Strategies for Improving Reading Skill
CHAPTER – III

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING SKILL

A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good.

Samuel Johnson 1709-94; James Boswell Life of Samuel Johnson, (1791)

INTRODUCTION

The Place of reading in the curriculum

Reading was invented only a few thousand years ago. And with this invention, we rearranged the very organization of our brain, which in turn expanded the ways we were able to think, which altered the intellectual evolution of our species. (Wolf, 2007:3).

In fact reading is mostly taken as a non-serious aspect. We read with what appears to be little effort and little planning. And it is remarkable that so much of the world’s population can read to some extent (Elley, 2001; Tucker, 2000; UNESCO, 2007). Human beings can read basic forms, read advertisements, read newspapers and use basic reading skills in their work. Universal literacy is an ideal goal that is an ongoing priority among UNESCO, nation states, and many non-governmental organizations, and efforts need to be made to reduce illiteracy levels.
It is also important that many people around the world read in more than one language. Large populations of people have learned to read in second or third languages for a variety of reasons, including interactions within and across heterogeneous multilingual countries, large-scale immigration movements, global transportation, advanced education opportunities and the spread of languages for wider communication. Readers, who have learned to read in their first languages, have also learned to be second language readers, often under very different circumstances.

One must read throughout the day because printed materials are all around us, and it must be used in many more ways than we are aware of. Many of us also engage in reading that may be quite demanding in educational, professional and occupational settings. It is a fact of modern life that almost any issue or topic can be discussed, addressed, or argued from multiple view points, and it is routinely our task to decide among these alternative sources of information. How we learn to negotiate this world of print and achieve our goals is a large part of many professional and academic lives.

Citizens of modern societies must be good readers to be successful. Reading skills do not guarantee success for any one, but success is much harder to come by without being a skilled reader. The advent of the computer and the internet does nothing to change this fact about reading. If anything is to be said, electronic communication only increases the need for effective reading skills and strategies as we try to cope with the large quantities of information made available to us.
A very large percentage of people around the world also learn to read a second language, usually as students in formal academic settings. Events over the past one hundred years have placed greater demands on people to become literate in an L2. The 20th century and early 21st century have been a time of massive migrations around the world as well as growth in the use of world languages. (Mc. Granty, 2006). Many people have moved to new countries for various reasons. They and their children have had to, and continue to, learn to function in societies and school systems where their significant reading experiences are often primarily in a second language. The level of expectation for a person to function well in a modern print environment is higher than ever before.

Besides massive waves of migration and relocation, the rise of English as a global language has had a major impact on educational systems around the world and the demand for reading in a second language. In countries around the world, school systems require students to learn English for access to information and for the eventual ability to compete economically and professionally. For good or for bad, this situation reflects a reality of the early 21st century. (Crystal 1995; Mc Granty, 2006). It is therefore an important societal responsibility to offer every person the opportunity to become a skilled L2 reader. Even reading in contexts outside the academic classroom, such as daily encounters with newspapers and e-mails, or reading novels for entertainment, represent important aspects of the development of academic reading skills.
Human beings started communicating with each other by gestures and sign language. Then came spoken communication. Reading came at a very later stage when people started developing graphic symbols for the words spoken by them. The development of script for a language is always linked to civilization. The graphic representation of the words is a sign of civilization. This can be ascertained from the fact that many languages spoken in the world do not have a written script. For example, the Tulu language does not have a script. Uniformity of language use can be obtained only through reading and writing. The written form of the language helps to develop a standard. The written word acts as a guardian of the culture of a race. The Chinese script is a classic example of pictorial representation which reflects the culture of the race.

The media for mass communication, particularly, the television, has had a negative impact on reading habits. Since the channels provide visual information, the reading habit is slowly dying. The reading habit has changed from the print to the digital form. The reading mechanism also changes with the focus on quickly reading the text in scroll messages. The students need to be trained in this area which would provide ample scope for further research.

Reading is generally defined as a process that helps us to:

1. Decode, decipher and identify the words in print
2. Articulate, speak and pronounce the words in print and
3. Understand, interpret and get across the meanings of the words/texts in print.
The processes listed in the first definition are generally done by the teacher for the beginner who cannot identify letters and words. The second definition pertains to reading aloud to develop fluency and good pronunciation. The last definition constitutes 'silent reading' or reading for comprehension. This is the type of reading, which we normally do in our daily life.

A lot of written material can be understood even without understanding the meaning of individual words and sentences, as unfamiliar words can be understood in the overall context of the sentence. One comes across different text-types in life and none of them is read for the same purpose and none of them takes the same amount of time in reading. The text-type determines how much time should be spent on reading it.

**Developing Reading Skills**

In foreign language teaching and learning, reading involves understanding and comprehending the meaning conveyed through the written text. Reading is an active process in which the reader is all the time involved in getting at the message, what is called decoding, that the writer has been able to put through the written text. The message of the text is accessible to the mind of the reader only after decoding it. Reading involves an active participation of the reader in understanding the message the writer has conveyed through the written text. Thus, it would be wrong to assume that the reader's role is passive at the time of reading.
Reading involves skimming, scanning, extensive reading/reading for pleasure/reading longer texts for fluency, intensive reading/reading for detail and/reading shorter texts for accuracy. Skimming is a type of reading when one goes through the text in order to get its gist or central idea. One doesn’t read through the text completely. It is a technique that involves quick glancing through a text to understand its general content. This is done by reading the topic sentences of each paragraph and the concluding sentence in the last paragraph.

Scanning involves rapidly glancing through the text to find out some specific piece of information. This involves the ability to reject or pass over irrelevant information. This is the kind of reading that is done when one looks up the meaning of a word in a dictionary or looks for a telephone number in a telephone directory. To answer the questions that follow a reading comprehension passage, one need not go through the entire text again. The reader knows where to find the answer for each question from his familiarity of the text.

Extensive reading or reading for fluency involves reading of longer texts for pleasure. It is not done for finding our minute details. Students should develop the habit of reading outside the classroom also. Class time is short and not much of reading can be done inside the classroom. Teachers should encourage students to do a lot of extensive reading on varied subjects. Extensive reading can play a vital role in second language learning. Students can do selective reading and decide when to read and where to read.
Generally, students find their text books uninteresting and demotivating. Hence, it is imperative that materials for extensive reading are easy, appealing and varied. The texts should be similar to those the students come across in daily life and which they will want to read after they go out of their educational institutions. The selection of texts depends on the level of linguistic competence the students have reached at a particular point of time. Independent silent reading requires a sufficient command of language to comprehend the message in the text.

Reading involves not only reading for understanding the gist of the text or looking for some specific piece of information but also comprehending the intended message, ideas, style etc., of its writer. The right kind of skills and strategies are to be developed in students for this purpose. Skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading are the main skills that can be developed in students so that they become efficient readers. An efficient reader is a reader who can read a text-familiar or unfamiliar-silently with understanding and without help.

Though reading, like all other skills, needs constant practice, a teacher can help his students increase their capacity of reading efficiently by using modern gadgets and sophisticated machines like tachistoscopes, pacers etc., that force the learner to read at a given rate without regressions by exposing the text briefly.

Students find that there is always too much to read. It is important that students select the most appropriate source for their needs. To do this, students
must have a clear purpose for their reading and they must be able to predict which source will help them most to meet that purpose.

Prediction means making intelligent guesses about what a text book, chapter or section contains using only a small sample of the text. The more one knows about the subject, the easier it is for them to make predictions because one can relate the samples of new text to one’s existing knowledge, when one’s knowledge of the subject is limited, one has to make maximum use of all available clues to predict well.

Making accurate predictions from book titles, chapter headings and text samples can help students make the right choice in what to read and can save one’s valuable study time. When a suitable text book has been selected and the chapters most appropriate to one’s needs identified, it is useful to see what help is given in each chapter to enable one to read it effectively.

**Improving Vocabulary**

Words are one of the first problems that readers face—words which are unfamiliar, words which change and words which are missing. Writers often use different words in a text to refer to the same thing, the meaning remains the same but the words change. Sentences which appear to have words missing may also cause problems. Sometimes writers omit words to avoid unnecessary repetition.
Students sometimes blame unfamiliar words for their reading difficulties. It is impossible to know the meaning of all the words one comes across in a textbook. The first decision to make when faced with an unfamiliar word is ‘Do I need to know its meaning?’ This question can be easily answered if one has a clear purpose of one’s reading. The second decision to make when faced with an unfamiliar word is ‘Do I need to know its exact meaning or its approximate meaning?’ Most of the time, an approximate meaning is sufficient.

Surveying a text means reading a text to get a general idea of its contents. Reading for a general idea depends on good sampling – knowing where to look, knowing which part of the text can help us most. Because we don’t read everything when we read to get a general idea, this kind of reading also depends on good prediction skills. Knowing linking words and phrases will help to understand how the ideas in a text are connected and also to make more accurate predictions. Signpost expressions may help in identifying the important part of the text. These expressions also indicate how the text is organised and to show when new topics are introduced.

In the absence of linking words or signpost words, readers should use information from the text and their previous knowledge to make inferences. It is one of the most important reading skills to develop.
Taking notes is an important way of learning from a text and making it easy to revise our knowledge in the future. While taking notes, one has to do three things.

1. Recognise what is important.
2. Reduce the important points to note form.
3. Show how the important points are linked.

Identifying text structure is useful because it helps us understand how the topics relate to each other. It also helps us to give a structure to our notes and summaries. Spider notes are a useful alternative to linear notes as they give a better visual display of the text structure.

Identifying differences in the factual content of texts is fairly straight forward. Identifying different view points is more difficult, understanding the writer’s purpose and the structure of the text can help. These are the first steps in critical reading.

Critical reading means testing the strength of an argument, proposal or an explanation in a text. It also means measuring the ideas in a text against your own ideas and against those of other writers. Critical reading is an important skill for any student.

For research, you need the most up-to-date information available. Locating specific information quickly is an important skill when using reference sources. No reference source can contain all the information on a particular topic. Knowing when it is time to give up and try another source is important.
The best way of searching journals is to use a database of abstracts and indexes. To find the needed information you want quickly, you need to develop an effective search strategy needs to be developed. This involves:

1. posing the search question.
2. identifying the main topics.
3. deciding how to search for the main topics.
4. formulating the search query.

When searching a database, the first keyword used may not produce helpful results. You may have to use a broader, narrower or related keyword to get the results you want. For example:

Keyword : Computer crime
broader : Information technology
narrower : viruses
related : computer security

Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. There are two main reasons for reading – reading for pleasure and reading for information. The main ways of reading are skimming, scanning, extensive reading and intensive reading. These different ways of reading are not mutually exclusive. In real life, our reading purposes constantly vary.
Sub skills of reading

Reading involves a variety of sub skills. The main ones are listed below.

(This list is taken from John Murby’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 of sentences and utterances.
- Understanding relations within the sentence.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion 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.
- Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
- Basic reference skills.
- Skimming for gist.
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

Reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it. Students should be taught to use what they know to understand unknown elements, whether these are ideas or simple words.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension should not be separated from the other skills. There are few cases in real life when we do not talk or write about what we have read or when we do not relate what we have read to something we might have heard. It is therefore important, to link the different skills through the reading activities.

- reading and writing e.g. summarizing, mentioning what you have read in a letter, note-making etc.
- reading and listening e.g. comparing an article and a news bulletin, using recorded information to solve a written problem, matching opinions and texts, etc.
- reading and speaking, e.g. discussions, debates, appreciation, etc.,
Reading is an active skill. It constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions. It is possible to develop the students powers of inference through systematic practice, or introduce questions which encourage students to anticipate the content of a text from its title and illustrations or the end of a story from the preceding paragraphs.

A second aspect of reading as an active skill is its communicative function. The students must be taught how to approach and consider the text in order to become independent and efficient readers. It is also important to remember that meaning is not inherent in the text, that each reader brings his own meaning to what he reads based on what he expects from the text and his previous knowledge. This shows how difficult it is to test competence in reading comprehension and how great the temptation is to impose one’s own interpretation on the learners.

But it is important to remember that many texts are meant to be read and enjoyed, that too many exercises might spoil the pleasure of reading. ‘A balance should be struck between leaving the student without any help on the one hand and on the other hand squeezing the text dry’. (Grellet, 1981).
Classroom Practice

The first point to be noted when practising reading in the classroom is that it is a silent activity. Therefore silent reading should be encouraged in most cases, though the teacher may sometimes need to read part of the text aloud. The students themselves should not read aloud. Reading aloud prevents students from developing efficient reading strategies.

Another classroom procedure can consist of helping the student to time himself and increase his reading speed little by little. It is necessary to reach a certain reading speed in order to read efficiently. To say that reading is a silent and personal activity does not imply that it only lends itself to individual work. On the contrary, it is particularly interesting to encourage comparisons between several interpretations of a text which will lead to discussion.

Reading can be done as a class activity but reading activities can also be devised to individualize students’ work at home. Instead of choosing one activity for the whole class, two or three sets of exercises of varying difficulty can be prepared based on the same text so that each student can work at home at his own level. If the text is then to be discussed in the class, each group of students who have worked on the same exercises will be able to talk about what they have done. This certainly will be stimulating for the weaker students, while the better ones will not be held back.
If there is little teacher-control of the reading activity, then self-correcting exercise are extremely useful. The students are able to evaluate their work and can try little by little to improve their reading ability. They feel reassured and guided and using this type of material is one of the best ways of building up the students' confidence. (Multiread II (S.R.A. Paris, 1973) and Multiread A (S.R.A. London, 1977).

Transfer of L₁ reading skills to L₂ reading tasks

Most of the reading techniques are already familiar to the students in their native language. But it is necessary to re-train them, as some students have difficulty applying them to a second language. Students need to develop strategies to cope with unfamiliar words and complex or apparently obscure sentences. It should be ensured that the students do not stumble on every difficulty or get discouraged from the outset.

Inferring means making use of syntactic, logical and cultural clues to discover the meaning of unknown elements when dealing with a new text, it is better not to explain the difficult words to the learners beforehand. They would only get used to being given ‘pre-processed’ texts and would never make the effort to cope with a difficult passage on their own. On the contrary, students should be encouraged to make a guess at the meaning of words they do not know rather than look them up in a dictionary. If they need to look at the dictionary to get a precise
meaning which is an important and necessary activity too they should only do so after having tried to work out a solution on their own. This is why, from the very beginning, it is vital to develop the skill of inference.

**Vocabulary Building**

Inability to infer the meaning of unknown elements often causes discouragement and apprehension in students when they are faced with a new text. A similar problem arises when students are unable to get an immediate grasp of sentence structures. This will be a definite handicap in the case of texts with relatives, embedded clauses and complex structures. It is therefore important to train the students, as early as possible, to look first for the ‘core’ of the sentence (subject & verb). (Grellet, 1981).

Another area in which it is essential to prepare students is in recognizing the various devices used to create textual cohesion and more particularly the use of reference and link-words. It is important for the students to realize that a text is not made up of independent sentences or clauses, but that it is a web of related ideas that are announced or introduced and taken up again later throughout the passage with the help of references.

If the reader does not understand some words of the passage, some of the facts and ideas will probably escape him. But if he does not understand inter-or intra-sentential connectors, he may also fail to recognize the communicative value
of the passage since those words act as signals indicating the function of what follows. From the very beginning, students should therefore be taught not only to understand them when they come across them, but also to look out for such markers. This will be helpful to them when skimming, since the simple recognition of those link-words will help them to understand the development of the argument in the passage.

**Reading Speed Vs Comprehension**

Students who read too slowly will easily get discouraged. They will also tend to stumble on unfamiliar words and fail to grasp the general meaning of the passage. One of the most common ways of increasing reading speed is to give students passages to read and ask them to time themselves. Reading speed should not be developed at the expense of comprehension.

One of the most important points to keep in mind when teaching reading comprehension is that there is not one type of reading but several according to one’s reasons for reading. Students will never read efficiently unless they can adapt their reading speed and technique to their aim when reading. By reading all texts in the same way, students would waste time and fail to remember points of importance to them because they would absorb too much non-essential information.
Motivation

Motivation is of great importance when reading. Partly because most of what we usually read is what we want to read, but also because being motivated means that we start reading the text prepared to find a number of things in it, expecting to find answers to a number of questions and specific information or ideas we are interested in it. This ‘expectation’ is inherent in the process of reading, which is a permanent interrelationship between the reader and the text, when reading, we keep making predictions which, in their turn, will be confirmed or corrected.

This underlines the artificiality of the classroom situation in which students are often confronted with passages they know nothing about, do not and cannot situate in a more general cultural context and what is even more important, they have no particular desire to read. It is very difficult, in such conditions, to expect the students to learn to read better.

Skimming and Scanning

Both skimming and scanning are specific reading techniques necessary for quick and efficient reading. When skimming, we go through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. When scanning, we only try to locate specific information and often we do not even follow the linearity of the passage.
to do so. We simply let our eyes wander over the text until we find what we are looking for, whether it be a name, a date, or a less specific piece of information.

Skimming is therefore a more thorough activity which requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading competence. Scanning, on the contrary, is far more limited since it only means retrieving what information is relevant to our purpose.

One vital aspect of reading comprehension is the ability to assess and evaluate the text. One should be fully aware of the writer's intention, of his point of view and possible bias. Students should be able to discriminate facts from opinions. It is an important part of reading competence since any good reader should be aware of the way his judgment is influenced one way or another.

Teaching Reading

If reading came naturally, teaching reading would be a much easier job. Children would learn to read as readily as they learn to speak. Teachers would only need to give students the chance to practice their skills. But children don’t learn to read just from being exposed to books. Reading must be taught explicitly and systematically, one small step at a time. That is why good teachers of reading are so important.

Researchers have made a lot of progress in determining how to teach reading more effectively, but it really comes down to the effectiveness of each
individual teacher. Teachers make the difference. When using any teaching strategy, teachers should (1) help students to understand why a strategy is useful and (2) describe explicitly how the strategy should be used. Teacher demonstration, modeling and follow up independent practice are critical factors for success. Student discussion following strategy instruction is also helpful.

**Choral Reading**

Choral reading is reading aloud in union with a whole class or group of students. Choral reading helps build students fluency, self-confidence, and motivation. Because students are reading aloud together, students who may ordinarily feel self-conscious or nervous about reading aloud have built-in support. Choral reading can provide less skilled readers the opportunity to practice and receive support before being required to read on their own. It provides a model for fluent reading as students listen. It helps improve the ability to read sight words.

**Readers’ Theater**

Readers theater is a strategy for developing reading fluency. It involves children in oral reading through reading parts in scripts. In using this strategy, students do not need to memorize their part, they need only to reread it several times, thus developing their fluency skills. The best reader’s theater scripts include lots of dialogue. It promotes fluency. It helps readers to read aloud with expression. It helps build reading confidence.
Tape assisted reading is an individual or group reading activity where students read along in their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book on an audiotape. As confidence and reading skills develop, students read the same passage or text without the assistance of the tape. It helps to build fluency skills including proper phrasing and expression. It helps students improve sight word recognition. It helps build comprehension. It allows students to hear the tone and pace of a skillful reader. It is a flexible strategy that can be used across content areas.

Reading skills enable readers to turn writing into meaning and achieve the goals of independence, comprehension and fluency. Reading skills are specific abilities which enable a reader to read the written form as meaningful language, to read anything written with independence, comprehension and fluency and to mentally interact with the message.

Word attack skills let the reader figure out new words. Comprehension skills help the reader predict the next word, phrase or sentence quickly enough to speed recognition. Fluency skills help the readers see larger segments, phrases and groups of words as wholes. Critical reading skills help the reader see the relationship of ideas and use these in reading with meaning and fluency.

Comprehension

Reading requires understanding or comprehending, the meaning of print. Readers must develop certain skills. That will help them comprehend what they read and use this as an aid to reading. Comprehension skills are the ability to use
context and prior knowledge to aid reading and to make sense of what one reads and hears. Comprehension is based on:

- Knowledge that reading makes sense
- Reader’s prior knowledge
- Information presented in the text and
- The use of context to assist recognition of words and meaning.

Reading Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read easily, smoothly and expressively. Fluency should be the aim of every reading lesson. It should increase as learners progress from the beginning to the advanced level. Fluency enables learners to read and write with more understanding. They gain this skill through practice and observation. (Gudschinky, 1973). Fluency skills are the ability to see larger segment and phrases as wholes as an aid to reading and writing more quickly. Some of the fluency skills are:

- Immediately recognizing letters and frequent clusters of letters.
- Learning frequent words by sight.
- Seeing phrases as wholes
- Using prediction skills within the phrase or clause.

A fluent reader is one who reads and understands what he or she is reading quickly and with a minimum effort.
A fluent reader:

- has automatic decoding skills.
- has built up vocabulary of sight words.
- has good comprehension skills.
- has good word attack skills.
- reads smoothly and with expression and
- self-corrects.

Decoding skills are the skills necessary to analyze and interpret correctly the spoken or graphic symbols of a familiar language. To learn to read one must learn the conventional code in which something is written in order to decode the written message. In reading practice, the term decode is used primarily to refer to word identification rather than to identification of higher units of meaning.

**Vocabulary; Word-attack skills**

A sight word is a word in a reading lesson containing parts that have not yet been taught, but that is highly predictable from the context of the story. Word attack skills are the ability to convert graphic symbols into intelligible language. Developing word attack skills is necessary to help beginner level readers become independent and fluent.

The order of recognition for a fluent reader may go back and forth from recognizing letters to recognizing words, phrases or even larger segments.
For new readers, whether recognition begins with the letter or the word depends on the way they learn to read. As fluency is gained, each reader develops his or her own strategies and interplay of skills. Proficiency in one skill aids proficiency in another.

Some of the word attack skills are:

- Seeing the component parts of words.
- Blending these parts into new words.
- Recognizing syllable patterns.
- Recognizing symbols for consonant sounds.
- Recognizing symbols for vowel sounds.
- Recognizing symbols for tone and other supra-segmental features.
- Recognizing capital letters and knowing when to use them.
- Recognizing punctuation and how it affects reading for meaning and expression.
- Recognizing the use of space to mark word breaks and paragraphs.
- Using the above skills simultaneously with comprehension and critical reading skills.

As readers make sense of what they read they use various relationships of ideas to aid recognition and fluency. Critical reading as a goal includes the ability to evaluate ideas socially and politically. Critical reading skills are the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize what one reads. They are the ability to see relationships of ideas and use them as an aid in reading.
Reading is typically an individual activity, although on occasion a person will read out loud for the benefit of other listeners. Reading aloud for one’s own use, for better comprehension, is a form of intrapersonal communication. Reading to young children is a recommended way to instill language and expression and to promote comprehension of text. (Alberto Mangnel, 1996)

Learning to read in a second language, especially in adulthood may be a different process than learning to read a native language in childhood. Reading is an intensive process in which the eye quickly moves to assimilate the text. Very little is actually seen accurately. It is necessary to understand visual perception and eye movement in order to understand the reading process.

Sub-vocalized reading combines sight reading with internal sounding of the words as if spoken. Advocates of speed reading claim it can be a bad habit that slows reading and comprehension. Speed reading is a collection of methods for increasing reading speed without an unacceptable reduction in comprehension or retention. Photo reading is a collection of speed reading techniques with an additional technique of photo reading to increase reading speed, comprehension and retention. Proof reading is a kind of reading for the purpose of detecting typographical errors.

Structure – Proposition – Evaluation (SPE) method, popularized by Mortimer Adler in ‘How to Read a Book’, mainly for non-fictional treatise, in
which one reads a writing in three phases: (1) for the structure of the work, which might be represented by an outline; (2) for the logical propositions made, organized into chains of inference; and (3) for evaluation of the merits of the arguments and conclusions. This method involves suspended judgement of the work or its arguments until they are fully understood.

**SQ3R**

Survey – Question – Read – Recite – Review (SQ3R) method, often taught in public schools, involves reading toward being able to teach what is read, and would be appropriate for instructors preparing to teach material without having to refer to notes during the lecture.

Multiple Intelligences – based methods draw upon the reader’s diverse ways of thinking and knowing to enrich his or her appreciation of the text. Reading is fundamentally a linguistic activity: one can basically comprehend a text without resorting to other intelligences, such as the visual, auditory or even the logical intelligence. However, most readers already use several intelligences while reading, and making a habit of doing so in a more disciplined manner can result in a more vivid, memorable experience.

**RSVP**

Rapid Serial Visual Presentation (RSVP) reading involves presenting the words in a sentence, one word at a time at the same location on the display screen,
at a specified eccentricity. RSVP eliminates inter-word saccades, limits intra-word saccades and prevents reader control of fixation times (Legge, Mansfield, Chung 2001). RSVP controls differences in reader eye movement, and consequently is often used to measure reading speed in experiments.

**Reading Speed**

Rates of reading include reading for memorization (fewer than 100 words per minute (wpm)); reading for learning (100 – 200 wpm); reading for comprehension (200 – 400 wpm); and skimming (400-700 wpm). Reading for comprehension is the essence of the daily reading of most people. Skimming is for superficially processing large quantities of text at a low level of comprehension.

Advice for choosing the appropriate reading rate includes reading flexibly showing when concepts are closely presented and when the material is new and increasing when the material is familiar and of thin concept. Speed reading courses and books often encourage the reader to continually accelerate; comprehension tests lead the reader to believe his or her comprehension is continually improving; yet, competence in reading requires knowing that skimming is dangerous, as a default habit.

Reading speed requires a long time to reach adult levels. According to Carver (1990), children’s reading speed increases throughout the school years.
Reading ability is very difficult to assess accurately. A student’s reading level is the level at which the student is able to use reading to accomplish communication goals. This means that assessment of reading ability needs to be correlated with purposes for reading.

**Comprehension**

Instructors often use comprehension questions to test whether students have understood what they have read. In order to test comprehension appropriately, these questions need to be coordinated with the purpose of reading. If the purpose is to find specific information, comprehension questions should focus on that information. If the purpose is to understand an opinion and the argument that supports it, comprehension questions should ask about those points.

In everyday reading situations, readers have a purpose for reading before they start. That is, they know what comprehension questions they are going to answer before they begin reading. To make reading assessment in the language classroom more like reading outside the classroom, allow students to review the comprehension questions before they begin to read the test passage. Finally, when the purpose of reading is enjoyment, comprehension questions are beside the point. As a more authentic form of assessment, have students talk or write about why they found the text enjoyable and interesting.
Effective reading comprehension is the culmination of mastering vocabulary, phonics, fluency and reading comprehension skills. Person having good comprehension skills is considered an active reader, with an ability to interact with the words by understanding its complete meaning and the concept behind it. Thus skill of reading comprehension distinguishes an active reader from a passive reader who just reads the text without getting its meaning.

**Reading Strategies**

Good reading strategies help students read in a very efficient way. They should be able to get maximum benefit from their reading tasks with minimum effort. The different strategies and techniques students can use to read more effectively are:

1. Knowing what they need to know and reading appropriately.
2. Knowing how deeply to read the document, skimming, scanning or studying.
3. Using active reading techniques to pick out key points and keep their mind focused on the material.
4. Using the table of contents for reading magazines and newspapers and clipping useful articles.
5. Understanding how to extract information from different article types.
6. Creating their own table of contents for reviewing material.
7. Using indexes, table of contents and glossaries to help them assimilate technical information.
Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text presents letters, words, sentences and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills and strategies to determine what that meaning is. These include:

1. Linguistic competence
2. Discourse competence
3. Sociolinguistic competence
4. Strategic competence

The purpose for reading and the type of text determine the specific knowledge skills, and strategies that readers need to apply to achieve comprehension. Reading comprehension is thus much more than decoding. Reading comprehension results when the reader knows, which skills and strategies are appropriate for the type of text and understands how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose.

Instruction in reading strategies is not an add-on, but rather an integral part of the use of reading activities in the language classroom. Instructors can help their students become effective readers by teaching them how to use strategies before, during and after reading.

Before reading: Plan for the reading task

➢ Set a purpose or decide in advance what to read for
➢ Decide if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed.
➢ Determine whether to enter the text from the top down (attend to the overall meaning) or from the bottom up. (focus on the words and phrases).
During and after reading: Monitor comprehension

- Verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses.
- Decide what is or is not important to understand.
- Reread to check comprehension
- Ask for help.

After reading: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

- Evaluate comprehension in a particular task or area.
- Evaluate overall progress in reading and in particular types of reading tasks.
- Decide if the strategies used were appropriate for the purpose and for the task.
- Modify strategies if necessary.

For students to develop communicative competence in reading, classroom and home work reading activities must resemble real–life reading tasks that involve meaningful communication. Therefore the reading material, purpose and the approach must be authentic.

**Transfer of L₁ reading skills to L₂ reading tasks**

Language instructors are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom – up strategy. One
of the most important functions of the language instructor, then, is to help students move past this idea and use top-down strategies as they do in their native language.

Effective language instructor shows students how they can adjust their reading behaviour to deal with a variety of situations, types of input and reading purposes. They help students develop a set of reading strategies and match appropriate strategies to each reading situation.

Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include.

1. Previewing
2. Predicting
3. Skimming
4. Scanning
5. Guessing from context
6. Paraphrasing

Many language text books emphasize product (answers to comprehension questions) over process (using reading skills and strategies to understand the text), provide little or no contextual information about the reading selections or their authors and few, if any, pre-reading tasks. Newer text books may provide pre-reading activities and reading strategy guidance, but their one-size-fits-all approach may or may not be appropriate for the students level.
Another problem with text book reading selections is that they have been adapted to a predetermined reading level through adjustment of vocabulary, grammar and sentence length. This makes them more immediately approachable, but it also means that they are less authentic and do not encourage students to apply the reading strategies they will need to use outside the class. When this is the case, the text book reading selection can be used as a starting point to introduce a writer or topic, and then the students can be given choices of more challenging authentic texts to read as follow up.

In foreign language teaching and learning, reading involves understanding and comprehending meaning / message conveyed through the written text. An efficient reader will understand what is relevant for him and what is relevant in the text that he should get at. Reading is an active process in which the reader is all the time involved in getting at the message, what is called decoding the text.

The message of the text is accessible to the mind of the reader only after decoding it and, thus, communication is achieved. This equally applies to the spoken text in which the speaker encodes the message in a certain order for the listener to hear it. The listener decodes the message or the intended meaning of the speaker as he listens to the speech. It would be therefore wrong to assume that the reader’s or listener’s role is passive at any time of reading or listening.
**Intensive Reading**

Intensive reading or reading for accuracy involves approaching a text under the close guidance of a teacher or through a task that forces the student to pay attention to the text. It involves a profound understanding of the text not only in terms of ‘what’ it says but in terms of also ‘how’ it says it. An intensive reading lesson is primarily concerned with developing reading strategies, judgement, reasoning, interpretation and appreciation of the learners.

**Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading or reading for fluency involves reading of longer texts for pleasure and, not necessarily, for minute details. It is a fluency activity in which the students can read on their own. Class time is short and the amount of reading normally is very great in our school curriculums. Extensive reading can lessen the teacher’s burden if he encourages his students to read without his help. A good school library would be an ideal place for students to enjoy reading. Unfortunately, most of our schools are ill equipped in terms of libraries and the school timings are such that they give very little chance to students to have some free time for reading. However, wherever such library facilities are available, students should be encouraged to read on their own and where no libraries are available, the teacher should refer to a list of books that students could be asked to read in their home.
Extensive reading can play a vital role in the learning of a second / foreign language. In this regard, the following characteristics are very important.

1. Students read as much as possible both in the class and outside it.
2. Different text- types are available for reading, for different purposes and in different ways.
3. Students have a choice and freedom to select whatever they want to read. They can stop reading the texts, which do not interest them.
4. Reading has its own reward. There are no follow up activities or tasks.
5. The reading texts are within the linguistic competence of the reader. During reading, the use of dictionary is very rare, as one does not stop to look for meaning of an unfamiliar/ difficult word.
6. Reading is individual and silent. Students read at their own pace. They choose when to read and where to read. This helps them develop fluency as they learn to read faster and without disturbance.

It is important, then, that intensive reading course is not confined to anthologies of prose and poetry, as is done in most of the school curriculum. It should include texts that interest and motivate students to read without a teacher’s help, both familiar and unfamiliar texts.

Extensive reading can prove very helpful in teaching and learning of English as second/ foreign language. It can provide a better exposure to English
through a wide variety of materials. Generally, students find their school textbooks uninteresting and demotivating. They can be asked to read additional materials so that the learning becomes easier. It is imperative that extensive materials are easy, appealing, varied and, above all, authentic. They should be texts which students come across in daily life and which they will want to read after they exit their educational institutions.

The decisions with regard to when to introduce authentic texts will depend on the level of linguistic competence the students have reached at a particular point of time. If the students' proficiency is below the required level, problems are bound to arise. Independent silent reading will require a sufficient command of language to comprehend and understand the message in the text.

Many teachers regard the prime purpose of reading as being to extract the message from the text – while students may well regard the prime purpose of reading as being to study the language contained within the text. As a result of the contrasting views, there is potential for misunderstanding. (Rose Senior, Tensions in Teaching Intensive Reading, English Teaching Professional, Issue 2, April 2009, P. 55).

Intent on helping them to hone their reading skills, teachers often tell their students to read quickly, urging them not to pause at every unfamiliar word. They may give them a limited time to read a particular text. Alternatively, they may
instruct their class to embark on a post-reading activity before everyone in the room has finished reading. Being required to read in ways that are unfamiliar to them can make students feel uneasy. To put students’ mind at rest, teachers can justify the importance of developing strategic reading skills by explaining that there is so much reading matter in the modern world, particularly on the internet, that everyone needs to develop the skill of identifying the main message of each text as quickly as possible – perhaps to decide that the text does not contain useful or valid information.

Views of experts on reading

Reading ability can be improved by teaching how to read for particular purposes. (Anderson, 2009 : 397). Academic purposes for reading include:

1. Reading to search for information (scanning and skimming)
2. Reading for quick understanding (skimming).
3. Reading to learn
4. Reading to integrate information
5. Reading to evaluate, critique and use information.
6. Reading for general comprehension.

Different purposes for reading also tend to impose differing levels of demand on the reader in order to maintain an acceptable standard of coherence (Linderholm et al., 2004).
Reading for general comprehension is the most common purpose for reading among fluent readers, and it is the default assumption for the term reading comprehension (Carver, 1992 a). This is the reading that takes place when we read a good novel, an interesting newspaper story or feature article, or a magazine when we are relaxing. Reading for general comprehension evolves over time for L₁ readers to become seemingly effortless because of the extraordinary number of hours devoted to automatic word recognition, syntactic parsing, meaning formation and text-building comprehension processes, all of which take place under very intense time contraints. It is this fluency under intense time contraints that makes reading for general comprehension difficult for L₂ readers who generally have far less exposure to L₂ print. (Grabe, 2009).

Successful reading includes the ability to adjust processing in such a way that learning goals, as a function of reading purpose, are met. (Linderholm & Vaxden Brock, 2007 : 778).

In reading, the singular recurring cognitive activity is the identification of words. From this follows two other, related observations about reading: Comprehension depends on successful word reading. Skill differences in comprehension can arise from skill differences in word reading (Perfetti, 2007 : 357). In children, word reading and reading comprehension are highly related; correlations fall within the range of 0.35 to 0.83 (Cain, 2006 : 65).
Improving Reading Speed

Reading is probably the most important skill students will need for success in their academic pursuits. Reading speed is determined by how many words your eyes can see at a single glance. The ability to see words on either side of the point at which the eyes focus is called ‘peripheral vision’. Being able to read by phrases requires an understanding of what words go together grammatically.

(e.g.)

a) Modification Patterns

1. The economic policy
2. an unnecessary expense

b) Prepositiona,l participial, infinitive phrases

1. on the other hand
2. considering the last point
3. to tell the truth

c) dependent clauses

1. because it was raining.
2. if potassium is added.

As important as increasing the peripheral vision is the importance of moving the eyes from point to point in a uniform rhythm. Slow reading also results in regression; the number of times the eyes have to go back to a word or phrase that they did not see accurately the first time.
It is useless to read rapidly but without adequate comprehension. It is equally inefficient to read with complete comprehension but at a very slow speed. The aim should be to comfortably balance the two. Reading comprehension does not necessarily suffer from a reading speed. There is no single best reading speed. Good readers adjust their speed to the material they are reading and the kind of comprehension they desire. Another cause of slow reading is ‘vocalizing’, that is, forming the sounds of each word, even though they may not be spoken aloud. The normal rate of speaking English is 180 to 200 words per minute. Reading 200 words per minute is a dangerously slow speed.

**Prediction while reading**

**Readers and advanced readers**

Reading is not only a visual activity but also an active process of predicting what is likely to come next. The success of the predictions depends upon the knowledge of the English language and culture and familiarity with the subject matter one is reading about. Redundancy exists whenever information is duplicated by more than one source. For example, in the unfinished sentence,

“...The captain ordered the sailors to drop the an........” there are four ways of reducing uncertainty about the remainder of that sentence.

1. Visual information

2. Orthographic information (spelling)
3. grammatical information

4. semantic information

The skilled reader who can make use of the three other sources needs much less visual information than the less fluent reader.

Reading as a skill in its own right involves the mechanics of reading, knowledge of the rules of construction of sentences and the relationship between sentences and clauses, a recognition of the organisation of the text.

One should have the ability to change one’s speed in accordance with the material that is being read. Although comprehension is far more important than the speed with which one reads, it is advantageous to read faster. This brings us to a discussion of eye movements. Only 6% of the time that one spends while one is reading is given to resting one’s eyes on the words what one is reading. The other 94% of one’s reading time is devoted to moving one’s eyes from word to word or words to words, that is, from thought group to thought group. The poor reader moves his eyes from word to word.

The basic difference between the techniques used by slow readers and the more effective techniques used by efficient readers is that eyes move from left to right along a line of print, making a series of small jerky movements, saccades, stopping momentarily on words. The slow reader fixates on every word, with regression and sub vocalisations.
The efficient reader sees written material in terms of groups of words, the relationship between sentences and clauses. If we do not recognise the force and meaning of the logical connectors and reference words, we will lose track of what we are reading. Helping students become self-regulated comprehenders is hard work and methods will likely take more than a year for most teachers to master. (Block of Pressley, 2002 a : 3).

**Sample Exercises from BULATS**

With a view to testing the various sub skills of reading, it is worth having a look at some samples from the BULATS Standard Test that are given below.

The BULATS Standard Test which the students of I B.E/ B.Tech. programme of Engineering Colleges affiliated to Anna University, Coimbatore includes sections on listening and reading and language knowledge. The section on reading and language knowledge includes questions based on:

1. Understanding notices, messages, time tables, adverts, graphs etc.,
2. Gapped sentences.
3. Reading passage with multiple choice questions.
4. Short reading passage; gap filling.
5. Short reading passages; sentence matching
6. Short reading passages; multiple choice gap filling
7. Short reading passages; gap filling
In the following two examples, identifying the correct answer depends on understanding an idea which is expressed in the question using different words.

1. Tim –order 1241 held up in customs. Please phone agent ASAP (before they collect the next batch)

What is the problem with the order?

a) It is damaged.

b) It is delayed.

c) It has not been collected.

2. Toxy – couldn’t get hold of Mario. His office number was engaged. Could you try? - Elaine.

Why couldn’t Elaine speak to Mario?

a) The phone line was in use.

b) He was out of the office.

c) The number was wrong.

Choose the best word for each of these spaces. In each case the correct word depends on the preposition after the space.
I. A recent survey shows that the decline in the global economy has ___1___ to a fall in the number of people ___2___ up their own business. 25-35 year olds are most likely to ___3___ in running their own companies but, interestingly, they are also the group who are most ___4___ of failure.

1. a) caused  b) resulted  c) led  d) happened  
2. a) beginning  b) starting  c) founding  d) created  
3. a) achieve  b) succeed  c) thrive  d) win  
4. a) worried  b) anxious  c) concerned  d) afraid

II. Choose the best word for each of these spaces. In each case the correct word depends on collocations.

The company ___1___ regular meetings in order to ___2___ sure that employees are kept informed about any changes. We pride ourselves in the fact that management and employees work in a ___3___ partnership.

1) a) holds  b) makes  c) puts  d) takes  
2) a) take  b) make  c) do  d) get  
3) a) close  b) near  c) tight  d) next

Activities for the Reading classroom

Readers are trained for fluency first, accuracy comes next. It is imperative that appropriate reading cultures are developed in students. Fluent readers are not trained for accurate reading. A good example of reading tasks would be to give students short stories with an open end. A full story with blanks can be given and
the students can be asked to fill up the blanks or alternate sentences can be taken out and the students can be asked to supply the sentences. First, the exercises can be personalized and later exercises can be contextualized.

The exercises can be individual or group activities. The teacher motivates the students to ensure that the learning level is equal. The teacher also spends time with the students for out of the class interaction. In the group activity, group leaders present the end of the story which would lead to interaction between the groups about the appropriateness of the end. The entire class activity is coordinated by the teacher. In English language teaching, the communicative language teaching approach advocates the acquisition of natural language in a non-stressed situation.

Activity I

Story with an open end

General Instructional Objectives:

1. Read and understand the story.
2. Predict the ending of the story
3. Discuss among group members the appropriateness of their ending
4. Group leader presents the end
5. Arguments and counter arguments by members of various groups.
Specific instructional objectives:

1. Reading comprehension of an unfinished story.
2. Presentation before the class
3. Group discussion on possible endings.
4. Interaction between groups.

Teaching aids

1) An unfinished story

Direction for the Activity

The teacher provides handouts containing an unfinished story to each group and motivates the students to predict the ending.

After the groups have finished reading the story, the teacher initiates the discussion by asking the leader of one group to present the prediction of the group before the class. The group leader gives a presentation. The teacher asks the other groups whether the ending given by the first group is acceptable to them or not.

The other groups object to the ending which is followed by a heated argument between the groups. The same action is repeated for each group. The reading activity combines listening and speaking skills along with enhancing reading comprehension.
Specific aim: To train students to read and understand a story which is open-ended and suggest suitable endings.

Skills involved: Inferring the course of the story. Predicting the ending personalized reading for active involvement.

**STORY – 1**

A man in the village was taking his dog on a leash to the forest. When he was on his way to the forest on the main road, he suddenly saw a car coming from behind. He had just enough time to jump to the side of the road to avoid being hit by the car. But unfortunately the dog was run over and was killed. The driver stopped the car and came to the man and offered his apology for killing the dog. The driver saw the man carrying a gun and felt very bad that he had spoiled the man’s intentions of hunting in the forest. The driver took out his briefcase and offered to pay some money as compensation. But the man politely refused to accept the money.

Exercise: Why did the man refuse to accept the money? What could be the reason?
A teacher in a school was collecting Flag Day contributions from the students. She spoke at length about the sacrifices our soldiers have made to safeguard the interest of our country. Some of them have even laid down their lives in war. She asked all the children to bring considerable amount of money to be contributed to the Flag Day Fund.

The next day, a rich boy in the class stood up and walked up to the teacher. He donated a sum of Rs. 100/-. The teacher appreciated him and as a show of affection patted him on his back. The rest of the boys contributed their mite to the Flag Day Fund. The boys who have contributed returned to their seats with a proud smile on their faces.

One boy reluctantly stood up and told the teacher that he could not bring any money towards the contribution. Other boys were looking at him scornfully. Tears swelled in his eyes. The teacher called him by her side and asked him what his father was. After listening to the boy, the teacher told the class that the boy had made the greatest contribution to the country.

**What did the boy tell the teacher?**

**What was the contribution of the boy?**
The Cat Ate my Gymsuit tells the story of an overweight girl and the problems she has in school and with her family. In this passage you get a glimpse at some of the difficulties she faces in her life.

School went on as usual. I kept getting good grades in everything but gym. My anonymous letters to the Student Council suggestion box were ignored. Lunches continued to be lousy. We were only up to the Civil War in history class.

It was different in some ways, though. I didn’t sit alone at lunch any more. I sat with some of the kids from Smedley. Ms. Finney’s classes were still great, but the rest of the classes seemed even more boring than they were before she came. We kept asking the teachers to be more like her, but they made faces and told us to keep quiet. We talked out in classes more and asked more questions, but they didn’t like that. We even asked some of them to join Smedley, but they said things like “What are you doing? Getting your heads shrunk?” and “My contract doesn’t say I have to stay after school past last period”.

by Paula Danziger
What changed a lot was my home. It got even worse. My father has a horrible temper. He doesn’t hit, but he yells. Even worse, he says awful things to me, like “I don’t care if you get good grades. You do stupid things. Why do I have to have a daughter who is stupid and so fat? I’ll never get you married off”.

My mother would try to tell him to stop, but he wouldn’t listen. They’d get into a fight and she’d start to cry and then go get a tranquilizer.

Then my little brother, Stuart, would cry and run for his teddy bear. While all this was happening my father would scream at me. “Look at what you’ve done. We’d never fight if it weren’t for you. Apologize.” By that time, I’m crying. It usually ended with me running upstairs, slamming my door, throwing myself on my bed, and rocking back and forth. My mother would come in and hug me and tell me everything would be O.K. but that I really should lose some weight and look like everyone else.

I hated it. That’s what usually went on in my house but, as I said, things got much worse.

In a way, it was because of Smedley. We did lots of neat stuff in there and I wanted to try some of it at home.

One day in Smedley we broke up into groups and told each other how we saw each other and felt about each other. I was really excited. Nobody said that they hated me. They said I was smart and nice, but too quiet and shy. No one
made fun of me. They didn’t say I was skinny and beautiful, but they didn’t tell me I was ugly and fat either. So I thought that may be it would be good to try it at home.

My mother was all for it. I had told her about what we were doing in Smedley, and she really dug it, because she said it was making me different. I didn’t tell her how scared I still was, though. I wanted her to be proud of me.

So one night at dinner, she explained that she wanted us all to sit around and talk like a family.

My father said, “I’ve worked hard all day for this family, Lily. Isn’t that enough? I don’t have to talk to all of you too, do I?”

Mom very quietly said, “Martin, I think it’s important, Please”.

So he said, “O.K... a little while”.

Mom and I cleared off the dishes, and then we went into the living room where my father was watching television. Stuart was sitting on the floor, stuffing pits into the hole in Wolf, his teddy bear. Stuart watches a lot of commercials and he once saw that oranges are supposed to keep you healthy. He used to try to put whole oranges in Wolk, but things got pretty sticky, so we convinced him that pits are best for bears.

My father frowned and said, “Let the kid stay here. He’s part of the family too. And anyway, I want to talk to him about his stupid thumb sucking and that idiot teddy bear”.

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Stuart held Wolf in his arms and started to suck his thumb. “I love Wolf. He’s my friend. He never yells at me”.

“Look, kid. You’re four years old. What are you going to be? Forty, hugging that bear and sucking your thumb? You’ll never get a job that way.

Instructions to students

Enter your reading time below.

Reading Time _______________________

Reading Speed _______________________

COMPREHENSION

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for each question or statement. Do not look back at the selection.

1. In school the narrator got good grades in
   □ a) everything but history.
   □ b) only gym
   □ c) everything but gym.

2. Ms. Finney’s class were
   □ a) great
   □ b) boring
   □ c) terrible
3. The narrator’s father often
   □ a) loses his temper
   □ b) hits her.
   □ c) praises her

4. When her parents fought, the narrator’s mother would cry and then
   □ a) run to her room and slam the door.
   □ b) get a tranquilizer
   □ c) yell at her husband.

5. Who or what is Wolf?
   □ a) the family’s pet dog
   □ b) Stuart’s teddy bear
   □ c) Stuart’s nickname

6. According to a commercial Stuart saw, what are supposed to keep you healthy?
   □ a) vitamins
   □ b) bananas
   □ c) oranges

7. One evening, the narrator’s mother wanted the family to
   □ a) discuss the narrator’s weight problem.
   □ b) go to the movies together
   □ c) sit and talk like a family.
8. Stuart loved his teddy bear mostly because it
   □ a) was soft and cuddly.
   □ b) never yelled at him.
   □ c) talked to him.

CRITICAL THINKING

Put an X in the box next to the best answer for each question or statement.
You may look back at the selection if you’d like.

1. The word that best describes the mood or feeling of this story is
   □ a) cheerful
   □ b) sad
   □ c) funny

2. Who is the narrator of this story?
   □ a) an outside observer
   □ b) Stuart’s sister
   □ c) Stuart

3. What is Smedley?
   □ a) a rival high school
   □ b) a nearby town
   □ c) an after-school group
4. Which word best describes the narrator’s home life?
   □ a) busy
   □ b) unhappy
   □ c) contented

5. The narrator’s father is mean to her because he thinks she
   □ a) does not respect him
   □ b) is a troublemaker
   □ c) is stupid and fat

6. Which of the following is a statement of opinion rather than fact?
   □ a) Lunches continue to be lousy.
   □ b) My anonymous letters to the Student Council suggestion box were ignored.
   □ c) We were only up to the Civil War in history class.

7. The people at Smedley made the narrator feel
   □ a) worse
   □ b) frustrated
   □ c) better

8. Compared to her father, the narrator’s mother treated her
   □ a) better
   □ b) about the same
   □ c) worse
VOCABULARY

Each numbered sentence contains an underlined word from the selection. Following are three definitions, Put an X in the box next to the best meaning of the word as it is used in the sentence.

1. My **anonymous** letters to the Students Council suggestion box were ignored.
   - □ a) silly
   - □ b) unlikely
   - □ c) unsigned

2. Lunches continued to be **lousy**.
   - □ a) sudden
   - □ b) terrible
   - □ c) short

3. My **contract** doesn’t say I have to stay after school past last period.
   - □ a) illness
   - □ b) owner
   - □ c) agreement

4. Look at what you’ve done. We’d never fight if it weren’t for you. **Apologize**.
   - □ a) accept a gift
   - □ b) admit your mistake
   - □ c) refuse to speak
5. Mom and I cleared off the dishes, and then we went into the living room.

☐ a) threw

☐ b) took

☐ c) placed

6. Stuart watches a lot of commercials, and he once saw that oranges are **supposed** to keep you healthy.

☐ a) believed

☐ b) unable

☐ c) prepared

7. He used to try to put whole oranges in Wolf, but things got pretty sticky, so we **convinced** him that pits are best for bears.

☐ a) dissolved into

☐ b) made to believe

☐ c) acted out a story

8. And anyway, I want to talk to him about his stupid thumb sucking and that **idiot** teddy bear.

☐ a) Sweet

☐ b) silly

☐ c) old
PERSONAL RESPONSE

What do you think will become of the narrator after she finishes high school? Use your imagination and write four to six sentences to describe what her life might be like.

I know how the narrator feels because

Interpretation

The activity has been administered to 60 first year B.E/B.Tech students of the Engineering College in which the teacher / researcher works. The students have been asked to time their reading and also answer comprehension questions and questions based on vocabulary and critical thinking. The results have been obtained and interpreted in the following way.
This exercise was selected from ‘Reading Drills – Middle Level’ by Edward B. Fry and published by Jamestown Publishers, Lincolnwood, Illinois, USA in 2000. The exercise ‘The cat Ate My Gymsuit’ was written by Paula Danziger in 1974 and published by Delacorte Press.

Students read at the rate of 250 words a minute, if they are readers of average ability. Their reading speed is nearly twice as fast as their speaking and listening speed. Reading is one of the fastest ways to put verbal information into your mind. These exercises are meant for students who want to read faster and with greater understanding.

The exercise begins with a reading selection. After reading the selection, the students are expected to record their reading time and speed. The lesson also includes exercises in reading comprehension, critical thinking and vocabulary as well as personal response questions. The reading comprehension and vocabulary exercises help them understand the selection. The critical thinking exercises help them reflect on what they have read and how the material relates to their own experience. At the end of the exercise, the personal response questions give them the opportunity to respond to various aspects of the story. These exercises help the students to monitor their own progress.

The students who have poor reading speed at less than 150 words per minute have been able to improve their reading speed to about 250 words per
minute at the same time not compromising on reading comprehension. The students have been taught how to improve their reading speed by improving their ‘peripheral vision’, maintaining a uniform eye movement, avoiding regression and vocalising. The students have also been taught to look at more number of words in one glance and move their eyes from thought groups to thought groups and not from word to word. They have also been trained to learn stock phrases and expressions to understand how words go together.

Their reading comprehension have also improved and the students have been able to infer the contextual meanings of words. They have also improved their critical thinking skills after teaching them appropriate reading skills and strategies. Students who have got a score of less than 4 in reading comprehension, critical thinking and vocabulary exercises have got scores of 6 and above. Hence, the researcher has found that the students have been able to improve their reading speed and comprehension if they are taught the required skills.
CHAPTER III

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