2.1. AIMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

From the foregone discussion it becomes clear that English is an all-important language and the ability to use this language has become a necessity to an educated person (RIE Monograph, 1980, P.1). The study of a language has four aspects. They are Semantic, Phonetic, Graphic and the Phonetic-Cum-Graphic aspects. Semantic aspect deals with 'Comprehension'. It is the understanding of the meaning. The Phonetic aspect deals with the spelling and pronunciation of words. The Graphic aspect is the written form of a language. The Phonetic-Cum-Graphic aspect is the Reading of the language. All these aspects of the language work in co-ordination with each other. Thus there are four general aims in teaching English. They are:

- To enable the pupil to understand English when spoken.
- To enable them to speak English.
- To enable them to read English.
- To enable them to write English.

These aims correspond to the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are passive or receptive skills and speaking and writing are active or productive skills. The following chart shows the aims of teaching English clearly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding (receptive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression (productive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active command</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2. OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Besides the general aims of teaching English the teacher should have definite, clear-cut aims in teaching each lesson. They should be clear, precise and expressive.

2.2.1. Primary Level Objectives

At the end of standard VII/VIII a pupil should be able to:

a. understand statements, questions, short talks and passages read out to him on a subject within his experience (within the scope of the syllabus), when read at careful conversational speed.

b. ask and answer questions in speech relating to his experience and to what he has read (within the range of the syllabus).

c. read with fluency (both oral and silent reading) and understand simple passages within the vocabulary and structural range of the syllabus.

d. express himself clearly in writing with reasonable accuracy, within the linguistic range of the syllabus, on subjects within his experience.

2.2.2. Secondary Level Objectives

At the end of standard X/XI a student should be able to:

a. understand a passage read out to him from the prescribed materials or a talk of the same linguistic level on a subject of general interest within his experience.

b. ask sensible questions and reply intelligibly to questions based on the above.

c. carry on a sensible conversation with clarity of expression on passages from the prescribed materials on a topic of the same linguistic level within his experience.

d. arrange and present his ideas intelligently on a topic selected by him.

e. read silently and understand the main ideas in a passage of simple English within the linguistic range of the syllabus and be able to reproduce them clearly and correctly in speech and writing in his own words.

f. express himself in writing with relevance and clarity on:

1. a subject of general interest within his experience.

2. a topic chosen from a subject within the curriculum.

g. read on his own with the help of the dictionary and reference books for information, further study and enjoyment.
The Study Group on Teaching of English (1971) recommended the following level of attainment to be reached in each class in terms of the structures or teaching points and vocabulary items.

Class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Teaching Points</th>
<th>300 words for active use</th>
<th>300 new words for active use</th>
<th>300 new words for passive use</th>
<th>200 new words for passive use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>1 to 50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>51 to 100</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>101 to 170</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>171 to 220</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>221 to 280</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3. Higher Level Objectives

For a successful completion of the first degree course a student should possess an adequate command over English, be able to express himself in it with reasonable ease, understand lectures in it and avail himself of its literature (ECR, 1966, 1.57 p.5). From these it may be understood that English Language Teaching should be a skill based one.

Full mastery of a language requires receptive ability as well as productive ability. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are related to and supplement one another. The psychology of language learning also tells us that the four basic language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing, reinforce each other, and even for the development of a single skill, some amount of emphasis on the other skills will be found beneficial (Baruah, 1991, P. 9).

2.3. SKILL OF LISTENING

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

Input → Processing → Output.

The skill of listening provides the foundation for

- following instructions competently;
- correct orientation to the task;
Ability to understand what others are saying is essential to interaction. Listening is a complex operation integrating the distinct components of perception and linguistic knowledge. The degree of listening depends on the type of material and its organization, the interest the material holds for the listener, the way it is presented and the emotional state of the listener. Of the time adults spend in communication activities, 45 per cent is devoted to listening, only 30 per cent to speaking, 16 per cent to reading, and a mere 9 per cent to writing (P.T. Rankin, 1962, p.2).

Adrian Doff (1988) talks about the following two types of listening.

- **Casual listening**: Many times people listen to something without any particular purpose and without much concentration. This type of listening is found in social contexts.
- **Focussed listening**: It is 'intensive listening' for information or for transacting business. The listener is attentive and concentrates on what the speaker is saying.

### 2.3.1. Teaching Listening

i. Teachers should model good listening, especially by giving students full attention and eye contact when they speak (De Hoven, 1983).

ii. Both spontaneous speech and written language read orally should be used to teach listening, because different skills are involved (Froese, 1981).

iii. Students with learning problems tend to comprehend better when speed of presentation is slower than the normal rate (Blosser, Weidner and Dinero, 1976; Mc Croskey and Thompson, 1973).

iv. Because of linguistic problems of some students, teachers should use structurally simple and relatively short sentences of not more than 5 to 10 words in their language of instruction (Wiig and Semel, 1984).
2.4. SKILL OF SPEAKING

Speaking is a muscular activity. People use speech organs to produce sounds. In learning to speak our own language, we learn certain specific muscle habits. Where sounds of a second language are different from those of our mother tongue we have to learn new muscle habits (Fribsy, 1964, p.43).

2.4.1. Natural process of developing spoken skills

There must be some kind of exposure to language input, so that the natural learning mechanisms have something to work on. Learners have to be exposed to English through clearer pronunciation, slower pace, simpler structures and common vocabulary. Many writers believe that it is interaction with other people, which plays the most crucial role in enabling acquisition to take place. Natural learning depends on the learner's active engagement with the language. Here motivation is an important factor. Natural language learning can be described with the help of the following Natural learning Model.

![Natural learning Model diagram](image)

(Littlewood, 1992)

The three basic conditions of natural learning are exposure to the language, interaction with other people and the need to communicate. The effect of these conditions is facilitated or hindered by the learner's attitudes towards English and to the learning experiences. Internal mechanisms process the language input in order to find regularities and build up a mental representation of the language. This representation constitutes an internal grammar, which continues to develop as the learner experiences
more language. The internal grammar, which the learner has constructed at any particular time enables him to take part in communication.

But unfortunately in Indian schools less attention is paid to speech training. Teachers rely too much on translation method. Spoken English is not used even inside the English classrooms. Therefore speech retardation in English is not uncommon in Indian schools.

2.5. SKILL OF READING

Reading is mainly a decoding process.

Encoder or Writer → Message → Decoder or Reader

The encoder encodes the message and the decoder decodes it and understands it.

Reading activity involves perception, recall, reasoning, evaluating, imagining, organizing, application and problem solving. The goal of all reading is the comprehension of meaning. Effective reading includes not only a literal comprehension of an author’s word, but also an interpretation of his mood, tone, feeling and attitude (Dechant and Smith, 1977, P. 237).

Gray (1967) views that when people read something they understand it at three levels. First, the purely literal responding to the graphic signals only with little depth of understanding, the second level at which the reader recognizes the author’s meaning, and the third level where the reader’s own personal experiences and judgments influence his response to the text. These three levels can be summarized as "Reading the lines, Reading between the lines and Reading beyond the lines".

2.5.1 Oral and Silent reading

Reading aloud is closer to pronunciation than to comprehension. The reader shares information that the members of the audience want. The “real-life” purpose of reading aloud to others is to convey information to them, to entertain them, or to share a good story that they do not have (Zintz and Maggaut, 1989, P. 425).

Silent reading is considered to be a “see and comprehend process” rather than a “see, say and comprehend” process. Buswell (1947) noted that silent reading should be a process of association between perceptual stimulation and meaning “without a mediating sub vocalization”. Silent reading focuses on comprehension based on background information, some visual data, and predicting and confirming strategies.
2.5.2. Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and Scanning are two important and useful advanced reading skills. Skimming is a reading skill which demands top most speeds. It is a method of quickly gathering information from the printed page (G. C. Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja, 1987, P. 69). Learning to skim is a valuable academic exercise. In scanning the reader runs his eyes down the page with the purpose of finding an answer to a specific question. (Dechant and Smith, 1977, P. 284). In skimming the reader does not try to find out the answer to any question. Skimming is a rapid reading technique and scanning is a technique to find the facts in a very fast manner.

Therefore Effective reading involves experiencing learning and thinking. It is a physiological process, a psychological process, a social process, a cultural process and above all a linguistic process (G. C. Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja, 1987, P. 15). Reading is a skill, which responds to practice. Continuous and systematic practice results in the improvement of reading rate.

2.6. SKILL OF WRITING

Interaction through the written message is the goal of writing. Motivating students to write is a challenging task for the teacher. Student aptitudes vary widely in writing. Some need considerable help in developing a smooth and effective operation; others seem intuitively to take off and create interesting patterns of their own (Rivers and Temperley, 1978, P. 297). If students are to write spontaneously, opportunities to acquire confidence in writing must be provided to them.

When the receiver of the communication is not physically present writing is used. Except professional people like writers, journalists, lawyers, teachers etc., others have very few occasions to resort to this mode of communication. Writing also fulfills a pedagogic purpose in second language teaching. It is used to fix the structures and vocabulary already learnt.

The student who learns to write English has not only to cope with the mechanical problems connected with the script of the language but also with the problems of ease and fluency of expression, of grammatical and lexical accuracy and of the appropriateness of the style of writing as demanded by the occasion or situation (C. Paul Verghese, 1990, P. 78).
2.6.1. Analysis of the skill of writing

Writing is a complex skill and it has some special components. A person who can express himself in written English can:

- Write the letters of the alphabet at a reasonable speed;
- Spell the words correctly;
- Recall appropriate words and put them in sentences;
- Use appropriate punctuation marks;
- Link sentences with appropriate sentence connectors and sequence signals (e.g. pronouns, definite article etc.)
- Organise thoughts and ideas in logical sequence and in suitable paragraphs around topic sentences;
- Evaluate the significance of a word or a sentence in the overall context of the written passage;
- Use the form and register appropriate for the subject matter and the audience (Baruah, 1991, P. 246).

The main aim of developing the skill of writing is to train the student in expressing himself effectively in good English.

2.7. COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF THE FOUR-SKILLS

Full mastery of a language requires both the receptive and productive abilities. Though they are related to each other, efficiency in one aspect does not necessarily lead to efficiency in another. Each of the four skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing requires due attention. But in reality in the English classroom, speaking in English is totally absent and intellectual writing is very poor. Students read only to memorize words and sentences for answering questions. Reading on their own with understanding is unheard of in ordinary English classrooms. Such an illogical and improper teaching and learning of English may be due to lack of understanding of the relative importance of the language skills. The following criteria may be on the continuum of a scale to measure the worth of the four language skills.
Usability

A skill should be a useful one. In the case of LSRW, each one of them is found to be useful in one form or other in one context or another. In the first language, listening and speaking form the major chunk of communication. However reading and writing assert their right in certain typical situations. Therefore for a fuller use of the language all the four skills are found to be useful. But the quantum of usability of these skills gets reversed in the case of the second language i.e., English. Reading, though rudimentary in nature seems to fulfill the criterion to the maximum followed by writing (mechanical) and then listening and speaking.

Learnability

Listening and speaking are more difficult when compared to other skills in the case of second language learning. A congenial atmosphere is needed to master these skills. In our environment there is no social compulsion to listen and speak in the English language. In the present classroom situation learning to understand and speak the language is very difficult. Intellectual writing is absent and only mechanical writing is used. Students never feel the necessity for creative writing. They memorize and write in English. When compared to these three skills, reading is easier for the individual to master. They casually learn the alphabets, group the words and pronounce the words. As reading is mostly passive in nature, without the active participation of other members in the group one can develop reading. So, it seems that reading is more easily learnable than the other three skills.

Teachability

Another criterion for judging the importance of a skill is its teachability. The teacher should have competence in English to teach the language. In listening and speaking teachers are not so competent. Naturally they can’t promote the oral fluency of the students. They may not favour intellectual writing, as they are not very competent to express their ideas in writing. In examinations also students are not assessed on the basis of their independent, original writing in English. Therefore the teachability of listening, speaking and writing are found to be very low when compared to that of reading.

Reading being a passive skill it may be easier even for an average teacher to read and explain the subject matter in English. Therefore on this count also reading has to be preferred to the other three skills.
Productivity

Another criterion to judge the competence of a language skill is its productivity. According to Dr. West (1964) and others reading has got a very high surrender value; that is, it can be developed in isolation with a very basic understanding of the skill. But in the case of listening, speaking and writing the learner has to strain a lot to gain an understanding of the basics of the skills. Also, the developed skills may not be of any use for them in ordinary circumstances. Therefore it is said that the productivity of the skills are very less. Hence it may be found that in the order of competence of the students reading tops the list of the language skills.

Utility

The final criterion for judging the need of a particular language skill is its utility. Though in the state of Tamilnadu and elsewhere in India English is taught as a second language, the teacher may try to treat it on a par with the mother tongue. Unfortunately the long period of learning English in schools does not yield the expected dividend in the form of language mastery. However being an International language it has to be learnt to make ourselves cope with the knowledge explosion. Whatever may be the criticism against the learning of English, the fact that it is a library language cannot be contradicted. Therefore to treat it at least as a library language the reading aspect of this language has to be mastered. Therefore on this count also reading is to be accepted, as the skill most needed for our pupils.

2.7.1. Fixing the area of Investigation

From all this discussion it can be understood that of all the four skills, reading is to be given the topmost preference while teaching English as a second or third language. Moreover practically speaking, almost in all classrooms, only 'reading' is found. Hence the Investigator conceptualises that in this much 'needed' and much 'used' skill of reading, the students may have a better attainment when compared to those of other skills. Based on this conceptualisation, she intends to probe into detail the skill of Reading comprehension possessed by students at the crucial stage of their learning that is at the secondary level in the schools in Tuticorin, a Southern district of Tamilnadu, where she is engaged in preparing teachers for teaching English at this stage. Having thus fixed 'Reading comprehension' as the field of investigation, the investigator
proceeds to review those factors that may influence it, so as to define and delimit the scope of investigation.

2.8. READING - AN ANALYSIS

Reading content is divided into word recognition skills and comprehension skills. The following figure - An Organizational Framework of Developmental Reading Skills illustrates these skills.

(Mercer et al., 1987, P. 375.)
From the chart it is clear that comprehension is the construction of ideas out of the reader’s pre-existing concepts in interaction with the ideas of the writer represented by the writing in the text. Five major areas are included in Reading comprehension (Ekwall and Shanker, 1985; Smith and Barrett, 1974).

i) Vocabulary Development: To understand the words used by the writer, vocabulary development is essential for the reader. Exposure to books, people and places will provide meaningful experience in learning words from context and this will aid in vocabulary development.

ii) Literal Comprehension: Recognition and recall of explicitly stated information is literal comprehension. Skills involved in literal reading are ability to read for the central thought and main ideas, remembering significant details, sequence of event and to find answer to specific questions.

iii) Inferential Comprehension: It requires the reader to make hypotheses based on stated information, intuition and personal experience. Grasping cause-effect relationships, anticipating the remainder of a story, and forming opinions are inferential comprehension skills (Cecil D. Mercer and Ann R. Mercer, 1989, P. 335).

iv) Evaluation: It deals with judgement based on the reader’s experiences, knowledge or values. Evaluation focuses on qualities of accuracy, acceptability or probability of occurrence. It includes making value judgements and analysing the intent of the author.

v) Appreciation: It is the reader’s emotional and aesthetic sensitivity to the written selection. The reader identifies with characters and incidents.

Therefore for a valid assessment of the skills of comprehension, all these five areas should be incorporated with measuring instruments.

2.9. FACTORS INFLUENCING READING

Many factors may influence the skills of reading. Some of the conditions needed by children to make maximum progress in learning to read are physical and mental health, abilities of visual and auditory recognition, intelligence, background of experience, knowledge of the language, desire to read, purpose for reading, interest in reading, confidence and certain other environmental factors.
2.9.1. Physiological Factors

Various Physical deficiencies cause reading disability. Visual, auditory, speech impairments and neurological status are some physical deficiencies, which cause reading disability.

Correction of visual defects enables children to learn to read more easily. Kavale (1982), on the basis of a meta-analysis of 161 studies, concluded that visual perception is an important component of reading achievement. Both the ability to pronounce words correctly and the ability to understand what they mean is based on a child’s language ability, which has been acquired through listening. Although children with severe and extreme hearing losses always have great difficulty in learning how to read, those with lesser impairments often do reasonably well if the hearing loss is identified early and appropriate medical and educational measures are taken (Guy L. Bond et al., 1989, P. 53).

Manroe (1932) says that faulty articulation may directly affect reading by causing confusion between the sounds the child hears others make and the sounds the child hears himself make when he is asked to associate print symbols with sounds in reading. Speech defects are not associated with silent reading achievement but only with oral reading disability. It can be said that good health is conducive to good reading and poor health is associated with reading deficiency. Physical inadequacies also contribute to reading problems. Physical inadequacy makes it difficult to become enthusiastic about learning.

2.9.2. Sociological Factors

Language background depends on the extent of experience. Though the school can do much in the matter of language background and general experiences with speech and vocabulary, reading ability is a concomitant of home conditions. There is a close relation between reading and social factors. Home background can include:

1) economic condition.
2) opportunities for play and for social experiences.
3) nature and amount of speech and language patterns of children particularly as they are influenced by the talk of the parents.
iv) amount of reading done in the home and the availability of books.

v) quality of family life in terms of inter-parental relationships.

A background full of meaning and experience provides clues to the nature of word patterns and enables pupils to make maximum use of content in word recognition. According to Seigler and Gynther (1960) there is more evidence of family conflict in the homes of poor readers than in those of children with no reading difficulties. Crane (1950) shows disturbed parent-child relations, marked sibling jealousy, and unfavourable school situations were characteristic of the poor readers. Home tension and pressures hinder reading progress. Likewise school environment also plays a significant role in the development of the skills of reading. The school library or media centre plays an important role in the reading programme. Through them the child’s interests in reading are pursued and expanded. The varied book collections in the library offer students opportunities for reference reading, research and additional reading. Gaver (1961) found that higher educational gains were made when there was a school library and students read more and better books when there was a library. A number of educational factors may lead to difficulty in the reading programme. Some of them are -

i) curriculum requirements taking the teacher’s time and they are unable to individualize the programme satisfactorily.

ii) using materials and methods that seem dull and unimportant.

iii) procedures which do not tie class activities to the reading programme.

iv) inappropriate emphasis on the basic reading skills prevent effective reading.

v) over emphasis on phonic analysis causes disability.

To progress satisfactorily in learning to read there should be a balance between the type of skills and abilities to be developed and the type of home and school environment available for the pupils.

2.9.3. The Psychological Factors

Reading is an interpretation of graphic symbols. It is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meanings with them. Reading involves an interaction between the writer and the reader. The reader interprets what he reads, associates it with his past experience, and projects beyond it in terms of ideas, relations and categorization. Horn (1937) points out that the writer does not really convey ideas to
the reader; he merely stimulates him to construct them out of his own experiences. The one who takes the most to the printed page gains the most. Therefore the psychological factors such as –

i) Interest

ii) Intelligence

iii) Reading readiness

iv) Attitude towards reading

v) Cognitive style etc.

may influence the reading competence of the pupils.

2.9.3.1. Interest in Reading

Ryan (1942) says interests are learned responses which predispose the organism to certain lines of activity and which facilitate attention. Cummins and Fagin (1954) suggests that interest is an emotional involvement of like or dislike which is associated with attention to some object. Interest is the tendency to give selective attention to something. Lack of interest is the cause of poor reading.

Wheat (1955) points out that as a person learns to read, reading enters his mental make-up as a permanent mode of behaviour. He now uses reading as a means of enjoyment, studying and thinking. He will arrange his work and play in order to provide time for reading. He will use reading to discover new interests.

If the child should read, his interest must be captured. He must learn to read, his interest must be retained and he must continue to read. Appropriate reading materials must be introduced to the pupil that must motivate the student to action. The pupil must be lured to new interests through the ladder of suitable materials.

2.9.3.2. Intelligence

Intelligence is an important determinant of reading. Reading is a process of thinking. Intelligence is the ability to learn and to apply what is learned. According to Eames (1960) intelligence is the functional manifestation of the integrity of the central nervous system. The intelligence manifested by a person bears a relationship to the structural and functional state of his brain.

Buttery and Mason (1979), Cegelka and Cegelka (1970), and Kirk, Kliebhan, and Lerner (1978) point out, low intelligence is the cause of reading disability when appropriate educational adaptations are not made. Carlson (1949) found that individuals
with high intelligence tend to comprehend better when reading rapidly than when reading slowly; those with average or low intelligence comprehend better when reading slowly, than when reading, rapidly.

Students with high IQs read books that are more difficult. Boys who score high on intelligence or aptitude tests (IQ 130 or more) read mystery stories, biographies, history, and westerns; girls of above-average intelligence read historical fiction, modern novels, biographies, mystery stories, teen-age books, sports, animal stories, science, history, and books treating social problems (Barbe, 1952).

2.9.3.3. Reading readiness

Lamoreaux and Lee (1943) emphasized that each stage of reading is a step towards readiness for further reading. Success in reading depends on the child's overall level of maturity. The child has to pass through different stages of mental maturity before he can receive reading instruction with profit. Gessell and Ilg (1949) suggest that readiness for learning results more from internal unfolding rather than from external stimulation, relevant learning experiences, practice, and integration of information.

Sutton (1964) reports that children who read early tend to be girls, have siblings and parents who read to them, come from upper socio-economic homes, have parents who are interested in school affairs and educational progress, are interested in words, are conscientious and self-reliant, have good memories and know how to concentrate, can name most of the letters of the alphabet, and have fathers who engage in mental rather than manual work.

Pupils in our Indian schools may have only poor reading readiness due to the lack of language competence.

2.9.3.4. Attitude towards reading

The child should develop a favourable attitude towards school, classmates, and reading. Positive attitudes faster progress in learning to read and negative attitudes result in reading difficulties. Personal and social adjustment, home conditions peer relationship, teacher-pupil relations, and the instructional programme all influence attitude toward reading (Guy L. Bond et al., 1989, P. 77).

Kantawala (1980) states that the higher the Socio-Economic Status, the better was the reading attitude. According to him students of small-size families had a more favourable reading attitude than those of large-size families. Due to the lack of
independent reading, students may not have developed a positive attitude towards reading.

2.9.3.5. Cognitive style

Cognition and reading are related in two important ways. First, specific cognitive abilities are essential for the acquisition of reading skills. Second, reading is a powerful means for knowledge acquisition, structuring and application.

Recently research concerning the relationship of several aspects of cognitive style and reading has been conducted. Field dependence and field independence have been related to reading ability and achievement. Field independence was found to be related to reading achievement by Blaha (1982), based on his study of 324 inner-city fifth-grade children. Research by Paradise and Block (1984) who studied that students who closely match their teachers on field dependence - independence make greater gains in reading achievement than students who are dissimilar.

Field-dependent children process information in a generally global fashion and appear to be easily influenced by their environment. But, field - independent children process information in an analytical manner and tend to be individualistic.

From the analysis of the psychological factors associated with reading it is clear that for any study aimed at studying the problems related to Reading comprehension a complete picture would be available only when some of the suitable psychological factors are treated as dependent variables of the problem under investigation.

2.9.4. Teacher Related Factors

Reading is a complex process made of many interrelated skills and abilities. Success in teaching children to read depends on the teacher. The teacher who is inept because of poor training, lack of experience or a slavish devotion to inflexible routine, is unable to adjust reading instruction to the varied needs of the students (Guy L. Bond et al., 1989, P. 86).

A comprehension lesson has two interrelated areas. They are the thematic and linguistic. Thematic content of a comprehension lesson is composed of the ideas expressed in the linguistic fabric of the lesson. The linguistic area covers the lexical items and structures, which constitute the linguistic body of the lesson. The objectives of teaching a comprehension lesson are:
to enable the pupils to understand the ideas inherent in the linguistic fabric of the lesson (a piece of writing or passage)

- to enable them to recall, analyse and classify the ideas expressed in the passage
- to enable them to understand contextual meanings of lexical items and structures fitted into the build-up of the passage
- to enable them to understand the usage of lexicals and structures involved
- to enable their penchant for reading with understanding (K. P. Verma, 1976, P. 16).

A comprehension lesson requires a goal-oriented silent reading on the part of the students. The teachers’ language teaching competence influences the reading skill of pupils. Teachers themselves are not voracious readers. They seldom give illustrations from other books. In schools teachers never encourage the students to read anything other than the text. They prepare the students only for the examination and their language teaching is syllabus and examination oriented. Moreover most of the children fail to take reading as a leisure time activity. They read texts only to memorize for the examination. So there is no chance of developing the essential reading skills. Hence contrary to the earlier conceptualisation the attainment of the skill of reading may not be to the expected level.

2.10. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The above stated facts have prompted the investigator to make the study a comprehensive one.

Therefore it warrants a probe into the skills of Reading comprehension developed by pupils at the secondary level in relation to certain psychological factors such as Reading readiness, Reading attitude and Cognitive style.

Moreover developing suitable instruments for assessing the essential skills and other chosen variables would become an inherent part of the study. The present study, therefore aims at answering the following research questions:

i. Is the Reading comprehension of pupils of standard IX in the schools in Tuticorin district low or moderate or high?
ii. Which of the following background characteristics –
   i) Gender
   ii) Community
   iii) Religion
   iv) Type of school
   v) Locality of school
   vi) Parental education
   vii) Parental annual income
   viii) Kindergarten education

   are associated with the following dimensions –
   a) Reading the lines
   b) Reading between the lines
   c) Reading beyond the lines

   and their sub-skills?

iii. How are Reading readiness, Reading attitude and Cognitive style related to the skills of Reading comprehension of standard IX students in the schools in Tuticorin district?
2.11. REFERENCES


16. Ibid., P. 335.


18. Ibid., P. 77.

19. Ibid., P. 86.