CHAPTER - 4
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As noted earlier, before the advent of CLT, the teaching of reading stressed the development of vocabulary acquisition, learning of sentence patterns and pronunciation. But from the beginning of 1970s this trend changed as a result of contemporary research, and a new theory of reading was proposed as a psycholinguistic model of reading emphasizing the importance of the employment of different strategies and skills in reading as well as background knowledge which the learner brings to the reading task. Thus, focus on individual words and phrases was ruled out since effective reading involved sampling or selecting chunks of related information from the printed text. William Grabe (1991) highlights the following aspects of reading which are to be taken into account in a pedagogy of reading:

i) Fluent reading is rapid, which means that silent and extensive reading should be encouraged in classroom teaching.

ii) Reading is purposeful, involving motivation, that is, in real life we always read with a purpose. In the classroom situation too, the reading activity should be wedded to real life needs.

iii) Reading is interactive, involving interaction between the reader and the text. The reader interacts with the text on
the basis of his/her background knowledge as well as the skills and strategies that they bring with themselves, such as anticipating, guessing, skimming ahead, scanning for specific information and so on. So the important implication of this view of reading as an interactive process is two fold: first, the development of this interaction by evoking the student's background knowledge through pre-reading activities; second, by teaching them to tackle the text through different skills and strategies.

In view of the above, it is heartening to note that in most of the classes observed by the researcher, the teaching of skills and strategies were emphasized. Often it was in the form of the material provided, which itself aimed to teach skills and strategies. In general, all the teachers encouraged the students to learn the meaning of vocabulary items through guessing from context. They also helped the development of the skills of scanning, skimming and critical reading, through comprehension questions based on the text.

This chapter aims to examine the teaching of reading in AMU at the undergraduate level with specific reference to CLT practices and principles on the basis of the classroom observation of the teachers as reported in chapter three. The different aspects of classroom teaching are taken here in the same sequence as presented in the previous chapter, that is,
section one discusses classroom teaching consisting of objectives, materials, Pre-teaching and Main-teaching. Afterwards, Interaction Analysis and underlying Pedagogical Principles are taken up which comprise section II and section III.
SECTION I

Classroom Teaching

Objectives: In all the thirty classes taken up by the researcher the broad objective of teaching was reading comprehension. Sometimes it was combined with the development of writing skills and teaching of pronunciation and oral work too in an adhoc manner. Guessing, predicting and previewing were the specific objectives of the classroom teaching of teachers B and F. Teacher B aimed to teach the guessing of word meaning on the basis of its form and also on the basis of context. For the teaching of word meaning through its form a number of affixes were taught along with Greek and Latin roots. In the classes of three teachers C, D and E study of cohesion and coherence in written discourse was the objective of teaching. Teacher C taught intra and intersentential linkers and coordinators. Teacher D taught the use of conjunctions and organization of sentences in paragraphs. Teacher E taught the use of pronoun as a cohesive device in connected discourse. The teaching of teachers G, H, I and J focussed on the comprehension of reading material in general. In their classes, apart from comprehension they also gave importance to the teaching of vocabulary items.
Materials:

It was seen that materials used in the above mentioned classes were of different types. Teacher A who taught engineering 1st year students used ESP materials from the text book *A Course in Basic Scientific English* consisting of several technical words and specialized sentence structure. Teachers B, C, D, E and F did not take help of any reading passage but their texts consisted of a number of activities or exercises. Sometimes passages were used in these exercises, giving the teaching a context, for example in the materials used by the teacher B in which the students had to guess the meanings of the given words in the given passages. For the teaching of the use of pronouns as a linking device, again passages were used by teacher E. However, in the teaching by teacher F of phrases and idioms, it was found that no context was given to the students not even in the form of single sentences. The students were merely asked to provide the meanings of given idioms and phrases through multiple choice questions and in another exercises they were asked to make sentences with the idioms. G, H, I and J used well known stories for the teaching of reading comprehension. The language in all these stories was fairly rich. On the other hand activities used by other teachers employed in formal and interesting material.
Materials employed in general were samples of contemporary, informal English and constituted interesting reading. They were not selected very strictly in terms of vocabulary and were well within the comprehension of the students’ level or it might be said that they provided "comprehensible input" to the learners and also exposed them to new vocabulary and structures. As far as strictly authentic material is concerned, it formed a part of a lesson taught by teacher F, which aimed to teach the strategy of prediction by presenting the students with titles of newspaper items and books. However, it must be noted that using authentic materials may not always be practicable and sometimes materials need to be edited and tailored according to student needs.

**Pre-teaching and Main-teaching**

**Pre-teaching:** Unfortunately, it was found that very few teachers employed warming up or pre-teaching activities in their classes. Five of the teachers did not start their class with any pre-teaching activity and immediately started the lesson the main activities. Teachers C, E and H however stated with a brief mention of the teaching done in the previous class. Teacher C revised in brief the teaching of the previous class before starting with the new lesson. Teachers E and H only asked whether the students had understood
properly what was taught in the previous class and then moved on to new teaching. However teacher D, E and I departed from this common practice and it was found the teacher whose objective was to teach conjunction, cohesion and coherence started his class by acquainting the students with the importance of learning English. He asked them what they were doing to improve their knowledge of the language and also gave them several tips in order to enhance their vocabulary and their general command over the language such as consulting the dictionary, keeping a diary, developing the habit of speaking in English among themselves without hesitation. Teacher I who was teaching the well-known story *A Pair of Mustachios* by Mulk Raj Anand, chose to start her class with information about the author and tried to inform them about the various works by the author. She could also have generated students' interest by discussing in brief about the significances of mustachois in the Indian culture. Teachers G, H and J, also teaching popular stories did not attempt to generate students' interest by discussing the themes of the stories in advance as a warming up activity. For example, teacher G who was teaching *The Portrait of a Lady* by Khushwant Singh could have created immense interest by asking the students about their grandmothers or grandparents, their habits, their manners and any interesting
anecdotes related to them. Teacher H who was teaching *Drought* by Sarat Chandra Chatterji could have started the class with a discussion of the evils of the zamindari system or the consequences of a drought in villages. In view of the above, it can be said that teachers should be made aware of the importance of background knowledge in the teaching of reading comprehension and how to incorporate this in their pre-reading activities in order to increase students’ motivation as well as understanding of the teaching material.

**Main-teaching:**

**Presentation:** As seen already, while some of the teachers used stories and passages for teaching of reading comprehension. Others, namely, teachers B, C, D, E and F used only different types of activities for the teaching of sub-skills of reading comprehension such as organization of sentences, learning the use of linking devices, guessing, predicting and so on. It was observed that silent reading of the passage by the students was employed by teacher A who taught passages from an ESP text book to engineering students. After the students read portions of passage, she put comprehension questions to them and through questions and answers tried to bring out the meaning of the passage. Teacher G, H and I, who also used reading passages, namely stories, however did not ask the students to read the passage
silently. Instead they themselves read out portions of the text loudly and explained the meaning of it paragraph by paragraph. Teacher I employed loud reading by the students also, apart from reading the text loudly herself. Teacher J combined loud reading with silent reading which seems to be a desirable alternative to silent reading throughout the class which tends to become monotonous.

As far as the activities were concerned, the teachers whose materials only constituted activities mostly conducted them through oral questions and answers. Teacher A and Teacher F also asked the students to do some work on paper, written work is desirable, considering the multi-skill approach which is advocated by CLT principles as well as keeping in mind the needs of the students who do not get much practice in writing throughout the year but are suddenly asked to produce written answers during the time of examination. A positive factor in the presentation of the teachers was that lecturing was avoided by most of them and teaching was mostly done through interaction between the teacher and the students which was on the basis of questions and answers provided by activities as well as adhoc questions put by the teachers themselves.
However, the deplorable fact is that in the teaching of reading passages by five teachers, three teachers used only loud reading which is not a very profitable exercise, since one of the aims of teaching reading is to promote silent and fast reading of written text.

**Teaching of strategies:**

Most of the activities employed by the teachers aimed to develop the strategies of reading in a direct manner. For example, the activities used by the teacher B focussed on the development of strategy of guessing word meaning on the basis of form as well as on the basis of context. The exercises used by the teacher C, D and E also aimed to develop the strategy of synthesizing and organizing word order and sentence order as they were based on inter and intra-sentential linkers of different types. The material used by the teacher F focussed on the teaching of prediction. Some of the teachers tried to teach the students different strategies of reading and learning in general, which is a favourable development. For example, teacher A who taught the ESP reading passage asked the students to guess the meanings of words, phrases and sentences on their own before giving it to them. Teacher D advised the students on the use of dictionary and encouraged them to get exposure to the target language as much as possible.
Use of L₁ and blackboard:

It was observed that L₁ was never used by any of the teachers except two, that is, teacher D and teacher G who made a judicious use of L₁ for explaining the meanings of some of the difficult words. It must be noted that a judicious use of L₁ is advocated by CLT, especially by the post-CLT paradigm. It is stated that use of L₁ to a little extent may help in the understanding of different lexical items and concepts in an economical way, and also alleviate anxiety, and assist in building a rapport between the teacher and the students (Atkinson, 1987; Bertkaun, 1974). The use of blackboard is an important teaching learning aid which helps in highlighting important items in a visual manner to the students. Learning through visualization is an important learning strategy and it should be exploited profitably by the teachers (O’Malley, 1990: p.119).
SECTION - II

Interaction Analysis

The study of interaction in the different classes was broadly based on the interaction analysis schedule proposed by Allwright and Bailey (1991), (see Appendix I, p. 166), referred to as COLT which aims to examine classroom interaction on the basis of CLT principles.

It was observed that in most of the classes the teaching was based on oral interaction between the teacher and the students and lecturing was mostly avoided. Written feedback was also encouraged some times. However, it is deplorable to note that interaction among the students themselves was conspicuous by its absence. Except teacher A, no other teacher asked the students to engage in pair work and group work though it is recognized as an important learning activity in the CLT classroom. It is believed that students do not learn only from the teacher but from peers also. An important factor in learning from peers is the absence of anxiety and tension.

Even in the case of student-teacher interaction, it was observed that the whole class did not participate in it, and interaction was dominated by a handful of better students. This is a malaise afflicting most of L2 classes across India. The students are generally disinclined to answer the
questions asked in the class, to participate in discussions, or to put questions to the teacher for clarification. Mostly, it is because the students are not able to express themselves adequately in the target language. If they are encouraged to use their $L_1$ in answering questions, then this problem of hesitation may be solved to some extent. However, it is also important that their responses in $L_1$ are reformulated in the target language by the teacher or by the other students, so that the relevant vocabulary and structures in $L_2$ may be taught to the concerned student.

**Error Correction**

The audio-lingual method and other methods before it took a very rigid view of errors, because it was believed under the influence of the behaviouristic theory of learning that errors lead to the formation of wrong habits and they should be corrected immediately or reinforced negatively. The cognitive view of learning however, presented error as a means of learning because learning is a process of hypothesis formation and hypothesis testing. Besides, some errors point to the fact that the learner is using the rules of language. For example, if a learner uses the word ‘oxes*’, it means that, he/she is applying the rule of attaching the plural affix $s$-, though in a wrong manner, and thus applying his/her analytic ability of the hypothesis formation. Subsequently,
the learner might find the exceptions to the rule and learn the correct form ‘oxen’.

Another point to be made here is, that by too much error correction the student becomes discouraged and inhibited in responding to the questions put by the teacher. In order to produce a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, it is important that errors are tolerated, especially in fluency activities. By fluency activities is meant those activities in which the focus is on meaning rather than on form. Even in accuracy activities, errors in those forms which are not the focus of teaching should be tolerated.

It was observed that most of the teachers were in general intolerant towards errors made by the students. They corrected their errors even before the students had completed their sentences. It was observed, however, that two of the teachers involved other students in error correction and asked them to provide the correct item. Teacher F also helped the students in self-correction, which is also a desirable practice, promoting self-esteem in the learner.

**Teacher-learner roles:**

CLT advocates a learner centered teaching atmosphere in the classroom and proposes for the teacher the roles of facilitator of communication, participant in classroom interaction, organizer of resources, resource to, a needs analyst, and
counsellor. As far as the observed classrooms are concerned, the teachers who were observed did play the role of the facilitator of the communication in the classroom and participant in interaction though not to the desired extent because, most of them failed to involve all the students of the class in the interaction. As noted earlier, classroom interaction was dominated by a few brilliant students and others continued to remain silent, in the background. Of course, tackling this problem of making the silent and uninitiated students speak out is a great problem faced by all L2 teachers. As suggested earlier, it can be resolved to some extent by the employment of the mother tongue. By motivating the students adequately in the beginning of the class, may be the problem can be solved well the further.

All the teachers played well the role of organizer of resources as well as being of resources themselves. Counselling was also employed by some of the teachers. Specifically, teacher D tried to play the role of a sympathetic counsellor to the students in the job of learning the second language. He gave many pieces of useful advice to them in this direction. Most of the teachers tried to build a congenial atmosphere in the classroom. None of them criticized the students and many of them tried to encourage them by using words of praise. Though directions and commands were
obviously present in the class of all the teachers. Though they were authoritative, most of them were also friendly and helping.
SECTION - III

Pedagogical Principles

This section aims to examine the underlying pedagogical principles reflected in the teaching of the above mentioned ten teachers in terms of objectives of teaching, materials employed, classroom presentation of the lesson and teacher learner roles.

Objectives: As far as the objectives of teaching are concerned, in all the classes the broad objective was teaching of reading comprehension was pursued which is compatible with the needs of Indian students in an L₂ situation. Since CLT emphasizes the importance of relating the needs of students to the objectives of teaching. We find that this is in conformity with CLT principles. The narrow objectives in most of the classes was the teaching of different sub-skills of teaching, that is guessing, predicting, previewing, skimming, scanning and so on. It has been observed earlier that learners bring to the reading tasks, skills and strategies as well as background information an important construct in the teaching of reading comprehension is incorporated in CLT ideology.

Materials: As far as materials are concerned, CLT advocates materials which promote and reflect real-life communication. Here also it was found that the material selection was
compatible with CLT principles, since in all the classes observed the material used constituted interesting reading in informal contemporary language. The materials also reflected language varieties according to different situations, for example teacher A used ESP material which employed the register of science and technology. The activities or exercises which were used by different teachers employed informal language and reflected everyday communicative situations. Authentic material was used in one of the exercises in which titles of newspaper items were used for guessing their content. It has already been said that it is not always practicable to use authentic materials such as excerpts from newspapers, magazines, legal documents or sports commentary without editing because they do not always lend themselves to teaching.

Classroom presentation: As far as classroom presentation of the teaching material is concerned, it was found that silent reading was employed in the teaching of comprehension passages only by two teachers. CLT advocates the development of fast and extensive reading with comprehension, because this is the type of reading used in our daily lives. We very seldom read loudly. But it is deplorable to note that most of the teachers who were teaching a reading passage chose the activity of loud reading
as a presentation technique. However, a positive factor to note was that lecturing was mostly avoided and classroom interaction between the teacher and the students in the form of questions and answers constituted the core teaching technique. The emphasis on the teaching of strategies of reading, by teacher A is also notable. In her case, these strategies did not form a part of the exercises in the teaching text.

In their presentation many teachers did not use the blackboard at all which is supposed to be an important teaching-learning aid, as it highlights learning items in a visual manner and learning through visualization is an important learning teaching strategy.

A remarkable factor in the teaching of all the teachers was the absence of the use of the mother tongue in their teaching. It is right that the students should be exposed to the target language as much as possible, but a judicious use of $L_1$ helps to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and can also be used to explain the meanings of words, structures and concepts in an economical manner. Sometimes a comparison of $L_1$ and $L_2$ structures brings home the meaning in a clearer manner. A total avoidance of $L_1$ from the classes of the above mentioned teachers is a reminder of ALM ideology because, CLT always advocates a limited use of
mother tongue. Another reminder of ALM principles and practice was the intolerance shown by most of the teachers towards errors. Most of them corrected the errors committed by their students immediately. Many of them did not even give them the chance of completing their sentences. CLT advocates the development of fluency through activities in which the focus is on meaning rather than on form. Even in accuracy activities when the focus is on form, CLT advocates tolerance of errors in those forms which are not the focus of instruction.

**Teacher-learner role:**

As far as the teacher-learner roles in the above mentioned classes are concerned, it was found that most of the teachers tried to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. A few of them taught in a neutral but some were very warm and attempted to build a rapport with the students. Teaching was dominated by classroom interaction between teacher and students, but unfortunately only a few students participated in this interaction which has already been noted earlier. Group-work and pair-work, important teaching techniques advocated by CLT methodology was conspicuously absent from all the classes except one. The teachers played the roles of facilitators, participants, resource persons, organizers of resources and activities and also sometimes as counsellors –
the roles which are recommended for the teacher in the CLT methodology. On the whole, however, one can say that they were less authoritative than the teachers in the ALM methodology and somewhat more authoritative than the teachers in CLT.

To sum up, one can say that the teachers' approach in all the observed classes comes across as an eclectic one which incorporates many of the elements of communicative language teaching but also adopts some practices of the earlier grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual method. For example, one of the teachers asked the students to learn vocabulary items by making lists in their diaries. In the class of another teacher the teaching material itself presented lists of idioms and phrases in a decontextualized manner and required them to learn their meanings and use them in their sentences. It seems the teachers were compelled to use different techniques according to the needs of the students and demands of the situation. For example, in the Indian situation in which the classes of compulsory English are mostly large, the teacher has to strike a balance between maintaining discipline and encouraging communication through various types of communicative activities through group-work and pair-work. Sometimes loud reading of the reading passage also helps as a discipline-
maintaining device, which should not be employed as a regular technique, however.

In the 1970s and 80s communicative language teaching created a lot enthusiasm and was considered as a panacea for all pedagogical ills. However, by the end of 1980s the flows and short-comings of this method became obvious and teaching theorists and practitioners realized that no single method can provide the answer to all language teaching problems. So, the best approach to the teaching of language is an eclectic approach which adopts techniques and practices from different sources according to the requirements of given teaching context.