CHAPTER V
5.1 Theoretical Aspects of Reading

5.1.1 Reading as a skill

Reading is one of the four basic language skills. To read a language means to grasp it by its written form. As Lado (1961:223) is of the view that, "reading in a foreign language consists of grasping meaning in that language through its written representation". There are three stages in reading which are as follows:

A. Recognition

B. Structuring

C. Interpretation

A. Recognition:

Recognition means firstly that the student must recognise written characters for what they are and then he should also be aware about the systematic connection between speech and the written language.

B. Structuring:

By structuring, we mean that the student should be able to understand the structure of words and sentences.
of the foreign language. In other words, he must be able to connect the written symbols to what they stand for. He should know as to how the written symbols of the foreign language are decoded.

C. Interpretation:

In this stage the student learns to interpret phonological, morphological and syntactic structures to semantics i.e. understanding their meanings. Reading is usually taught to the students who are already literate in the source language.

5.1.2 Importance of Reading Comprehension:

Reading is an important language skill. It involves proper understanding of words in a sentence and the understanding of the structure of language. Both the things are essential for reading accurately. If the learner has no understanding of words in a sentence and if he has no understanding of structure of language, he will not be able to make the reading fruitful and he may not be able to comprehend what is there in the paragraph. Reading, therefore, is not only general ability, but it is a complex activity
of the following three dimensions:
1. Perception of words.
2. Clear grasp of meaning
3. Thoughtful reaction.

While constructing tests for reading comprehension, all the above points should be kept in mind.

5.1.3 Reading Comprehension Versus Listening Comprehension:

The similarities and differences between reading comprehension and auditory comprehension are of two kinds, i.e., language matters and matters of graphic representation. These will be discussed in the following sections.

5.1.3.1. Language Problems:

A learner faces various difficulties in reading a foreign language. These difficulties are more or less the same as the learner faces in understanding it aurally. But there are three main differences between reading a foreign language and understanding it aurally. First difference is that in reading a language learner is able to proceed at his own speed and goes back to re-read what he fails to grasp earlier. While in auditory comprehension, he must adjust himself
to the speed of the speaker. In ordinary conversation he may ask that something be repeated, but in a test situation it would become impossible because different students would ask different utterances to be repeated.

Secondly, in reading there is a possibility of by-passing some of the troublesome sound contrasts. Because we can read at our own speed, it is easier to perceive graphic differences in symbolization than minimal differences in sound articulation that are not significant in the native language of the student. It is right that some sound contrasts may be be by-passed in listening also but the fact is that in reading, it is possible to distinguish the graphic differences without having to rely on the context.

The third distinction between reading and listening arises from the difference in style between the language used in speaking and the language used in writing. For example, questions are used frequently in conversation, and conversation in turn, is more frequent as speech than as writing. We can, therefore, expect fewer questions in reading than listening. The sentences used in writing, tend to be more complex and contain more complex modification structures than those used in speaking. The length of the utterances that are found in reading is greater than the length of utterances heard in conversation.
Due to the above differences between reading and listening, it is sufficient to require separate materials for reading tests.

5.1.3.2 **Problem of Graphic Representation**: In addition to language difficulties in reading, the students will have to face difficulties caused by the system of graphic representation of language. There will be less problem in reading where the native and foreign languages use the same alphabet or writing system. But the problems of graphic representation can not be overlooked when the two languages use different writing systems as for example, Chinese, Urdu and English. In testing reading a foreign language we must take into account the problems caused by the differences in graphic representation between the native language of the learner.

The reading problem caused due to graphic symbolization can be the result of the kind of units represented, the actual symbol used and the direction in which the symbols are written. There are three kinds of unit representation in writing systems, i.e., words or morphemes, syllables and phonemes. For example, Chinese traditional writing system is Logographic, i.e. it represents words or morphemes. Japanese writing represents the roots in Chinese character (Kanji in Japanese). The languages of Europe and Asia are written in alphabetic system. When an
Urdu reader learns to read Chinese, problems arise due to the fact that he expects to read sounds out of the symbols and vice-versa.

The graphic problem might be due to the use of different symbols for the same unit of language. Urdu, Thai, Arabic, etc. and the languages of Europe have alphabetic systems of writing but the symbols are strikingly different. Even within the same alphabet, graphic problems arise when an English reader learns to read another European language and finds that the same letter represents different sounds in English and in the other languages such as German, French etc. The direction of eye movements in reading may also vary from language to language. Therefore, it may constitute a different learning problem, particularly in rapid reading. For example, Chinese is written in vertical columns running from top to bottom of the page and successively from right to left. These directions differ from those of English writing in two dimensions. Urdu and Arabic, on the other hand, is written horizontally from right to left and the line follows each other successively from top to bottom. The Urdu writing differs from English in one dimension, i.e. the directions of reading and writing. These differences reduce the speed of reading when a literate adult of one language tries to learn and to read the other language.
5.2 Techniques for Testing Reading Comprehension:

5.2.1 Multiple Choice Tests and their Importance:

Multiple choice test belongs to objective tests. As opposed to subjective tests, it has maximum objectivity. It takes less time in evaluating the answer. Objective type test is constructed in such a way that scoring can be done by observing a single word or phrase. According to Halliday, et al (1966:219), "an objective test is one in which marks are gained (or lost, as the case may be) solely by reference to the subject's performance in such a way that all examiners would agree on the apportioning marks". Ingram (1974:319) is of the view that, "the search for 'objective' testing methods is the direct outcome of dissatisfaction with the reliability of the marking of traditional examinations. Tests are set up so as to eliminate any differences in results due to variations between different markers or due to variations in the judgement of one marker at different times." The objective type test derives its name from 'objectivity' in scoring. There are basically two formats of objective type tests, viz., open ended tests and Multiple choice tests. In open ended objective tests, the student writes his own answer which is often a single word, never more than a sentence, in the space provided. Where as in multiple choice
tests, the answer is given along with the test with four alternatives and the candidate is simply required to indicate the correct answer with a tick or a number. Multiple choice tests are more convenient to mark. It provides more diagnostic knowledge because the candidate is forced to choose the right answer from amongst a particular set of choices. Multiple choice tests are very effective and are widely used.

5.2.1.1 **Merits of Multiple Choice Tests**

Multiple choice tests are very useful and have several advantages which are as follows:

1. A test item containing various multiple choice type question can test entire range of linguistic contents as well as literary content of the given passage within a short period of time.

2. These tests are very easy to score.

3. These tests are highly reliable because there will be no fluctuations in score while different evaluators examine the same test. This is one of the reasons why this test is considered to be standardized, valid and reliable.
4. In this test, a student is forced to choose the right answer within the four alternatives given in the form of A, B, C and D. It means that if one does not know the correct answer, he will not be able to choose the right answer.

5. A test containing the multiple choice items can cover more aspects as compared to the subjective tests, and also within short period of time.

5.2.1.2 Demerits of Multiple Choice Test:

Limitations of multiple choice items can be categorised into the following:

1. Construction of multiple choice test requires a substantial amount of time and a bare deal of patience and certain amount of mental ability.

2. In objective or multiple choice test some possible hints are provided which sometimes lead the student to guess the right answer.

3. Objective or multiple choice tests are useful for testing the knowledge of the student on various aspects of language but do not provide the measurement of productive and creative ability.
5.2.1.3 Sample Test of Multiple Choice Items for Testing

Reading Comprehension:

In this model the importance of reading comprehension has been emphasised and on the basis of a given paragraph the test questions are constructed. In this model of testing reading comprehension, the paragraph is given in the question paper itself, and on the basis of silent reading of the given paragraph the examinees are asked to reply certain questions. In this way the text is not detached from the memory of the examinees.

The questions are framed on the basis of the given paragraph and are designed in such a way that they fully test the reading comprehension ability of the examinees.

Against each question there are, generally, four answers of multiple choice type, out of which, only one will be the correct answer. The student has to put a tick on one possible answer.

As an example of this model for testing reading comprehension, we would like to present the following Urdu passage which has been taken from an Urdu text book of class VI prepared by the NCERT, New Delhi.
/raj: dushyant ko shikar khelte: ka: bahot shaoq tha:.
esk bar: shikar khelte: voh apne sa:thiy: se bikh: kar
bahot dur ja:nika: ra:ste m: use e: k xu:ubsurat hiran
dikha: diya:. raj: hiran par tir: kalasna: hi: ba:hta: tha:
ki e: k rishi: ki a:swaz ne use ca:oka: diya:. pa: s as:kar rishi:
ne bata: ya: ki voh un ke a:shram ka pa: tu: hiran hai, isliye
kis: ko use mar:ne ki ija: zat nahi:. rishi: dushyant ko apne
sa: th a:shram le gae. vaha: daraxto: ke ni:ce ti: n naujawin
la: rkiya: phul: ko pa: ni: de rahi: thi: un m: e se ek Shakuntala:

ai: to us ne va: pas ja: na: rash: i: ruxsat hote vaqt dushyant ne

raj: ke gale ja: ne ke bar: d bahot din guzar gae: lekin
us ko na: kha: ne ki: su: m rash: i: na pi: ne ka: hosh. voh din
ra: st dushyant kisi: ad m: e khoi rahi: . ek din kanu rishi: se

raaste mē ek muqaddas jagah Shakuntala: ne ashna:n  
kīya:n.naha:ste mē agguːthiː gir gaiː aur bahot dhū: ḍhēː ḍhēː na miliː.  
kai dinō ke safar ke baːd jāb Shakuntalaː  
dushyant ke darbāːr mē pahuːḍiː to raːja use pahːaːn naːsakaː.  
Shakuntalaː intehaːiː dukh aur besarosamaːntiː ki haslat mē darbāːr  
se nikal aːiː. vahaː se voh eːk aːshram mē pahuːḍiː. yahaːkuch  
dinō baːd uske betaː paidaː huaː. jiskaː naːm bharat rakkhaː  
gayaː.  
ittefaːq se Shakuntalaː ki agguːthiː ċand mahiːnō ke  
baːd eːk māːthīːː ko māːthīː keː peːt se miliː. voh use baːchːeː  
keː liye baːzzaːr mē layaːː. to raːjaː kiː agguːthiː ċuraiːneː keː  
ilzam mē pulis ne use pakāː liyaː. māːmilaː darbāːr tak pahuːḍiːː  
raːjaː ne jaiseshiː agguːthiː dekiː. usko kanu rishiː ke aːshram  
mē guzraː huaː vaqt aur Shakuntalaː se apnaː byaːsh yāːd aːrgayaː  
aur voh Shakuntalaː ki yāːd mē baːqaraːr ho uṯhaː. har taraf  
Shakuntalaː kiː talash mē aːdmi daurːaːː. gaeː lakin Shakuntalaː kōː  
kahīː pataː na ċalaːː.  

kuːch muddat baːd jāb dushyant aur uskeː sipaːhiː eːk  
muhim se laːt raːheː theː to unhō ne heːmkoːst pahairːiː par eːk  
rishiː ke aːshram ke qarːiːb paraːːo dāːlaː raːjaː. jāb rishiː  
se milne ke liye jaː rahaː thː to raːste mē use eːk larkːaː  
dikhaːi diyaː. voh kheːl hiː kheːl mē sheːːr ke  
baːcːeː ka mūh khoːle us keː ċaːit ginine kiː koshish kar rahaː.
dil khi:ta hua: mahsuss hua:. thor:is de:ir më ra:ja: us lar:ke 
se ghul mil kar bar:te karne lag:ae:. mal:u:m hua: ki us ki: mä: 
ka na:m Shakuntala: hai, aur uske ba:sp ne us ki: mä: ko çho:ri 
rah:ka: hai. yeh Sunte:hi: ma:re xushi: ke dushyant:ke: ñis: 
apni: bu:il ki: ma:fi: mä:gi:.

hukumat ki:, mah:bhar:rat më unhi: hukmara:nõ ke kar:nä:me 
bay:ae: kiye: gae: hai:.

(See Appendix-I).

TEST
There are four choices under each question. Tick the choice 
which you think is correct.

1. /ra:ja: dushyant kanu rishi: ke Sa:îth /
   a) /un ke: shahr gae: thei: /
   *b) /un ke: a:sharam gae: thei: /
   c) /un ke: ghar gae: thei: /
   d) /un ke: do:st ke: ashram gae: thei:/
2. /Shakuntala ko kis ne paisa tha?/
   a) /use: rajja: dushyant ne paisa tha/
   b) /use: us ki saheiliyo ne paisa tha/
   *c) /use: kanu rishi ne paisa tha/
   d) /use: ek sa:dhu ne paisa tha/

3. /shatdi ke: ba: d Shakuntala: se: rajja:
dushyant ne kya: vaid: kiya: tha: /
   a) /rajja: ne kaha: tha: ki voh use: ek bahot
      xusbsurat mahal bana: kar desga/
   *b) /rajja: ne vaid: kiya: tha: ki uska: be:ta: hi:
      us ke: raj ka: varis bane ga: /
   c) /rajja: ne kaha: tha: ki voh bhi: us ke: sa:th
      ashram me: raha:ga: /
   d) /rajja: ne kaha: tha: ki voh use: ek xusbsurat
      tohfa: la: kar desga: /

   a) /ek phusil /
   *b) /ek anug:thi: /
   c) /ek ha:ir /
   d) /ek kangan/
5. /kanu rishi se milne kaun aya tha?

*a) /rishi: drosa:/

b) /rishi: dronačarya:

c) /un ka: naukar/

d) /un ka: bha:ž /

6. /rishi: drosa: ne Shakuntala ko kya: shra:sp diya?


*c) /unho ne kaha: ki tu: jiski: ya:d me' istarah kho:ši: hai

voh tujhe bhu:š jase aur te:re: ya:d dila:ne par bhi:
tujhe: na: pah:žane: /

d) /unho ne kaha: ki tera: pati na: mile: /

7. /kanu rishi: jab ya:tra: se va:pas ase: to...

*a) /unho ne Shakuntala ko ra:jä: dushyant ke pa:š bhe:jne ka:

faisla: kiya: /

b) /unho ne Shakuntala ko bahot bura: bhala: kaha: /

c) /voh xuž use dushyant ke pa:š le:gie: /

d) /unho ne Shakuntala:ko us ke ghar va:pas bhe:j diya: /


a) /kha:šte vaqt: /

*b) /naha:šte vaqt/
c) /shikair karte: vaqt/
d) /pero ko paani de:te: vaqt/

   pahu:ti: to -----/
   a) us ka: inteqa:il ho gaya:/
   * b) /us ko esk be:ta paida: hua: /
   c) /us ko esk be:ti: paida: hui: /
   d) /use kanu rishi: mile /

    a) /esk kisa:n ko khe:t me:/
    b) /esk shikairi: ko Jangal me:/
    c) /esk carvai:he: ko /
    *d) /esk ma:shigir ko maci:li: ke pe:tte:

    a) /bha:rat/
    b) /bhi:m /
    * c) /bharat/
    d) /ra:m /

12. /lafz "parvarish" ke ma:ni: hai/ 
    a) /khila:na:
    * b) /pa:lnas/
13. /raijai dushyant ne Jaise hi: aggusthi dekhi: ---- /
   a) /use apne: uppar bahot Gussa: aiy: /
   b) /use apni: lad parvashi yadi aii: /
   c) /use: apne: shikar kar zamana: yaid aigaya:
   *d) /use:apna: byash aur Shakuntala: ke saith kanu rishi:
       ke a:shram mē guzaira: hua: vaqt yadi aigaya: /

   *a) /he:m kot ki paharī: par/
   b) /kanu rishi: ko: a:shram mē/
   c) /rishi: drosa: ke:a:shram mē/
   d) /maidane jang mē/

15. /jab raijai ne larke ko: dekha: to: voh kya: kar raha:
   tha: ?/
   a) /voh khel raha: tha:/
   b) /voh bhaig raha: tha: /
   *c) /voh khel hiskheil mē sheir ke: bačē: kas: mūh
      khole: us ke: dīst ginne: ki: koshish kar raha: tha:/
   d) /voh sheir ki savirī: kar rahastha: /
16. /jab rājai ko pata cała ki lārke ki mā ka nām
   Shakuntala hai to -------/
*a) /xushi ke māre us ke āisu nikal pare/
b) /xushi se voh naːcne laga/
c) /voh bahot nːraːz hua/
d) /us ne use pakaryā liya/

5.2.2 'Cloze Test' and its Importance:

The term "Cloze" is derived from the Gesalst concept of 'closure', the tendency to complete a structured whole by filling a missing gap. The cloze test was developed by W.L. Tylor in 1953 for testing reading comprehension. This test was designed to know as to how much a student understands after reading a given passage. This procedure of testing has been experimented by various scholars in different situations. It covers broader range of testing, i.e. from comprehension of vocabulary to paragraph comprehension and communicability of the entire passage. The basic assumption of this procedure is that in view of the redundancies inherent in any language, rarely each word in a sequence of speech is found necessary for understanding of the new message and hence, parts of speech sequences can be anticipated even if they are missing.
In this technique we measure how well a student has understood what he has read. The student, taking the test, tries to guess the precise word which is deleted. In other words, in a reading comprehension test based on Cloze testing procedure, the student would have to write the appropriate word in the blank space. In Cloze procedure of testing reading comprehensions generally 550 or 600 words are given in the passage to the students to supply the appropriate words for the blank spaces given in the passage.

According to Ahuja et al (1988:2) "A Cloze test can be constructed by deleting certain words in random from a verbal passage and substituting underlined blank spaces. The testee is asked to fill in the word which very suitably belongs to each blank space. Only minor mis-spellings are disregarded; otherwise responses must match the actual word deleted". In Cloze procedure of testing the reading comprehension every \( N \)th word is deleted from the passage and the student has to supply these words in blank spaces.

5.2.1.1 Merits of 'Cloze' test:

'Cloze' test technique is widely used for testing reading comprehension and considered very valid technique of
judging student's ability to comprehend the given passage. As Ahuja et al (1988:a) is of the view that the possible uses of Cloze procedure can be categorised into the following:

1. Readability of reading text for school children can be checked.
2. Cloze procedure is a very easy technique for grouping the students on the basis of their reading abilities.
3. It serves as a good measure for testing reading comprehension in a second language situation.
4. It is an easy and interesting technique of checking certain important aspects of reading comprehension.
5. Standardized 'Cloze' test simplifies attainment testing in reading.
6. It may be used with a wide variety of material from narrative and descriptive to technical and scientific.
7. It may be used with oral as well as written materials.

5.2.1.2 Demerits of 'Cloze' Test:

In Cloze procedure of testing reading comprehension, every $N^{th}$ word is deleted from the passage mechanically. The
deleted word might be a content word or a function word including certain grammatical categories. When the deleted word belongs to grammatical category, the student would be tested simultaneously for his comprehension of passage as well as the knowledge of grammar, this is not valid and is against the basic principle of testing. Keeping the above demerit in view, various scholars have adopted the Cloze procedure by deleting only certain word clauses like; nouns, verbs, etc. rather than deleting every Nth word of the passage.

5.2.1.3 Sample Test of 'Cloze Test' for Testing Reading Comprehension:

In the following model test for testing reading comprehension, we would like to present the following Urdu paragraph which is selected from the text-book of class IV prepared by the NCERT, New Delhi.

Instruction - Read the following passage carefully and supply the word missing in the blanks of the passage.

Reading Comprehension test:

/ṛājīnaḥnehrū hamāsē un bāre rahnumā sō mē se esē karaṇē ne mulk ko ______ karāne ke liye qurbāniyā: dhān.


azad kara:ne ki jaddojaha: mē voh ga:dhī ji ka

ba:ta:ne lage.

Java:har la:l nehru:ki kamla kaul se
hui. voh bahot nazuk aur xu:bsu:rat thi: un ke esk
paida: hui: to us ka nām Indira Pirya:darshani rakhai:gya:..
yehi: voh la:rki: thi: jo age īal kar ke nām se
mashhur hui: aur hamare mulk ki bani.

Gāndhi: ji:ke sāth milkar pandit java:har la:l
nehru ne a:zā:di ki tahrī:sk mē bar:ān īārk kar

liya. Is silsile mē unhe kai bar: jēl para:

jēl mē rahkar unho ne apni be:ti Indra:ko jo xat likh: voh
hindustān ki tārid:xe a:zā:di ka hissa ban

jēl mē rahte hue unho ne apni a:pbisti: bhi likhi.

a:zā:di hindustān ka va:zī:re a:zām

liye bahot se: kīye: . mulk se Gāris:bi: aur jahā:lat


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aur pîchre hue tabqo ki hałat sughârâne liye bahot koshishâ ke ki. un ke zamânâne me ne bahot taraqqi ki aur sa:ri me hama:re mulk ko izzat ki nazr se dekha: Jâne laga:.
