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CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Learning to read is a life long process. From cradle till grave, each period of life contributes to the development of reading ability. It also forms the part of individual's total personality. Reading is not what the reader sees and pronounces but it is rather a more complex process than previously assumed and like many other cognitive and linguistic skills, the richness the depth and the complexity increases as it is more closely examined.

"Reading, as we now view it, is more than seeing words clearly, more than pronouncing printed words correctly, more than recognising the meaning of individual words". ¹

2.1 Physiological Aspects of Reading

There are many factors contributing to the progress of reading process which make the act of reading a complex one. Some activities take place when we read. "Reading relates to the visual, auditory speech or articulatory and other bodily processes that function with act of reading". ²

2.1.1 **Eye-Movement in Reading**

In silent reading the psychologists talk about the eye memory span. This has been defined as "the distance the eyes have travelled ahead of the print at which the interpretation occurs." 3

Therefore, the studies of eye-movement in reading have led some people to define reading as an act of visual exploration, moreover, fixation pauses, regressive movements, eye-memory span and eye-voice span. In silent reading the mature reader has a large eye memory span of, from 15 to 20 letters. In oral reading it is slightly less.

2.1.2 **Speech and Articulatory Process**

It is certain that silent reading is accompanied by movement of the vocal apparatus. As the result of these inner movements, some believe that the presence of vocal movement in silent reading is a by-product of current methods of teaching pupils to read. Because of visual perception, the reader is able to perceive sentences, which involves the ability to identify the words by configuration, outstanding letters, initial syllabus, skill of recognition, simultaneously both the outlines and the details of the word in relation to each other. Perception is the process

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that makes the visual impression meaningful in the light of the past experiences.

2.2 Psychological Aspects of Reading

The knowledge of word meaning or word recognition skill is fundamental in reading process. All good readers always make use of context clues in recognizing the word and obtaining meaning, from the unfamiliar words in the sentence or a passage, "Accurate word recognition and knowledge of word meaning are closely related to readers comprehension." Therefore, word meaning is a fundamental and important factor in reading process; without it the reader would not be able to recognize word or to differentiate one word from the other promptly and accurately. Reading becomes an easy and enjoyable affair to the pupils if they have enough vocabulary.

2.3 Gray's View of Reading

S. Gray of the university of Chicago, a man who spent his life in studying the process of reading has tried to summarize the steps of reading process as follows:

1. The printed words may be either in isolation or in sentences.

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2. The eyes of the reader should receive the impression of the print, observe the writing from left to right, making a series of stops along the line of print.

3. The message is sent to the brain.

4. If the reader has seen the word, many a time, the sound and meaning of the word "reach the brain" immediately.

5. As the words in a sentence are recognised, one by one, the reader builds the meaning of the whole sentence.

6. After the reader has decided what a sentence conveys, he tests the meaning against his experiences.

7. The reader responds emotionally to the idea he believes the author intends.

8. The reader selects what he thinks worth keeping and fits in it with the ideas, he has met and kept before.

First four steps are summarized by Gray as word perception. The step number five is described as comprehension. Steps sixth and seventh are described as reaction to what is read. Thus attempts have been made to study the nature of reading process, no step defines reading. To realize this let the investigator examine a few definitions of reading.
2.4 Some Definitions of Reading

"Reading ability is the ability to perceive and interpret the sounds and symbols" - Robinson

This definition includes the term 'Perceive' and 'interpret'. The term perceive describes the mechanical aspect of reading that is seeing and perceiving the words. The term 'interpret' describes the intellectual process involved in reading. It means to bring or obtain meaning to what is perceived or read. Thus the final product of the process can be said to be comprehension.

"Reading is a process of thinking" - Betts

Mostly, all reading involves physical factors, thinking and feeling.

Reader feels satisfaction when he accomplishes his purpose. "He may feel pleasure or displeasure, satisfaction or annoyance with the content or the style. He may approve or disapprove the author's ideas. Sometimes his emotions are aroused by some incident or character that has been described by the author. These feelings may be either facilitated or hinderance in thinking process". 6

"Reading is a process of Reasoning" - R.L. Thorndike

Thorndike was the first man to attempt to describe reading as reasoning. This was a penetrating analysis of the reading process and provided a basis for more detailed research to draw correct inferences from writer's statements, that is to go beyond the literal interpretation.

2.5 Reading with Comprehension

After careful study of the process and definitions, it is clear that reading involves a two-fold process:

i. There are mechanical processes involved in bringing the stimulii to the brain and,

ii. There are the mental processes involved in interpreting the stimulii after they reach the brain.

Therefore it can be formulated that the heart of reading process is to obtain the appropriate meaning from the printed words that is comprehension.

"Comprehension carries the understanding of word or phrase beyond recognition to the understanding of a word the meaning intended by the author". 7

Comprehension involves many skills. John J. DeBoer has enlisted the skills in details and they could be summarized as following:

i. Ability to select significant details,
ii. Ability to find main idea or central idea or thought,
iii. Ability to answer the questions,
iv. Ability to summarize and organise ideas,
v. Ability to reach at generalization,
vi. Ability to predict outcome or draw inferences,
vii. Ability to follow directions,
viii. Ability to read graphs, tables, charts and maps,
ix. Ability of critically reacting to what is read, and
x. Ability to find out sequences of events.

Comprehension is a gradual process. It is complex of many skills. In addition to the skills enumerated above, a thoughtful and enquiring attitude towards reading should also be developed among our pupils. It needs a lot of time and persistent efforts on the part of the reader. Then only reading will become an active process leading to intellectual comprehension and desirable chances in reader's thought and action.

Sometimes, people talk of levels of comprehension as literal, interpretative and critical. These levels are nothing but the same as classification of the skills mentioned above.

All these discussions lead us to formulate that the immediate goal of all reading is comprehension. Comprehension is thus a complex of skills. Some consider these skills as the behavioural changes or the specifications of comprehension, which are generally expected to be developed as a result of teaching reading comprehension.

In the present study, the skills or behavioural changes as it is called in terminology of evaluation from the basis of constructing the tool has been considered for measuring comprehension. Here the investigator is not only going to construct a test to evaluate the comprehension, but she has also planned to divide the students into three categories of readers, viz., good readers, normal readers and poor readers and to study the impact of reading in mother tongue on the academic achievement.

As reading is done by different pupils with varying degrees of understanding, there may be a few students reading without any sort of understanding and there may be other students reading with full understanding. The amount of comprehension depends upon reader's purpose. In spite of this, there are other important factors that have an important
bearing on the comprehension of a passage. They are physical conditions of the reader, his interest in the material, linguistic difficulty of the material etc.

2.6 Silent Reading, Reading Speed and Accuracy in Reading

In Indian schools very little provision is made for the teaching of silent reading. The arguments in favour of silent reading are based upon the following considerations:

i. Most of the reading outside the school is silent reading.

ii. Silent reading emphasizes comprehension rather than sound.

In silent reading, the emphasis is on comprehension skills such as recognition of vocabulary, speed and accuracy. The comprehension will depend upon, "the size of the vocabulary, rate of accuracy of reading, textual materials. Therefore, most of the silent reading tests contain some sort of vocabulary section". 9

2.6.1 Reading Speed

It is a describable characteristic of silent reading. It cannot be stressed in primary schools, that is in the beginning of teaching to read, when children are concentrating upon eye-movements, return sweeps and the association of

9. Ibid., p. 121.
symbols with meaning. Even undue emphasis upon speed in high schools or colleges, may affect comprehension unfavourably, particularly when reading is to note details or to follow sequences of events or ideas.

2.6.2 Accuracy

Accuracy includes number of factors such as difficulty of material and purpose of reading material etc. The pupils are expected to read with accuracy otherwise they will not be able to comprehend what is read. Therefore, accuracy can be considered as the most desirable factor in silent reading comprehension.

2.7 Reading and Its General Effects

"The two independent variables like reading comprehension and speed in reading are very closely interrelated."10

But no reader reads faster at the cost of comprehension. There are cases where candidates with a very high order of comprehension were found grinding slow in speed with apprehension that little increase in speed would jeopardize their interest in the reading matter.

If the reading comprehension of the child is good, his achievement on the whole should be better. Pupils with

normal or average comprehension cannot be better in their achievement than that of good readers because of speed. Same is the case with poor readers.

So the student's personal development as well as his scholastic achievement may largely depend upon his reading skills and comprehension.

For the present purpose of study, the investigator selected the silent reading comprehension and the main object in front of the investigator is to study the impact of silent reading comprehension on the academic achievement of different school subjects of pupils.

In next chapter, the investigator has made an effort to understand the problem by reviewing a few studies from India and foreign countries, where tests are constructed and standardized and the studies which are undertaken to study the impact of independent variables like sex, area, S.E.S., etc., upon product variable of achievement of the pupils, are also to be reviewed so that the investigator will get foresight for her work.