Conclusion

As the title suggests the aim of this work is a description and analysis of reading tasks for ESL students within a CLT paradigm. A major shift in the theories regarding the language teaching came around 1970’s, with the advent of CLT. Now the teaching has became more learner-centred where the students are expected to perform the given task and to actively participate in the language classroom. The main purpose is to enable the learners to effectively perform and communicate in the target language. Acquiring efficiency in language learning means acquiring the ability to respond, predict, reflect, think, guess, making decisions an critically assess.

In order to make the students efficient performers in the English language, it is necessary to develop the linguistic skills, which enable them to learn the system accordingly. Out of the four basic skills of the language, the skill of reading is long believed as an essential skill of the language. It is believed to be the medium of language acquisition. It helps learners to enlarge their lexical as well as grammatical knowledge of the language. In those academic institutions where English is the medium of instruction, most of the students’ time is devoted to reading no matter whether they are reading in Science, Social Science, Commerce, Computer Science etc. Reading is defined as an active process, since a reader has an active interaction with a reading text while reading. Reading is not a matter of just picking up of information word to word from printed pages. The reader rather, processes the new information
with the help of already existing information in his / her mind and arrives at successful comprehension. This means that meaning does not reside in the words itself but the reader brings meaning to the words. So, reading is the process of receiving, comprehending and evaluating the printed message. It involves interpretation and construction of meaning too.

Reading and understanding successfully in L1 is an unquestionable skill especially in a literate world to cope with different kinds of written material. An efficient reader must possess mastery over the needed skills. But in ESL / EFL, efficient and effective reading is a major goal of the curriculum, for which learners need to develop those skills and strategies which would help them dealing with academic and non-academic reading materials.

Now the questions arise as to how second language reading should be taught? How second language learners be made efficient and proficient readers? Which methodology or syllabus to choose from, for fulfilling this mission? As the ESL / EFL pedagogy gained prominence various approach and methodology regarding the teaching and learning of L2 have been proposed. In the history of language teaching we can see that at different times, different methods gained prominence. At one time one method became prominent over the other, and at another time the other method gained prominence. But then it was realized by the theorists and practitioners that no method is the single best method that can provide answer to all language teaching problems, as the methods themselves are decontextualized. So the best
way for a language teacher is to adapt techniques and practices from different sources to suit his/her teaching context.

One successful and advantageous technique is to teach L2 reading through tasks. Different types of tasks/activities have been in use over the years in different methods of teaching. But task-based language pedagogy holds a central place in current L2 research and pedagogy. Through tasks, language is treated primarily as a tool for communication and thus it makes reading a communicative rather than a passive activity. Tasks make classroom teaching more communicative and provide a purpose to a classroom activity. Tasks make learners comprehend and manipulate the read material. Tasks help the students to become aware and conscious in their use of skills and strategies they already possess in their L1. They can apply their L1 reading skill to successfully accomplish their L2 reading task as the use of task makes language learning a very self-directed and individual process. It prepares them to cope with the L2 reading problems that they meet inside and outside the language classroom, for example, reading and understanding rail timetable, pamphlets, hoardings, instructions on any food tin, popular newspapers, magazine, application forms, journals, academic textbooks etc.

Tasks do not disregard but encourage and bring out the learners’ existing range of study skills and strategies. The best point with tasks is, they can take place both inside and outside the classroom. Tasks outside the language classroom help the students to develop the kind of language behaviour needed to accomplish the real word tasks. It develops in them the
competence needed to use L2 effectively in real life situations. CLT views tasks as both necessary and sufficient for L2 learning, where meaning is the result of interaction between the reader and the writer. Reading tasks also facilitate the acquisition of the linguistic features of the language too.

Here, through this work, I have tried to show the effectiveness and advantages of teaching L2 reading through tasks. An attempt has been made to describe and analyze the reading tasks used to teach L2 reading in contemporary language pedagogy. I have also made an attempt to classify tasks on the basis of skills and strategies.

In language literature there is a lot of confusion regarding skills and strategies. Various typologies have been proposed so far classifying the skills and strategies but the overlap and confusion remains the same. Here I have tried to give possible distinction between skills and strategies and have listed reading skill and strategies accordingly. Although there are number of skills and strategies suggested so far in reading literature to enhance L2 reading but here I have listed only those skills and strategies which are crucial for the development of L2 reading and are relevant for mature readers. Then I have classified the reading tasks accordingly. The tasks are either reproduced or adapted from certain sources. The material chosen is both authentic and non-authentic providing the example of both inside and outside classroom tasks. Care had been taken to select tasks from up-to-date sources or from those older sources that have now become sound texts. The tasks are intended for mature readers, who have mastered some basic structure and vocabulary in English.
In chapter one, a general introduction to the skill of reading comprehension has been presented. I have presented briefly the place, role and importance of English language all over the world and then moved to record the importance of reading skill for gaining proficiency in ESL EFL. Here I have thoroughly defined the concept of reading in particular. In the chapter I have also recorded the changes that have taken place in the development and definition of reading over the last hundred years. Here I have also listed some of the popular definitions of reading highlighting the changes in views regarding reading. Then we looked in detail the various purposes for which an L2 learner wants to read. Then the chapter moves to record the components of reading which are essential for gaining proficiency in reading. Then I have ended the chapter by presenting in detail the different kinds of reading which a reader uses while encountering different types of text in academics as well as in real life.

In the Second Chapter, I have briefly discussed the behaviourist, the cognitivist and the psycholinguistic views of reading, noticing the changes taking place regarding views on reading throughout the century. Then, I have talked about the recent principles and theories proposed for reading pedagogy. Here I have briefly outlined the schema theory, the bottom-up, top-down and interactive theories of reading comprehension. I have also discussed thoroughly the models that represent the procedures of reading to give the theories a strong support.
In the third chapter, I have recorded the teaching of reading in the past four centuries. Here I have tried to show how L2 reading was taught in the alphabet, phonic, word and sentence method. After discussing the teaching of L2 reading in traditional methods I have moved to define briefly the place and importance of reading in language teaching methods moving from the Grammar Translation Method to Communicative Language Teaching. Then I have moved to define the nature of reading comprehension where I have described the various types of comprehension and noted down the factors that affect reading comprehension. Then I have suggested some pedagogical solutions to overcome those factors that affect reading comprehension.

In the fourth chapter, I have introduced and defined the notion of ‘task’ in language pedagogy and have noted the features of task on the basis of the given definitions. Then I have explored those core elements that go to make up a task, for example, goals, input data, procedures, and task with the supporting elements of teacher / learner roles and settings. Then, in order to support the concept of task I have discussed task-based approach in language pedagogy and have attempted to show the relationship between task based-language teaching and communicative language teaching and set it within a broader curriculum framework. Here I have touched upon the rich research agenda supporting tasks in language teaching. Here I have discussed about the focused, unfocused and C-R tasks too. In CLT curriculum I have discussed both the weak and strong versions of CLT, where I have tried to show the place of task in both the versions. Within the strong version I have highlighted the
framework for task-based language pedagogy and have noted down the instructional sequences around which language teachers can develop task. In the same heading, I have also highlighted the other approaches related to using tasks in language teaching, for example, Humanistic Language Teaching and Experiential Learning. Finally, I have ended the chapter with a thorough discussion on synthetic and analytical approaches to syllabus design.

In chapter five, the main part of the thesis, I have talked in particular about teaching of L2 reading through tasks. I have started the chapter by providing a general discussion on the benefits of using reading tasks in language pedagogy. Then I have explored some of the reading tasks used to teach L2 reading in traditional methods. As the purpose of the thesis is to record the tasks used to teach L2 reading in CLT, so I have talked about the relevance of reading and its pedagogy within the CLT paradigm. Here I have also discussed instructional program for reading tasks. Then I have moved to discuss the types of tasks used to teach L2 reading in CLT. Next a classification of tasks based on skills and strategies has been given. But as there exists a lot of overlap and confusion regarding skills and strategies, so before classifying the tasks I have given a possible distinction between skills and strategies. Then I have listed skills and strategies separately according to the distinction. On the basis of this list reading tasks are classified and analysed. An attempt has been made to give a description of each task briefly stating the aims and objectives, role and level of the learners, expected outcome, task benefits, skill or strategies developed and real life use of the task. Additionally,
examples of tasks are also given, some in the Chapter itself and some in Appendices.

Finally to sum up, the humble contribution of this work is an attempt to present a classification of tasks on the basis of skills and strategies. The classification of strategies used in the work is based on the classifications given by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) and Husain (1994). It is observed that the strategies are of two types: Cognitive and Metacognitive. Cognitive strategies are purely mental processes such as translating an L2 word into L1 and inference. Metacognitive strategies have an external and often a physical element present in them. They involve thinking about the learning process and taking an action accordingly to facilitate learning. For example, in the case of not understanding a word, consulting a dictionary is a metacognitive strategy of learning. The researcher is of the view that since cognitive strategies are universal mental processes and inherently possessed by all human beings, their teaching and tasks based on them (e.g. inferencing, predicting) should be deemphasized in ESL teaching. On the other hand metacognitive strategies which involve the planning, execution and evaluation of the teaching process, need special focus in reading pedagogy.