PREFACE

It is a commonplace observation that the ELT situation in India today leaves much to be desired. This is largely because we have failed to set appropriate goals and targets for teaching English in India. As a consequence, all those involved in teaching and learning English find themselves in a helpless situation. Frequent changes in the objectives of ELT, uncertainty about the status of English in the country and the vacillating attitude of the policy makers, among others, have all contributed to this state of affairs.

That English, as a language of comprehension - if not as a language of expression in certain walks of life - has a continuing role to play in India is a view shared by agencies, both official and non-official. But this is hardly reflected in the syllabi of our universities. The syllabi in our universities are still literature-oriented and teachers from colleges and universities brought up on the old literary tradition seem reluctant to face facts. The Education Commission (1964-66) assigns English the status of a 'library language'. The methodology of teaching English as a library language is still to be evolved clearly and precisely. However, it may not be far off the mark to
assume that the Commission expects a large majority of our students to acquire English for purposes of reading and comprehension so that they may keep themselves abreast of modern writing, research and information in their respective fields.

Reading, in the right sense of the word, however, has been one of the most neglected skills in our schools and colleges. India, like several other countries, has not been able to achieve a higher level of performance in reading. There is hardly any doctoral thesis on the subject. Barring a few Diploma Dissertations at CIEFL, M. Ed. Dissertations and some research papers at the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, there is hardly any significant work done in this area. Though a good number of articles on different aspects of reading in journals have started appearing of late we do not yet have reading 'clinics' for improving reading efficiency of students studying English at different levels. There is no reading 'association' to enlighten teachers about the latest innovations and research in the field. The present investigator could not find a single standardized test prepared for students of Maharashtra to test their reading efficiency precisely. This is a pointer to what needs to be done in this vital area of E.I.T.

It is with a view to ascertain to what extent our students are really equipped with this important skill that
the present investigator undertook to assess the reading efficiency of students of Standard XI.

The thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter I attempts to survey the objectives of teaching English from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day. Chapter II studies the changing pattern of education and the status of ELT and includes the sub-topics: (i) Teaching of English before the emergence of the New Pattern (ii) Emergence of the New Pattern of Education: Need for Revision of Objectives (iii) Objectives of Teaching English as L3: Need for Reading Comprehension skill. Chapter III discusses the theory of reading in general. It also discusses related subjects like (i) Linguistics and Reading (ii) Some Linguistic Approaches (iii) Mechanics of Reading (iv) Reading Speed and Comprehension and (v) Measurement of Reading Efficiency. Chapter IV outlines the design of the experiment. Analysis of data and conclusions are set forth in Chapter V. Suggestions to improve reading efficiency are made in Chapter VI.

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