it saves you time and effort. Students specialising in certain fields (eg, Chemistry, Physics) employ widely used symbols (O for Oxygen, C for Carbon, etc.)

However, these are specific to that field and may not be widely understood.

(i) We will talk about the most commonly used abbreviations next. Study this list.

cf. = compare ; eg. = for example ; etc. = et cetera, and so on ; ie = that is ; Nb = Note well (something important) ; viz. = namely' .....

(ii) Then there are symbols.

➤ greater than ; < less than ; equal to ; / = not equal to ; % per cent ; then there are common symbols like = , - ,

→ from.....to, leads to results in.....

In addition, we also make our own abbreviations for names or some commonly used words.

We can also take *branching notes* by using diagrammatic symbols. Here is an example.

Specialised symbols <-----Symbols-----> common symbols

Personal symbols

## Review Questions I

1. Here are some notes taken by a student from an article on pyramids. Write his notes more briefly by using abbreviations, symbols, etc. and leaving out the unnecessary words.

By the word 'pyramid' we usually mean the grave of an Egyptian king of the Old and Middle kingdoms (that is, from 2680 to 1567 BC).

The earliest pyramid was build for King Zoser and is called the 'Step Pyramid' because the sides go up in large steps. It is 197 feet high.

The largest pyramid ever made is one of a group of three built at Giza, south of Cairo, by the kings of the fourth dynasty, which lasted from 2680 to 2565 BC. This pyramid is called the 'Great Pyramid', and was built by King Khufu (his Greek name is Cheops). The outside of this pyramid consists of more than two million blocks of stone. The average weight of each of these blocks is two and a half tons.

2. Look at the information on 'Listing Numbers' above. Try to organise the information in the 'Branching' format.

## 3C.4 Reference Skills

There is another area where we need to *scan* to get the information we want. This when look up some words or information in a dictionary, Encyclopaedia, Thesaurus, newspaper advertisements for jobs, information on films, houses and accommodation, and so on.

### 3C.4.1. Using a Dictionary

We use a dictionary for specific information, and do not read it for pleasure. We scan quickly until we come across the word and the entries under it and as we locate the specific information, we stop.

What can we learn from a dictionary? It serves a lot of useful purpose, besides giving us the meaning of a word.

As teachers you should suggest that your learners use a monolingual dictionary. One reason for this is that there is hardly ever a total correspondence between words in two languages. Here are some of the reasons for using a monolingual dictionary.

1. To find out meanings of words (perhaps the most common reason), or whether there is more than one meaning for a particular word, by using the definitions and the examples.
2. To check out spellings of words.
3. To find the pronunciation of words.
4. To see if there is any important grammar points associated with a word.
5. To find out the different forms of a word (eg. adjective, adverb, verb, etc.).
6. To discover idioms (make a face) phrasal verbs.
7. To find out whether the word is used in American or British English, whether it is pronounced differently in either usage.
8. To find out information about written and spoken forms of words.
9. To see how words go together (collocation).

There are many more uses of a dictionary. Think about them.

### 3C.4.2. Using a Thesaurus

The Thesaurus is a different kind of reference book. It has only the synonyms and antonyms of words. These synonyms and antonyms cover widest possible range of meanings and situations. Of course there are Thesauruses for young learners which gives a limited range of meanings and opposites. Here is a typical entry from a Thesaurus:

(We have quoted a few of the meanings).

*band* 1 n. bandage, bandeau, belt, binding, bond, chain, cord.....

*band* 2 n. association, body, clique, club, combo, company, coterie, ensemble, flock, gang, group, herd.....

*v.* affiliate, ally, amalgamate, collaborate, consolidate, gather, group, join, merge.....

*antonym* disband, disburse

As you can see the word 'band' as a noun has two different connotations. In the first meaning, it has a set of synonyms which is very different from the second one. So you need to decide first which of these connotations you have in mind. Then from the list of synonyms you select the one you need for your purpose. Next, there is the verb 'band' which also has a range of synonyms. The antonyms are for the verb form only as their placement shows.

Notice that the synonyms range from literary to colloquial uses.

### **3C.4.3. Using Encyclopaedia**

An encyclopaedia has a lot of information on a given topic. The large ones like Encyclopaedia Britannica comes in volumes. The entries are arranged alphabetically like in a dictionary or a thesaurus. Under each entry all possible information about it given. So, if it is a country, you may learn about its geographical location and features—its flora and fauna, rivers and mountains, political and economic situations, its trade and commerce, etc. There are graphic presentations and illustrations so that the information is easy to understand and remember.

### **3C.4.4. Looking up advertisements, radio/TV programmes in Newspapers/magazines, etc.**

When we are trying to locate specific information we require, usually we do not need to read the whole text carefully. We try to find which paragraph has the information we are looking for; and then read this paragraph with more attention. So we run our eyes quickly over a text in order to locate where the information might be.

For example, in 'houses and accommodation' column you get a lot of information about the different kinds of houses, flats, bungalows, etc in different locations. If you are looking for a small flat at or near the city centre, you do not waste time on reading about big houses or bungalows in the suburbs or countryside. You may also need to consider the price, facilities, etc. available in or near the flat (eg. number of rooms, security arrangements in the flat, or transport facilities, markets, educational institutions nearby). You will scan the text for a likely location and flat/s and then choose to read carefully the ones that meet your requirements.

### **Review Questions II**

1. In addition to the reasons given for using a dictionary, add five more reasons to the list. For help you may scrutinise carefully any page of a dictionary.

2. Do the following tasks. Look up a dictionary.

- (i) Is the verb 'arrive' transitive or intransitive? Does it take a preposition?
- (ii) Are there two past tense forms of 'show'?
- (iii) Look up the verb 'take' in your dictionary. Look up all the phrasal verbs listed under 'take'. Now find out the meaning of the italicised phrases in these sentences:

Mani *takes after* her father.

Ravi *took time off* his studies and *took up* a temporary job.

I *took down* this poem from an anthology.

The plane *took off* in time in spite of the thick fog.

- (iv) Look at the following words. Can you think of any idiom and phrases which include words?

FACE HEAD LEG EAR NOSE

3. Look up the entries under 'band' given above. Then decide which word from the list you can replace the word 'band' in each of the sentences.

- (i) The young man looked funny with a green *band* round his head and a purple *band* round his waste.
- (ii) A *band* of robbers attacked the pilgrims on the way to the temple.
- (iii) The man was grazing a *band* of buffaloes in his field.
- (iv) In the World War II Great Britain *banded* with the U.S.A.

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## 3C.5. Thinking As a Skill

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So far in this unit we have been discussing what we do when reading for information. But we do not always read for information only. As we gather information, we also try to understand the *content*. In other words, we may want to understand why the writer wrote the piece (writer's *intention*), how he made the point he wanted to make (*function* of the language): we differentiate between the *facts* he stated and the *opinions* he expressed. In short, as we are now reading for pleasure, we try to *appreciate* the text.

### 3C.5.1. Reading For Pleasure

When we read for pleasure, our focus is on the text and mode, ie, how a fact or information has been presented. If we want to enjoy reading, we should read actively and try to interpret the



text. In the process, we draw inferences, predict a possible outcome, distinguish between facts and opinions. This heightens our enjoyment of reading.

A writer writes with a purpose which may be to argue a case, to persuade, to humour, to teach. If we understand the writer's purpose, we comprehend the text more fully. In other words, the reader has to be aware of the writer's intention, of his point of view and his possible bias. To understand all this we need to develop the ability to assess and evaluate the text.

### 3C.5.1.1 Drawing inferences ; Predicting a Possible Outcome

Now we will discuss how we can infer or predict. We draw inferences on the basis of the information we already have.

Read the following text and then decide which information suggests that the boy in the paragraph was poor.

It was barely light when a small sturdy boy trotted down the street towards the cotton factory ; he was only ten years old and he had to be at work by six o' clock.

The likely answers are :

- the boy had to start very early.
- he was barely ten years old and he had to work.
- he worked in a factory.
- he had to walk to his workplace.

You may find some other answers. In all these cases you are inferring or guessing the answers on the basis of the information given in the text.

*Inference* is when you draw conclusions on the basis of the information you have.

We may also predict the possible outcome, ie, we try to guess what might happen next. However, our prediction may turn out to be wrong! For instance, while reading a crime thriller, we try to guess who committed the crime. It is not that we are always right in our prediction. We try to predict on the basis of some information *implied* in the situation, but not *explicitly* stated.

For example, what do you think are the occupations of the following persons whose names have been italicised ?

- (i) *Miss Ghosh* looked over the hastily scribbled notes on Mr. Narayan and sat down at her typewriter.
- (ii) *Latif* came out of his van and lifted his ladder, sponges, and cloths.
- (i) We may predict *Miss Ghosh* is a typist, but she may as well be the receptionist or a junior colleague, or even a friend.

- (ii) Latif may be a glazier (person who cleans the windows), or even a thief pretending to be a cleaner! Is he going out to work or coming home after work?

We do not have enough data to come to a definite conclusion.

### 3C.5.2 Facts and Opinions

A fact is something that is actually true. An opinion is what a person or persons think about something.

Read the following passage. Then decide whether each sentence is a statement of fact or of opinion.

The train sped by at a speed of 100 km per hour. It was indeed a beautiful train. Surely the passengers would consider it the best train they had ever travelled in. For 20 years the engine had stood idle in the transport museum. Now it has been restored and brought back into service.

Sentences 1, 4 and 5 are statements of fact. Sentences 2 and 3 are opinions. How do you know? Consider the words that made you think these are opinions. These are words like *indeed* (beautiful), *surely*, *ever*.

As you can see to differentiate between facts and opinions, it is important that we know the different functions of language.

While giving factual information we may make a request or offer, apologise or warn, give instruction or direction and so on. While expressing opinions, we may express our likes and dislikes, agreement or disagreement, and so on. To achieve our aim, we may repeat, exaggerate, use words which have favourable/unfavourable connotations, words which alliterate.

### Review Questions II

#### 1. Read the following text and then do the tasks given below.

Helen Keller was only eighteen months old when she was stricken with an illness which left her blind and deaf. You can imagine the awful shock to the parents when all this happened to their happy and intelligent child who was normal and healthy until her illness. The worry and sadness was almost inhearable.

When Helen was six years old, her parents sought the help of the inventor Alexander Graham Bell, who had done good work on behalf of the deaf. He recommended that Anne Sullivan should become Helen's teacher.

Anne had been almost blind herself as a child but afterwards her sight had been partially restored. From her own experience, Anne knew about the special needs of the blind. She had also

made a careful study in teaching the blind-deaf. She also knew how a blind-deaf girl Laura Bridgman was taught to read, write and learn algebra, history and geography.

But would Anne be able to help Helen who was blind and deaf and often violent as well?

**Making Inferences :**

(i) Do you think (a) Helen was physically healthy or weak? (b) Anne Sullivan was clever?

Why do you think so?

**Predicting outcomes :**

Do you think Anne Sullivan would have been appointed Helen's teacher? Why do you think so?

(ii) What do you think might have happened later on?

### **Glossary**

**Comprehension :** Different types of reading comprehension depend on the reader's purpose in reading and the type of reading used. The following are the types of comprehension :

**Literal comprehension :** Reading in order to understand, remember or recall the information explicitly contained in a text.

**Inferential comprehension :** Reading in order to find information which is not explicitly stated in the text, using the reader's experience and intuition, and by inferring.

**Evaluative comprehension :** Reading in order to compare information in the passage with the reader's own knowledge and values.

**Appreciative comprehension :** Reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from a passage.

**Reading speed :** The speed with which a person reads depends on (a) the type of the reading material (fiction or non-fiction), (b) the writer's purpose (to gain information, to find the main ideas of the passage, (c) the level of comprehension required (to extract the main ideas or to gain complete understanding), (d) the individual's reading speed.

**Scanning :** A type of speed-reading technique which is used when the reader wants to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text.

**Skimming :** A type of rapid reading which is used when the reader wants to get the main idea or ideas from a passage.

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## **Unit 4 Writing Skills**

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### **Structur**

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 Writing as a skill**
- 4.3 Mechanics**
- 4.4 The stages of the miting Process**
- 4.5 Framing Tasks**
- 4.6 Testing and error correction : Waht do we test ?**
- 4.7 Error analysis and its implications for language learning**
  - 4.7.1 Error analysis and correction Procedures**
- 4.8 Let us sum up**
- 4.9 Questions**
- 4.10 Glossary**
- 4.11 Reference List**

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### **4.0 Objectives**

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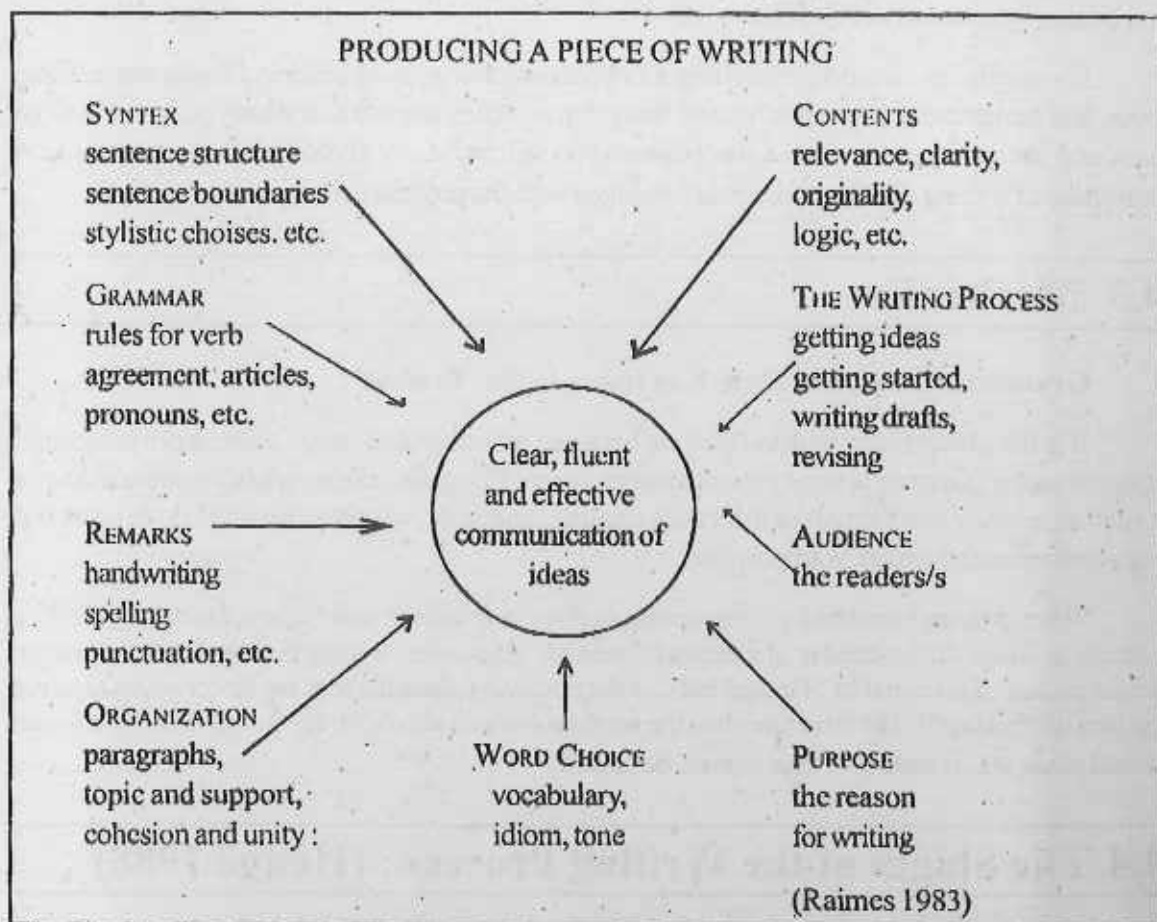
- To make learners and teachers aware of the importance of writing the subskills of writing and the need to write well.
- To make learners and teachers conscious of writing being a 'Process Oriented Activity.
- To provide a guideline to Writing Tasks.
- To make Teachers aware of certain key concepts of 'Testing and Error Correction.'



## 4.1 Introduction

Writing is one of the most difficult of language skills. It is more than putting down signs, letters of the alphabet or words and phrases in isolation. Writing requires the ability to produce language in chunks ; it requires deliberate organization of ideas and their logical development, appropriacy of language use and meaningful expression. In a good piece of writing we look for lexical range and syntactical correctness and further more, we look for proper format or layout, a development and movement in content and finally, style. These are important issues to be considered when we are talking of developing writing skill in learners.

All writing aims at clear and efficient communication. But what goes into clear and efficient communication ? Anne Raimes (1988) has diagrammatically represented this as follows :



The diagram above clearly illustrate the complex of *sub-skills* that go to make a piece of writing coherent, effective and communicative.

## 4.2. Writing as a skill

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To quote Tricia Hedge, 'writing in its broad sense—as distinct from simply putting words on paper—has three steps : thinking about it, and doing it again (and again and again, as often as time will allow and patience will endure).

The first-step "thinking," involves choosing a subject, exploring ways of developing it, and devising strategies of organization and style. The second step, "doing", is usually called "drafting", and the third, "doing again", is "revising."

Writing is a complex activity. As you think about a topic you are already beginning to select words and construct sentences—in other words, to draft. As you draft and as you revise, the thinking goes on : you discover new ideas, realize you've gone down a dead end, discover an implication you hadn't seen before.

It's helpful to conceive of writing as a process having, in a broad and loose sense, three steps. But remember that you don't move from step to step in smooth and steady progress. You go back and forth. As you work on a composition you will be, at any given point, concentrating on one phase of writing. But always you are engaged with the process in its entirety.

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## 4.3. Mechanics

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### Grammar, Usage, and Style-Key Issues in the 'Process' :

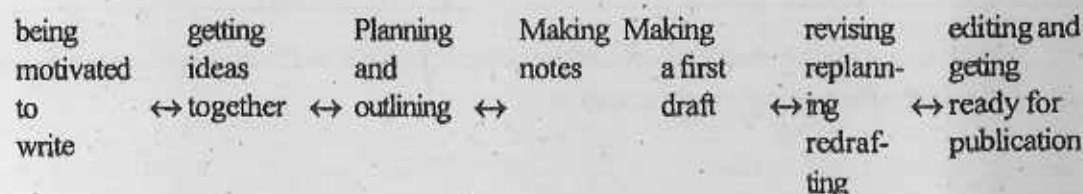
It is not always easy to draw the line between grammar and usage or between usage and style. Broadly, grammar is what you must do as a user of English ; usage, what you should do as a writer. of more or less formal (or informal) English ; and style, what you select to do to work out your strategies and realize your purpose.

"Her dresses beautifully," represents an error in grammar, and "She dresses beautiful", a mistake in usage. "She dresses in a beautiful manner", however, is a lapse in style. The sentence breaks no rule of grammar or of usage, but it is not effective (assuming that the writer wants to stress the idea of "beauty"). The structure slurs the emphasis, which should be on the key word and which should close the statement—"She dresses beautifully."

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## 4.4. The Stages of the Writing Process : (Hedge 1988)

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## Pedagogical Implications in a writing class :

The process of writing is often described as consisting of three major activities or groups of activities according to Tricia Hedge :

### (a) Pre-writing :

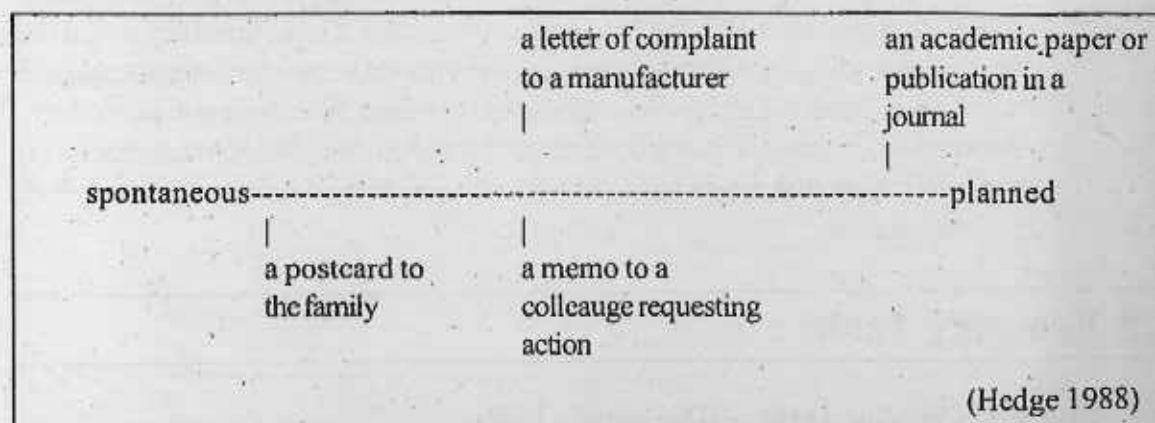
Before putting pen to paper, the skilled writer in real life considers two important questions.

**What is the purpose of this piece of writing :** ? This first question is to do with function. For example, is it a report which the writer hopes will be persuasive and stimulate action ? Is it an explanation of how something works, which has to be careful, detailed, and clear ? Is it a letter of invitation to some friends or a letter applying for a job ? The purpose of the writing will influence the choice of organization and the choice of language.

**Who am I writing this for :** The second question is to do with audience. The reader may be an individual, one you know well, or a group of colleagues, an institution, an examiner, or a tutor. Thinking about the eventual reader(s) helps the writer to select what to say and how to present it in the most appropriate style-formal, friendly, serious, or tentative.

The answers to these two questions provide the writer with a sense of purpose and a sense of audience, in other words, a writing context which significantly influences the first stage of the composition process, that of exploring possible content and planning outlines.

The good writer generates plans for writing at this stage though, as we have seen, the amount of planning varies. We could draw a scale from comparatively spontaneous writing to very carefully planned writing and place different kinds of writing on it in appropriate place.



- (b) **Writing and rewriting :** The second phase of activity is the writing itself and with good writers this consists of making a first draft. But writing the first draft is often interrupted as the writer stops to read over and review, to get an idea of how the text

is developing, to revise plans, and bring in new ideas or rearrange those already expressed. There is a good deal of recycling in the process from planning to drafting, reviewing, replanning, revising etc. Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar until later.

Revision involves assessing what has already been written and deciding on points like these :

- Am I sharing my impressions clearly enough with my reader ?
- Have I missed out any important points of information ?
- Are there any points in the writing where my reader has to make a 'jump' because I've omitted a line of argument or I've forgotten to explain something ?
- Does the vocabulary need to be made stronger at any point ?
- Are there some sentences which don't say much or which are too repetitive and can be missed out ?
- Can I rearrange any sets of sentences to make the writing clearer or more interesting ?
- Do I need to rearrange any paragraphs ?
- Are the links between sections clear ? Do they guide my reader through the writing ?

- (c) **Editing :** The post-writing stage consists of reading through and trying to apply a reader's perspective in order to assess how clearly readers might follow the ideas. The editing process makes the final readjustments and checks accuracy so that the text is maximally accessible to the reader. Some poorer writers tend not to engage in editing but assume that their writing is clear to others because it is clear to them. Alternatively, poor writers may concentrate throughout the whole writing process on accuracy in grammar, punctuation, etc. without considering whether or not the overall structure is clear.

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## 4.5 Framing Tasks :

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**Samples of Writing Tasks :— (David Jolly 1984)**

**Letters on Requests and inquiries :**

**Model**

Below you'll find a letter from a girl in Wales to a friend in London. She wants to spend a few days in London.

10, George Avenue  
Chapstow  
Wales CHS 3NA  
1/2/84

Dear Ali

I'm thinking about killing two birds with one stone. The stone is a three day trip to London from Friday 10th of Marh till the Monday. The birds are seeing all those films I've wanted to see but can't in Chapstow, and seeing you.

Would it be possible, Ali, to stay in your flat for that weekend, with you—or I f you'r away—without you—which would be a pity, but still convenient. Of course, I'd like very much to see you and this seems a marvellous opportunity if you're going to be there.

Please could you let me know at once so that if it's not possible. I could make other arrangements .....

### LANGUAGE NOTES

#### Request language

##### Polite forms :

Would it be possible to...../for you to.....

Please could I.....(possibly)

Please could you.....

##### formal forms :

I'd be most/very grateful if you'd/I could.....

##### informal forms :

Can I/could I.....

##### hesitant forms :

Is there any chance of me/my coming to stay.....

I was wondering if I could/you could/would.....

#### Inquiry language (this can use rather similar forms) :

I wonder if you could tell me.....

Would it be possible to.....(something general)

I'd like to know if.....

Do you happen to know if.....

Can you remember whether.....(informal)

### TASK 1 :

Write a letter of request and a letter of inquiry :



## REQUEST :

- A. You are back in your own country after spending some time with a British family. You would like to stay with them again in July. Write a letter to the family, requesting this.

## INQUIRY :

- B. You've returned to your own country and you suddenly need to know-in some detail-something about English newspapers. Write to a friend and ask him for the information.

## TASK 2 :

### Applications for temporary work :

Write for one of the positions below :

- A. Write for the job below. Give details of age, nationality, language ability, how long you want to stay ; relevant experience ; relevant personal details.

#### SALES ASSISTANT

ADVT.

For busy plumbing and heating merchants. 5½ day week, £4. 250 p.a. plus commission ; experience in selling bathrooms, kitchens, heating, electrical for DIY in retail or wholesale essential.

Ring or write to :

Mr. Newman,  
D. and T. Holmes and Sons Ltd.  
9 High Street, Histon, Cambridge,  
Tel : 3222.

B. ADVT.

WAITRESSES/CHAMBERMAIDS required at Aquamarine Hotel Brighton from May to September. Hours negotiable, Generous pay, Contact (letters only). The Manageress, Aquamarine Hotel, 14, Elm Row, Brighton SX3 5IT. Please supply references.

Apply for the temporary job above, including details of relevant experience and personality.

C. ADVT.

**CAN YOU SWIM ?** Earn some money this season on one of the loveliest beaches in Wales as a life-guard. Apply in writing to : The Town Clerk, Town Hall, Bangor, Wales.

Apply for the summer job advertised in the Wales Advertiser.

Give personal details ; ask about wages, hours and length of season. Give possible interview times/dates.

**TASK 3 :**

**Application for full-time jobs :**

Apply for one of the posts advertised below.

In your letter mention :

Where you saw the ad.,

why you want to apply,

previous experience,

qualifications (if any),

your ability to speak English,

work-permit problems (if non-E.E.C. member)

Ask question about anything you think you need to know.

ADVT.

**PROBABLY THE MOST  
VARIED WORK**

In our office awaits someone who enjoys typing, has a proven ability with figures and book-keeping, but wants to deal with our customers as well.

Due to continued expansion, we now want another who has these rather special talents.

If you are the right person to join us, please write in your own handwriting and tell me why.

The successful applicant will work in our small friendly team and enjoy the working conditions and benefits which the Abbey National would be expected to offer.

**BARRY CARPENTER**  
Abbey National Building Society  
3/6, Queen Street, Newton Abbot

ADVT.

EVE  
63 FLEET STREET, TORQUAY  
Do you like beautiful clothes ? We have a vacancy for an  
ATTRACTIVE PERSON  
with flair and personality for selling fashion.  
Please apply in writing to Mr. J. Austin at the above Address.

PARTTIME/FULLTIME  
ATTRACTIVE STAFF Required

to work in both our present jewellery shop in Bridge Street  
and/or our new Jewellery/gift shop opening soon in the Gar-  
den House Hotel.

Smart appearance, and experience in jewellery and gifts an  
advantage but selling ability, willingness to work under own  
initiative and some flexibility of hours a MUST

We are also looking for an

ASSISTANT  
WINDOW  
DRESSER

Apply in Writing to  
KEITH LORING  
6 WYNFORD WAY  
CAMBRIDGE CB42LB.

**TASK 4 : Applications for Educational courses :**

Write applications for A or B below : C is a genuine task— do it if appropriate.

A.

A number of universities/polytechnics in Britain are running  
a one-month summer course at advanced level for the  
following things :

ADVT

Bristol University : The Language of Nursing Commercial  
English

Portsmouth Polytechnic : Legal Language, English for Military  
Advisers, Advanced Translation Course.

Edinburgh University : Scientific English English for the Car  
Industry.

Write a letter of application to one of these places for one of these courses. Mention your occupational background, qualifications, experience and reasons for application.

- B. Look at the advertisement below and write a letter of application.

**THE NATIONAL FILM & TELEVISION SCHOOL**  
Invites applicants for the course commencing September '83.  
Commencing September '83.

The School announces a new programme in Production Design and additional programmes in production, Sound and Editing. Candidates for writing, Directing, Camera, Design and Animation are expected to submit portfolios of supporting material. Candidates in Production, Sound and Editing who are unable to supply supporting material may be invited to Beaconsfield for preliminary tests. The full time course occupies 3 years, but candidates already in the Industry may be accepted for shorter periods. Closing dates for applications 28th February.

Enquire to : NATIONAL FILM & TELEVISION  
SCHOOL (Dept. ST), Beaconsfield Studios, Beaconsfield,  
Bucks HP9 1LG Tel. (04946) 71234.

- C. Use your College or the public library ; consult the relevant brochures, and write a letter of application to a university or polytechnic to do a 2 or 3 year course in Britain (a degree course/higher education course/H.N.D.)

#### UNITS-5.1-5.4

### 4.6 Testing and Error Correction : What do we Test ?

When we look at a piece of writing in order to assess it, we should ideally be asking ourselves a number of questions. Is this a good piece of writing ? What makes a good piece of writing ? What skills do students demonstrate in their written work which show that they are on the way to becoming effective writers in English ?

- A. What skills do good writers demonstrate ?

Criteria for Marking

**Authoring**

1. Having something to say (a sense of purpose)

Content

Length

2. Being aware of the reader (a sense of audience)
3. Developing the ideas (a sense of direction)

Style

Organization

### Creating

4. Organizing the content clearly and in a logical manner
5. Manipulating the script
6. Using the conventions, e.g. spelling, layout
7. Getting the grammar right
8. Developing sentence structure
9. Linking ideas in a variety of ways
10. Having a range of vocabulary

Handwriting

Accuracy

Complexity

Range

(Hedge) 1988

### B. Communicative Test At Different Levels

	Basic Level	Intermediate	Advanced
Accuracy	No confusing errors of lexis and punctuation. Grammar may be shaky but what the candidate writes is intelligible and unambiguous. orthography may be uncertain	Grammatical, lexical and orthographical accuracy is generally high, though some errors which do not destroy communication are acceptable. Handwriting is legible without undue effort.	Standard of orthography, punctuation, lexis and grammar are extremely high. Handwriting is easily legible
Appropriacy	Use of language is broadly appropriate to function, though no subtlety should be expected. The intention of the writer can be perceived without excessive effort. Layout is generally appropriate	Use of language is appropriate to function. Some adaption of style to the particular context is demonstrated. The overall intention of the writer is always clear. Layout appropriate.	Use of language entirely appropriate to context, function and intention. Layout consistent and appropriate.
Range	Severely limited range of expression. The candidate may have laboured to fit what he wanted to say to what he was able to say.	A fair range of language is available to the candidate. He is able to express himself clearly without distortion	Few limitations on the range of language available to the candidate. No obvious use of avoidance strategies.



	Basic Level	Intermediate	Advanced
Complexity	Texts may be simple showing little development Simple sentences with little attempt at cohesion are acceptable.	Texts will display simple organisation with themes and points linked and related.	The candidate demonstrates the ability to produce organised, coherent and cohesive discourse.

(Heage) 1988

The most important aspect of a scheme like this, is its positive approach to writing-one which looks for strengths as well as weaknesses. It is all too easy for marking to become a mechanical task of 'correcting errors' rather than a chance to indicate to students how they are developing as writers.

The criterion of complexity will serve as a good example of the importance of positive feedback. Students who are trying to develop an ability to write complex or compound sentences may well make errors in their choices of connectives, relative pronouns, or in the word order of subordinate clauses. If the only feedback they receive is negative, in the sense of corrections with no commendation for trying, they may well become discouraged and revert to writing simple sentences.

Students need positive feedback on the way their writing is improving, and this may be received through comments at the end of a piece of writing or through a grade of some kind. Attitudes to grading vary with educational systems and institutions, but if grading is the accepted norm then perhaps teachers need to review the system in use and decide on its merits and drawbacks.

Two examples of rather different grading systems are given on the next page, but each has the advantage of specifying to students the criteria upon which their writing is marked.

#### Grading Criteria : Example : 1

1.	Organization of content (clarity, coherence, paragraph development)	20
2.	Range (grammatical structures, vocabulary)	15
3.	Complexity of sentence structure	15
4.	Accuracy of grammar (tense, agreement, etc.)	30
	of sentence structure (word order, connectives etc.)	
	of spelling	
	of punctuation	
5.	Fluency (feel for the language, appropriateness use of idioms etc.)	20
		<hr/> 100%

**Grading Criteria : Example 2 :**

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Weak
<b>A. General development</b>					
1. Interest and force of content					
2. Development of ideas					
3. A sense of audience and style.					
<b>B. Specific components in writing</b>					
4. Grammatical skills					
5. Complexity of sentence structure					
6. Use of vocabulary					
7. Spelling					
8. Punctuation					
9. Presentation (neatness handwriting etc.)					

These examples are presents as sources from which teachers can develop systems appropriate to their own students. Many teachers prefer not to award grades but to use the simple strategy of writing comments at the end of a piece of work, though the latter can be time-consuming. However, a more detailed assessment is useful periodically, especially with motivated students who like to monitor their own development and assess progress in the various components of skilled writing.

## 4.7 Error Analysis and its implications for language learning :

Definition of errors : distinction between mistakes and errors :

**Mistakes :**

A mistake refers to a lapse in performance—it is failure to utilise a known system correctly. All language users make mistakes—in both native and second language situations. But the differ-

ence is that the native speakers can recognize and correct mistakes faster than a second language speaker.

### **Errors :**

Occur mainly in the speech/writing of second language users. Manifestations of the idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage (he is operating at a given time) of a learner. An error is a noticeable deviation from the grammar of an adult native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner.

### **Some regular types of errors :**

**1. Omission :** Omission is ungrammatical while ellipsis and zero elements are allowed by the grammar. e.g. : He'll pass his exam and I'll too.

**2. Addition :** The "result of all-too-faithful use of certain rules."

(a) **Regularization :** overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply e.g. : \*bayed for 'bought'.

(b) **Irregularization :** a productive process such as affixation is not applied, but instead the form is wrongly assumed to be an exception to the general rules :

e.g. : \* dove for the preterite form dived.

(c) **double marking :** failure to delete certain items which are required e.g. : He doesn't know\*s me.

**3. Misformation (mis-selection) :** use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme e.g. : \*I seen him yesterday.

**4. Misordering :** to arrange the right forms in the wrong order e.g. : \*He every time comes late home.

### **4.7.1 Error Analysis and Correction Procedures**

Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics where learners' errors are recognized, classified, described and analysed in order to draw evidence towards making hypotheses about universal aspects of the structure of languages and the processes involved in language learning.

There are several good reasons why teachers ought to consider limiting the number of factors that they check in compositions, except at the most advanced levels. One reason to evaluate only a few factors at one time is that doing so, helps us grade our papers more accurately and consistently. Another reason is to speed up our essay grading. A third reason for limiting the number of factors to be evaluated is to avoid unnecessary discouragement of our students. This latter point deserves elaboration.

Many students are inhibited in their writing because their work has been overcorrected. A more selective grading of writing can offer needed encouragement. Students could be assigned to write a paragraph on a specific topic, in class. In grading this short piece of work, the teacher could look only for fragments. Regardless of other errors, he could give a score of 100 percent of each paper that was free of fragments (and perhaps 75 percent to a paper with one fragment, 50 percent to a paper with two, etc.)

Many "conscientious" teachers assess student writing by red-pencilling every error that they can find.

Certainly a compromise between this extreme and the one-item-per-paper scoring would be very natural. Generally, we can look for several items in a given paper. But the number should be rather limited, particularly on the beginning level, and they should always be drawn from concepts that have been covered in class.

There is an extreme to be avoided in the selective grading of papers, and that is an exclusive focus on grammar or mechanics. Writing, as we know, is much more than grammar. On the intermediate and advanced levels, we begin to give more attention to rhetorical matters of unity, organization, and coherence, in addition to grammatical accuracy. A test corrected only for grammar—even though written as an essay or letter—is still simply a grammar test. Of course, an occasional focus on grammar or vocabulary or mechanics can have a good 'backwash' effect on instruction : Students can appreciate the communicative application of these subskills through classwork.

There are basically two ways to give a formal grade to a piece of writing. One is called analytical, and the other holistic.

The analytical method attempts to evaluate separately the various components of a piece of writing ; it can be illustrated with several approaches. One analytical approach is the "points-off" method. Students begin with 100 points or an A grade. Then they lose points or fractions of a grade for errors that occur in their piece of writing. What would we look for in student writing at or below intermediate level ?

Mechanics might include 'capitalization' (notably at the beginning of sentences), 'punctuation' (especially end punctuation), and 'spelling' (no penalty for more than one misspelling of the same word). Grammar would include basic material that had been taught (at least matters such as sentence sense, verb tense, and word order). A larger element of writing to be included might well be 'organization'. Other possible factors are 'vocabulary choice' and ability to follow the assigned writing task. To avoid failing a students for repeated errors of one kind, it is possible to use the following system ; one to two errors = one unit off (for example, A to A -, or 100 to 95) ; three to five errors = two units off ; and over five = three units off. It is also possible to have grammar errors count double or triple the amout off that mechanical errors do, and for errors in larger elements such as organization to be double the weight of grammar errors.



Another analytical approach reverses the procedure described above. Points are given for acceptable work in each of several areas. Consider the following :

Mechanics .....	20%
vocabulary choice .....	20%
grammar & usage .....	30%
organization .....	30%
Total .....	100%

Sometimes a big difference appears between the message that the student conveys and his mastery of the language. To encourage such students, it is possible to assign a 'split grade' for example B+/D). The one at the left can stand for quality of content ; the one at the right, accuracy of language use.

A major problem with analytical approaches is that one never knows just how to weight each error or even each area being analyzed. We avoid this difficulty in holistic grading. Also we focus on communication. We are aware of mechanics and grammar, for instance ; but we ask ourselves, "How well does this paper communicate ?" Minor mechanical errors that interfere very little require very little penalty. In fact, we don't count them. Instead, we might reduce a grade from 'A' to 'A-' on the basis of a scattering of these errors. The same principle applies to other areas. To develop a "feel" for such grading, we compare one paper with another. The holistic approach doesn't make us feel as secure as we are when we grade as spelling quiz or grammar exam. Nevertheless, it is one of the best ways to evaluate the complex communicative act of writing. Therefore, although the analytical approach has some things to recommend it, the holistic approach is, on the whole, better.

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## 4.8 Let us sum up

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Writing thus is not caught automatically in the classroom—it should be taught in the process. What is important is to maintain a balance and co-ordination between teaching and testing techniques. It is essential for teachers therefore to probe into current techniques of teaching and testing and bring about changes in the teaching and testing patterns. This is important for the well being and comfort of the learners in the second language-writing classroom.

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## 4.9 Questions:

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**A) Write in not more than 200 words :**

(a) What are the 'stages' of writing ?

(b) Frame a writing task matching the expectation of an Indian classroom situation.



(c) What are the main issues in 'testing writing'?

(d) Write a short note on Error Analysis.

**B) Answer in 2 or 3 sentences :**

(a) What do you understand by Mechanics?

(b) What is the difference between a Mistake and an Error?

(c) Mention the different causes of errors.

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## 4.10 Glossary

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Authoring	:	Relates to the mental process of planning.
Coherence	:	Overall meaningful expression.
Cohesion	:	Refers to the language resource which relates words and sentences in writing. E.g. Linkers and Connectors.
Crafting	:	The actual act of implementation.
Discourse	:	Language
Holistic	:	A whole response to a whole situation.
Interlanguage	:	A state between one's own language and the target language to be learnt.

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## 4.11 Further Reference

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মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

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—সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

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