CHAPTER – III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

This chapter provides in detail a conceptual frame work based on which the research study has been undertaken. It deals with the basic components of language, linguistics, meta-linguistic. Reading and comprehension. The investigator in this chapter tries to highlight on the linguistic aspects of language learning and extends it to the meta-linguistic awareness of a child. The investigator emphasize as the meta-linguistic skills and awareness in the enhancement of reading comprehension.

3.1 Language:

Language is a process of evolution. The child does not wake up one morning with a fully formed language in the brain. It is acquired in stages, each stage more closely approximating to the language of adults around him. These stages are very similar respective of whether the child learning English, Hindi or Tamil. All children acquire the rules of the language of their society in stages of increasing complexing.

3.2 Knowing and Knowing about a language:

The degree and concept of knowing a language varies among individuals. To an academic linguist-it means to be able to have a native speakers insight and fluency an ability to produce sentences with no grammatical errors. To a language user it means the capacity to write
elegantly and expressively and to a language learner being able to get their meaning across.

Knowing about a language is a concept developed by linguistics. According to the linguistic schools, knowing about a language means, to know, to analyse and manipulate the language. It is in short to know the system of language in consideration.

The study conducted is based on this concept as the investigator attempts to focus on the view that linguistic awareness and meta linguistic awareness and application of meta linguistic awareness are the bases of reading comprehension. It reveals various ways in which these skills can be identified, improved upon to make reading comprehension a successful task. The underlying principle is to understand the system of English language, how the language works, the peculiarities of the language the specific rules to be adopted and soon.

3.3 Linguistics

Linguistics in the systematic study of a language. The importance of linguistic base of a language study cannot be ignored. Linguistics provides us with the techniques for discovering the nature of language and also offers insights into the operation of human mind. As we learn more and more about a language we learn more about uses and users of that languages. We learn to interpret a language with a language.

According to linguists there is distinction between language as a system and language in contexts of use. The approach at the primary school
level, should be to use tasks to provide a situation in which the aspects of language. Performances such as fluency, accuracy and complexity are given a scope for enhancement.

Language skills like any other skills can be acquired only through practice. In the case of mother tongue the child gets sufficient scope for this practice in his daily environment. He has the strongest urge learn the language, for if he cannot express himself in his mother tongue he is at a disadvantage. Thus he learns his first language automatically.

In the case of 2nd language particularly when it happens to be a foreign language like English, these natural sources are not available to the learner. This language is learnt deliberately in the classroom.

The linguists believe that the following aspects should be borne in mind while teaching English for the age group of 6-10 years.

1. By this time the child would have acquired a particular system (his mother tongue) which he can use while expressing something.

2. He has to therefore keep the habits of his first language in check in order to produce new sounds and structures.

3. In learning the first language the child has already acquired a set of linguistic skills. So when using a second language he will have the tendency to transfer the speech habits of the first language to the second language.
4. While learning English the linguistic skills of the child results in a negative transfer and force of such transfer is maximum. Hence it is almost impossible for a second language learner to acquire the pronunciation of the native speaker of a language.

3.4 Meta-Linguistic Skills

Two reliable indicators for success in reading and writing are a childs meta-linguistic skills and awareness of these skills. When the child begins to read it is an interaction between the reader and text. The child tries to use the skills of reading to understand or comprehend the text-read. It is the Meta-linguistic skills possessed by the child which helps him to complete the task successfully. The investigator in this study has made on elaborate attempt to identify these skills expected to be possessed at the standard level.

3.5 Meta-linguistic Awareness

The main task of linguistic scholars is not to improve the language teaching situation, not to study English language as an end in itself but has to improve their application of literature or general understanding of other complex skills. Their task is basically to study the general principles upon which languages are built. They are conceived with the designed feature of a language. Hence this paved way to the concept of Mea-linguistic awareness. Meta linguistic awareness is defined as the conscious awareness of a language which allows a child to control and make changes in utterances.
After the age of 6, children can concentrate on both linguistic correctness and the message meaning and autonomously. They gradually learn to understand the arbitrary nature of words. For eg. they understand that the word ‘start’ has got a different meaning according to the context used, such as an object in the sky or the person of celebrity states. The meta-linguistic awareness allows the child to observe, analyse, describe and manipulate a language. The child at this stage understand that the word ‘The’ does not have a meaning unless it is joined with some other words, but the work ‘Table’ has a meaning. Here the gradual shift from first language orientation to second language orientation takes place.

This orientation or the language the child uses to understand a language is the underlying principle of meta-linguistic awareness. The investigator in this research study makes an attempt to makes this principle the basis of reading comprehension for enhancement of reading comprehension at primary school level.

3.6 WHAT IS READING?

3.6.1A DEFINITION OF READING:

Reading and writing have been linked to language proficiency. Reading can be defined as the ability to derive understanding from the written text. That is reading can be defined as a combination of skills and abilities that individuals bear to bring as they read. In simple terms it is the process of extracting meaning from written or printed language. When we keep this meaning of reading in mind two things arise out of it.
1) To read there has to be a written or printed material.

2) The reader is supposed to have a skill to decode the material that is he has an efficient process to recognize words automatically.

Reading is to derive understanding from a written text-

That is first there has to be a written text. A child may be good orally that is when he starts learning a language he listens to the words expressed which may not be clear to him at first but slowly he tries to understands the word, connects to the situation and derives a meaning. While it come to reading there has to be a written form in front of him. Reading becomes successful only when he understands how the texts are structured and how information is organized in written form and how he should comprehend the written form with the help of the skill he possesses. Therefore to say that reading is taking place a written or printed material should be there.

2) When a child starts reading in a second language in this case English, he already possesses his mother tongue in his mind. He learns his mother tongue in a natural setting without much effort. The same does not happen when exposed to reading in English. He has to use his skill to decode words that is he has to understand that strings of letters lead to a word to be pronounced in a particular manner.

With this elaborate discussion on the meaning of the word reading we can define reading as “ability to derive understanding from written text”. This definition may present an incomplete situation unless we get answers to questions such as
a) Why should one read?

b) What is the purpose of reading?

c) Do the children have these abilities in them?

What is Reading and who is a reader?

Reading is complex information processing a skill in which the reader interacts with texts in order to create meaningful discourse listening to the sounds. It is therefore obvious that in spite of individual differences there are some distinctive phonetic features which make one language different from another. We can therefore say that it is pronunciation which effects the articulation, intonation and rhythm of a language.

3.6.2 Grammar

Grammar can be defined as the systematic study and description of a language, a group of languages in general. It is grammar which decides or makes sense in a sentence. The meaning of a sentence is not sum of the words in a sentence. It is the right grammar which gives the meaning. The simple mathematical proposition that a whole is equal to the sum of its parts does not apply to organized wholes like language structure where the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. In mathematics 2+3 and 3+2 mean the same thing but in language it does not happen. It is grammar which decides the meaning of the sentence according to the right placement of words.
A good reader has a longer eye span and can take in longer aspects of the reading matter at once than the one who is poor in reading due to shorter eyespan. A poor reader also moves his eyes backwards to go back to the word he is not sure of. This process is called regression.

Efficient reading includes not only the ability to see longer bits of language at once but also the ability to comprehend the matter read. Since a reader with a longer eye span can have a better view of the matter, comprehension becomes easier for him. This implies the apparent paradox that a fast reader understands better than a slow reader. This of course the same thing as saying that comprehension keeps on increasing proportionately with the increase in the reading speed.

In this study in relation to upper primary level various skills are expected to be possessed by the children.

1. Growing confidence and independence as readers.
2. Should be able to have a strategy to retrieve the information read.
3. Should be able to respond to the retrieval of information. In short they should be able to know why they retrieve information from the text.

The skills that are expected at fifth grade level are:

3.7 Phonemic awareness

The capacity to decode words.
The skill to understand main ideas.
The skill to analyze semantic features.
The skills to improve upon their basic vocabulary knowledge.
A skill to understand the purpose of reading.

Developing the skills.

At a grade 5 level a child reaches a stage when awareness has been formed and the interest in language has become systematic. At this stage he shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. Reading involves the transformation or decoding of the printed input. This process should be deliberately taught to him. Now the question is if it should be taught by early introduction of systematic instruction in letter sound relationship or by whole word recognition. By this level nearly all children must have mastered word recognition skill. Their performance in reading is increasingly a function of the difficulty of the material in terms of vocabulary, syntax, background information required and conceptual complexity.

Skill development in reading English must proceed in an orderly sequential manner, which will take into consideration speech and print discrepancies in English. Differential approaches should be taken depending upon language background of individual learners. Reading programme which introduce and expand the abilities in a pupil must take into consideration the pupils own language abilities and various other environmental factors effecting a child.

At grade 5 levels a child reaches a stage when awareness has been formed and the interest in language has become systematic.

How to develop these skills:
Fundamentally listening or reading are receptive processes in which printed or written message is transformed, into a representation of a spoken message. It becomes an object to be comprehended just as a spoken message is comprehended. A young child learns to process spoken inputs as a part of native language acquisition, but in the process of decoding printed symbols it must be deliberately taught to him. How can this be taught?

Skill development in reading must proceed in an orderly sequential manner and the background of individual should be taken into consideration.

The success in decoding determines the performance of children in reading. By about 5th grade level nearly all children must have mastered word recognition skill. They might face difficulty of the material in terms of vocabulary, syntax, background information required and conceptual complexity.

Learning to read is a satisfying activity. What encourages children to read and thus learn to read is not some reward presented to some but being able to read, their own sense of achievement in being ‘able to read’. The act of reading covers three related forms of development. The development of the ability to read, understand and respond to the types of writing, the development of reading and information retrieval strategies for the purpose of study-this is the comprehensive part of reading in which a child tries to understand what is being read.

Third is the development of knowledge about language. It is the Meta-linguistic awareness that makes it possible for child to develop
knowledge of the language. In short the child knows what language to use
to understand the language.

Specific skills required:

Keeping in view of the various theories of reading which advocates
that the material or content read is important, the meaning gained is
important and ‘Reader’ is important. We can agree that various skills either
natural or acquired play a great role in a child’s reading programme.

The various skills expected to be possessed or acquired by a child
takes place according to their chronological age or academic level. A child
at grade 5 levels is expected to have acquired the following skills.

1. Recognize that print is used to carry meaning.
2. Begins to recognize the individual words or letters in familiar context.
3. Shows signs of developing interest in reading.
4. Talk in simple terms about the content of the story, information seen in
   a newspaper and so on.
5. Read silently with sustained concentration.
6. Read aloud expressively and fluently.

Does the child know that these abilities exist so that they can
exercise on them?

Children in the early stages of language acquisition are much
concerned with the ability to communicate. If particular words are not
known the child tries to substitute with other words or uses gestures. His
focus of attention is on what is being said and understood. This is the beginning of their use of abilities.

Between the ages of 4-8 years children being deliberately to reflect on language, how it is structured and how to say specific words in various ways to denote different meanings.

This awareness of the child makes him go through the three stages of reading.

1. Recognition stage
2. Structuring stage
3. Interpretation stage.

In the first stage he has phonemic awareness that is he has the understanding of and the ability to manipulate the smallest units of sound that makes up spoken words. Ex: the word dog has three phonemes the sounds of which are d/o/ and g. This awareness is critical to reading success and also takes the child to spelling.

In the 2nd stage the child knows that he can identify separate, pronounce and blend individual sounds or phonemes to decode one-syllable words. This ability takes him to recognize words with too many phonemes. The reader uses this structural analysis skills to decode the words.

In the 3rd stage the child is aware that he can use the structural ability, the skill to read a given passage. The meanings of words, thought and perceptions slowly increase in complexity and he is aware of it. With
this understanding he interprets the new words for he interprets the word butterflies as:

1. Belong to a category of insects.
2. Things having many colours.
3. Creatures that can fly.
4. Living creatures and so on.

Initially he over generalize new words in a variety of contexts, some of which are in appropriate. Later the child becomes aware that he has to be more specific and well defined. The child tries to interpret the word relevant to manipulate the word will be able to recognize the word and apply to the present context.

Learning the meaning of words:

Children have to learn not only the syntax and sounds of their language but almost the meaning of words.

The use of context clues can be one of the students greatest tool in determining the pronunciation and meaning of unfamiliar words.

3.8 Comprehension (Definition)

Reading comprehension has several definitions. Most experts agree that reading comprehension is the meaning gained from what is written on the page. Some people emphasize that the material or the context read is more important.
3.9 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension consists of a dynamic interaction among three elements.

1. Reader
2. Text
3. The context

These three elements are present in every reading act. They interact with each other to make the reading act enjoyable.

Traditionally comprehension has been viewed as a major skill made up of a number of individual sub-skills in the hope that individual attention to sub-skill word result.

3.10 Reading comprehension and Meta-linguistic Awareness

The investigator emphasize on the importance of Meta-linguistic awareness and its implementation is a classroom situation, to enhance reading comprehension. The earlier research conducted in the study reveals that though the concept of Meta-linguistic awareness is given importance, not much contribution has been made in the area. The strategy followed in the study is to Judge the level of Meta-linguistic awareness of students population. The sample was selected from students following British curriculum, and Kenyan curriculum. The schools belong to both government and private schools. The study was extended to teachers to facilitate their teaching and to enable them to meta-linguistic awareness and
reading comprehension towards initiating for effective learning. The various steps followed in the study, how the experiment was carried out, and overall methodology adopted are stated in the next chapter.

**APPROACH TO READING COMPREHENSION**

The investigator envisages that meta linguistic awareness has a positive impact in enhancing reading comprehension at the upper primary level. Though Cognitive skill is the most important aspect in any language learning. The investigator assumes during the research, the importance of the meta linguistic skills and its awareness is very important in any reading activity, especially in comprehending what is being read. The entire process of this activity of 'Reading' and comprehending is explained as follows:

1. Metacongnitive skills lead to meta linguistic awareness and realization of this awareness.
2. A child is not interested in any activity unless he has some idea of what is being read.
3. He / She develops a mental image, by relating to past knowledge.
4. He is able to use the main skill of any linguistic study that is decoding.
5. The next process is to recognize the main ideas with directed learning. There is a shift from known to unknown. An attempt is made to understand the context or the situation.

6. The teacher at this stage plays an important role, by identifying and developing the basic speech and reading skills. Motivation plays a vital role here.

7. The acquisition of the above mentioned skills such as lexical, syntactic, context clues is possible because of the meta linguistic skills possessed by a child.

8. With a prior knowledge with practice a child understands that he/she is required to possess certain skills and he also becomes aware of these skills.

9. Now the child crosses to the interpretation stage, which is the root of comprehension.

10. In the next stage the child is able to analyse the vocabulary aspect. He is in a position to recognize the ‘Key word’ in a line, important line in a passage. This is a stage of controlled vocabulary, that he could ignore. This is the essence of comprehension.

11. At this level various comprehension skills such as previous knowledge, readers interest, purpose influences the child.

12. At the next level reinforcement of the language takes place. The child will be able to reason at this level that his purpose in reading is
fulfilled, if he is able to understand word in context to words, words in context to sentence and so an.

13. The comprehension sub skills plays important role in the next stage. The child now understand that each language has process of its own, and in this case to read and understand a passage in English he must have certain skills. This is the Meta linguistic awareness.

14. The Meta linguistic awareness helps in reasoning and recognize the main ideas, important details.

15. By practice a child will be able to predict out comes and try to analyse the passage given.

16. The last stage of comprehending is to understand the grammar portion of the material read. He also understands how same words can mean differently according to situation and context.

17. He now tries to interpret the reading programme, by the following procedure.

Main ideas -------------- conclusions – inferences.

The above illustration clearly indicates various aspects of a reading comprehension activity. The investigator thus concludes that to develop the cognitive activity in this case learning which is acquired by a child, Meta linguistic awareness plays a major role, especially with respect to reading comprehension.
BHAWANI’S approach to Meta-linguistic Awareness and Reading Comprehension

**INPUT**
- Meta Cognition
- Developmental Images
- Recognize main Ideas
- Direct Attention

**PROCESS**

**INITIATING CONCEPT**
- Meta-linguistic Principles
  - using the skill
  - From known to Unknown

**DECODE**
- Speech and Reading
  - Functional
  - Previous Knowledge
  - Language Through Practice

**Acquisition of Skills**
- Pronunciation
  - Auditory
  - Dictionary
  - Visual
  - Using contexts

**Word recognition**
- Skill
  - Lexical
  - Syntactic
  - Philology
  - Morphemes
  - Word order
  - Functions

**Critiquing skills**
- 1. Previous knowledge
  - Readers interest
  - Purpose
  - Follow directions

**Comprehension Sub skills**
- 1. Recognise main ideas
  - Recognise important details
  - Predict outcomes
  - Critical Reading

**Meaning acquisition skills**
- 1. Synonyms & Antonyms
  - Figure of speech

**Interpretive skill**
- Main Ideas
  - Conclusions / interferences