CHAPTER –II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE
CHAPTER TWO

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The main objective of all authentic and effective reading assessments is to check the testees’ ability to associate the words with their corresponding meaning (Farhady, 1998; Hellekjaer, 2008; Wiggins, 1989b). The purpose of this study is to investigate assessing reading comprehension through different tasks. The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview on concepts such reading and assessment. To reach this aim, first a brief history on reading comprehension is provided. Second, types of assessments have been introduced. And finally different scholars’ views’ regarding different comprehension assessment tasks are briefly presented.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Grabe (2009), “reading can be thought of as a way to draw information from the text and to form an interpretation of that information “(p.4). However, this definition does not really tell us much about what happens when the reader reads and how to comprehend a text and still the nature of reading is not known exactly. Rivers (1978) claims that reading is a problem solving activity that involves the reader in process of drawing the meaning from the text. Reading is sometimes referred to as a passive or receptive skill, but if we examine the abilities that come into play in fluent direct reading with comprehension of meaning, it is clear that readers are far from passive during this activity (Chastain, 1988). It is important to remember that the goal in reading is to get meaning or to recreate the writer’s meaning (Grabe, 2002).

Schwandt (2004) states:

Reading is a complex skill that it involves a whole series of lesser skills. In discussing the complex nature of the reading skill it was pointed out that reading involves correlating elements of language with meaning in culture and society (p. 94).
Kern (1989) believes that “reading in any language is cognitively demanding activity” (p. 135). In his view, reading involves the coordination of attention, memory, perceptual processes and comprehension processes. The role of comprehension in reading is so significant that no reading takes place unless the readers comprehend. Regardless of the crucial role of comprehension, many students experience difficulty in understanding the text in a foreign language. Our understanding of reading, both in terms of theory and practice has changed considerably over the past decade. In the mid-to-late 1960s as Silberstein, Van, Shyamala & Daniel (1996) notes, reading was seen as little more than reinforcement for oral language instruction. Under the influence of audio lingualism, much effort to teach reading was centered on the use of reading to examine grammar and vocabulary, or to practice pronunciation of reading. This view of reading was challenged by two major changes: one related to the changing of EFL/ESL instruction needs, the other to the changing reading theory.

By the mid-to-late 1970s, the research and persuasive argument of Goodman (1976) and Smith (1978) evolved into a psycholinguistic model of reading. Goodman’s research led him to propose that reading is not primarily a process of picking up information from the page in a letter-by-letter, word-by-word manner.

Rather, Goodman (1976) argued that reading is a selective process. Since it did not seem likely that fluent readers have the time to look at all the words used knowledge they brought to reading and then read by predicting information, sampling the text, and confirming the prediction.

2.2. TYPES OF CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

It is believed that the sociolinguistic context in which the students are located plays a crucial role in their language learning. The term context here refers to the manner or situation in which language learning takes place. It could refer to the classroom with its teacher and its materials in the case of classroom learning, or the social situation in the case of untutored, naturalistic language acquisition. A second language is learnt around the world in a variety of learning contexts and at different ages. Since the quality and quantity of the input and the type of interaction and
opportunities to communicate vary in each setting, it is necessary to distinguish different types of learning contexts, which along with the age of the learner give rise to different types of language acquisition. The issues of concern in the present study are: (1) the pure classroom or foreign, and (2) second language learning within the culture and environment of the learner’s first language- The case of Iranian learners of English in Iran and the case of Indian learners of English in India respectively.

2.2.1 Pure Naturalistic SLA

This type of language is also referred to as ‘untutored’ or ‘spontaneous’ language acquisition. It takes place within the culture and environment of the TL. Thus the learner has ample access to the target language in the course of everyday communication with the interlocutors in classroom and social environment. As Paradowski (2008:10) puts it, "it is the acquisition of a SL in every day communication, in a natural fashion, and free from systematic guidance." Acquisition in this environment assesses the importance of communication, being able to express oneself and to comprehend incoming messages. The pressure of communicative needs is likely to accelerate the learner’s progress. Ringbom (1989) suggests that in such environment input is rich, varied and encoded in a variety of meaningful contexts. It is in this respect that processes of L2 naturalistic acquisition are said be similar to first language acquisition (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982).

2.2.2. Pure classroom SLL

Pure classroom SLL, technically called ‘foreign language learning’ is learning a non-native language in one’s own culture, where the foreign language plays neither a communication function inside the community the FL learner lives nor an essential role in national or social life. As Klein (1986: 19) notes:

"The term, ‘foreign language’ is used denote a language acquired in a milieu where it is normally not in use (i.e. usually through instruction and which, when acquired, is not used by the learner in routine situation,"
Classroom input is the chief or only source of SL; because of the absence of intensive meaningful input and because there is little or no natural use of the TL in the surrounding society; the foreign language is usually treated as equivalent to any school subject, in which the students are taught to be able to pass the examination or course requirements (e.g. learning English as a FL in Iran).

Inherent in this type of learning environment is a set of discourse features pertaining to the characteristics of a classroom context. As a result, it raises the issue of whether these classroom discourse characteristics affect SL development.

2.2.3. The Social Context of Classroom Learning

The classroom context is described by Richards as follows:

"Textbook and teacher input are the order of the day, and the material chosen may be irrelevant to the learner’s personal needs or culture. Even when the material is potentially interesting, it is not taught for content but form, and this serves the narrow requirements of examination preparation" (Richards 1985: 68).

In a classroom context, both the teacher and learns assume a participant role in the generation of a classroom discourse. As Allwright (1982) notes, classroom discourse is unique in the sense that there is the presence of a teacher who assumes the responsibility of:

a) initiating a discourse, soliciting responses from the learner(s), and providing feedback.

b) controlling the types of input and taking deliberate and planned procedures to draw the learner’s attention to the TL structure, and providing practice opportunities.

The teaching approach adopted by the teacher, which somehow reflects his belief concerning the goal of learning is also embedded in this classroom discourse. As such, the nature of instruction varies along three parameters:
(1) the frequency and explicitness of instruction, (2) the sequence of presenting the TL structure, and (3) the opportunity for communicative interaction in the TL. As a result, it is reasonable to assume that the adopting of any teaching approach would have some influence on the nature and the general characteristics of a classroom discourse. For instance, the amount of opportunity for the 'negotiation of meaning' among the participants in the classroom, which is claimed to be facilitative for language acquisition to take place (Long and Sato, 1983), may be more prominent in a communicative language situation than one which emphasizes structural practice and relatively more explicit explanations about the language system.

2.2.4. Mixed Second Language Acquisition

The third context of learning a second language is technically referred to as ‘Second Language Acquisition’. This term indicates that the SL has communicative functions inside the community where the learner lives. The type and amount of input and opportunities for real language use are considerably greater for SL learner. Second language acquisition is of two major types.

a) within the culture and environment of the target language (e.g. learning English as a second language in England, U.S.A, or Australia) in which the kind and quantity of input and opportunity for real language use is the greatest for L2 learner.

b) within one’s own native culture (e.g. learning English as a SL in India). In this context the second language is accepted to be used for education, government, and business within the country. The term ‘mixed’ is used to show that the L2 learner benefits from both instruction and exposure from a wide context; that is he has access to both natural (newspapers, radio, television) and classroom input. Clearly a good command of the TL in a SL situation is the passport to social and economic advancement. This rather explains the high motivation and strong need toward learning the second language.
Inherent in any type of classroom language learning is ‘pedagogical input’. This term is used to denote the manner and content of presentation of the TL structures. Generally in a classroom context, the TL structures are graded and discretely presented according to their degree of difficulty. This according to Faerch & Kasper (1986) paradoxically presupposes that we know how the human language learning capacity operates in its natural form. Following this ‘meta-talk’ as Faerch & Kasper (1986) call it, are language exercises, ranging from mechanical and structural (such as pattern drills) to relatively more meaningful and communicative activities (such as unguided speaking and writing communicative activities, role plays or language games).

So a common feature of foreign or second language classroom is pedagogical input or ‘meta-talk’ discourse, in which both the teacher and students objectify, discuss, and analyse the TL (Target Language) in ways they do not naturally do in daily communication outside the classroom (Faerch & Kasper 1986). In other words, ‘meta-talk’ is a characteristic of classroom discourse which manifests itself in what Schachter (1996) refers to as ‘metalinguistic input’, covering explicit corrections, clarification and confirmation checks, as well as signals of a failure of understanding.

The analysis above concerning naturalistic and classroom environments seem to suggest that these two types of learning contexts have little in common. But fact is that in both environments, the types of input and interactions can overlap to some extent (Krashen 1976). Ellis (1986) suggest that instead of treating them as opposites, it would be more appropriate to see them as providing the same discourse type in different degrees. Nevertheless, it is still reasonable to assume that some discourse characteristics such as rule presentation and discussion, or feedback, both positive and negative, are uniquely frequent in classroom discourse, which may trigger different learning processes (linguistic or cognitive) of L2 learners; thereby resulting in quantitative as well as qualitative differences in their IL development. If we accept
this assumption, we have a case for examining whether these characteristics have any effect on SL development.

2.3.1. The Role of Pedagogical Input in Second Language Development

Despite these formal statements on the university of language acquisition, there has been a debate on whether classroom learning or pedagogical input in particular, facilities SL development. According to Faerch and Kasper (1986), the fact that many people acquire an L2 in a naturalistic context does not imply that the types of input and communication found in each context provide the ideal environment for foreign language learner. As a matter of fact, these learners may experience minimal contact with the TL outside the classroom. Furthermore, he argues that pedagogical rules may be used to support foreign language learning despite being simplified and provided by the teacher ((Faerch & Kasper 1986). Bicketron (1977: 55) believes that "The difference between arriving at a ‘pidgin’ and arriving at a reasonably accurate version of a standard language is mainly in the availability of TL models and the amount of interaction with speakers of the TL, both of which are absent in foreign language classroom and context". Ringbom (1989) suggests that pedagogical input may relieve the learner of the burden of hypothesis formation about: the TL structure which is provided ‘ready- made’ in the classroom. Though it might be true to some extent, we must mostly assume that there is an isomorphic relationship between teaching and learning strategies. It is too early at this stage to ascertain the utility this ‘meta-linguistic’ input in classroom regarding SL development.

Researchers like white (1987 a) and Chachter (1986) have suggested that pedagogical input may be useful for certain aspects of grammar which cannot be ‘comprehended’ with the help of contextual meaning, or for which direct positive evidence is not available in the input data.

Concerning the second issue, i.e. in what principled way pedagogical input affects SLA, there are three possible influences:

1) Pedagogical input or instruction may have some influence on the order or route of development of SL learner.
2) It may influence the rate of SL development.

3) It may lead to both qualitative and quantitative difference in IL knowledge, as defined by Bailey (1989) in terms of the development of automaticity and analyticity of SL learners.

Studying the role of pedagogical input or formal instruction in SLA is important both for developing a theoretical understanding of SLA and for language pedagogy. Because of the variations that can exist in formal instruction, the investigation into which type of instruction or method is more effective than the other is the issue of our concern and this line of research has been investigated in ‘task comparative’ studies in India and Iran. But, in general, the present study aims at investigating the role of different treatment (oral, written and oral-written) in terms of its impact on reading comprehension in India and Iran.

2.4. AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT OF THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION ON SLA IN A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

Studies which have attempted to investigate the effect of external factors such as input, instruction, and learning context on the development of second language are many. Yet, the findings or results are far from conclusive.

The controversy found in the results of all studies may be due to a lot of situational variables play in the process of second/ foreign language learning. Therefore, differences in learning context can almost always account for variation in the rate or route of learning. The studies reviewed here are subdivided as far as possible into whether the TL is acquired in a second or foreign language environment that is SLA studies in natural environment are excluded (Bialystok, 1985).

2.4.1. The Morpheme Studies/ The order of Acquisition

a. Second Language Environment

Researchers in this line of inquiry attempt to compare the ‘order of acquisition’ of grammatical morphemes or some grammatical structures such as
negation, interrogation and relative clauses with and without formal instruction. Several correlational studies comparing the frequency of input of various morphemes in teachers speech, and their accurate production in learner’s interlanguages have revealed positive and negative association. An early study of this relationship was that of Krashen, Sferlazza, Feldman and Fathman (2006) who compared the morpheme orders of two groups of learners of diverse L1 backgrounds. The first group was receiving instruction in English and the other was attending normal classes. Despite, a high correlation between the morpheme orders of the two groups was found. Another study by Krashen et al. (1976) also found no significant in the rank order of morpheme accuracy between formal and informal ESL learners. Tunner and Hoover (1993) investigated the relation between the teaching order and the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes and found they did correlate significantly.

While the above studies claim that formal instruction does not affect the order of acquisition of the grammatical morphemes, other researchers offer some counter evidence. Larsen--Freeman (1976) examined the correlation between the frequency rank orders of nine English morphemes in speech of two ELS learner’s oral production. The correlation was significant (P<.05, one tailed) in four of six comparison with the adults and in all six comparisons with the children.

Perkins and Larsen Freeman (1975) gave a translation test and oral description test to a group of university students before and after two months of instruction. Although the morpheme orders established in the oral description task showed no significant differences, the order established from the translation test differed significantly. They concluded formal instruction did not affect the order of acquisition where spontaneous speech was concerned, but instruction might result in improved performance in terms of the frequency and accuracy of morpheme usage (Gardner, Julian, 1992).

In two different studies, Lightbown (1980) found that formal instruction influences the order of some morphemes like plural ‘-s’ and ‘-ing’, whereas the other morphemes remained similar to the natural order. In another study, Lightbown (1980) found a ‘disturbed order’ which she attributed to intensive instruction. In her study,
frequency of classroom input, e.g. the teaching of ‘-ing’, would only lead to ‘pseudo-acquisition’ and the over-extension of the taught structure to inappropriate contexts. She found that the accuracy rate of this morpheme dropped when instruction was over. Lightbown (1980: 103) believes that:

"Formal instruction cannot subvert the order of acquisition, rather it ‘upsets’ the learner’s development because of too early insistence on correct production of certain language forms which would be expected to come later in a natural sequence."

Kanagy (1991) investigated the developmental sequences in the acquisition of propositional negation in Japanese. Her subjects were adult learners of Japanese as a foreign language from diverse L1 backgrounds. Results of negation pattern were found similar to learners of English and other European languages. These findings were remarkably similar to those observed in Japanese L1 children.

A few researchers have worked within the same paradigm, few studies address directly to the question of the effect of input and instruction on second and foreign language. Makoni (1992) studied the variability in the inter-languages of Shona learners of English. To examine the degree of variability in the realization of third person singular and spatial and directional prepositions in SL learner use context sensitive rules. The analysis reveals that whether SL learner’s performance is variable or not may ultimately depend on the linguistic context and level of proficiency the subjects have reached in the target language (Fathman, 1978).

b. Foreign Language Environment

Foster-Cohen (1999) compared the morpheme orders between EFL learners living in Germany and ESL learners living in the U.S. He reported a positive correlation. Pica (1983 b), on the other hand, argues that the subject in Foster-Cohen(1999) study not be comparable since the EFL learner’s mother tongue was German and the difference in the rank order could be the result of L1 influence. Makino (1992), who investigated nine morphemes, produced in a writing task, also found significant correlation in the morpheme order established by 777 Japanese learners of English in Japanese secondary schools with the natural order. However,
conflicting results were also found in Sajavarra's study (1992) in which he used the Bilingual Syntax Measure for his Finish speaking subjects and found a significantly lower rank for the articles and -ing in the order he established.

Pica (1983) compared the morpheme orders of three Spanish learners of English who were classified as naturalistic, pure classroom and mixed learners and found a significant correlation among them. Despite these similarities, she found the group that only received instruction scored one or two ranks higher in certain morphemes such as plural -s and did better on third person singular -s than did other two groups. Pica believes that instruction has a selective impact on certain morphemes. In sun, she notes that "differing conditions of L2 exposure appear to affect acquires hypotheses about the TL and their strategies for using it" (Pica 1983: 495). Though, Pica draws no conclusion about either the rate of acquisition or the level of ultimate attainment for her findings.

2.4.2. Development Sequence Studies

a. Second Language Environment

Concerning SL learning, Ellis (1984) examined the acquisition of negation, interrogation, and a number of verb phrase morphemes in two L2 learners who received instruction without any contact with native speaking children. The subjects were taught during a period of nine months. The data was collected from spontaneous communicative utterances produced by the learners in the classroom. He found that some patterns like past tense were slow to emerge in their utterances. Ellis (1984) ascribes theses results to the nature of classroom discourse which the learners were exposed to.

b. Foreign Language Environment

Felix (1995) investigated the developmental sequence of negation, interrogation, sentence types and pronouns for 34 German learners of English in an EFL environment. The subjects were entirely dependent of formal instruction for L2 input. He found parallel developments with these learners when compared with those
who acquired the TL in a naturalistic setting. The important point in that the learners used uninverted intonation questions, while these types of samples were neither found in classroom instruction nor in the teacher’s questions. Besides, the learners did not resort to their German First Language (L1) which requires inversion in the main clause Felix (1997). Based in these results, it can be concluded that both naturalistic and instructed learners are adopting some similar natural processing strategies, irrespective of their learning context. Paradis, Le Corre, & Genesee (1998) compared the development order of relative clause formation between instructed learners in Italy and naturalistic learners living in Edinburgh. The results of the study drawn from the elicited oral tasks suggest that language setting does not seem to influence the order with which the different noun phrases are relativised. Besides, formal learners relativised more accurately the less marked noun phrases than informal learners did (Nemser, 1971).

Ellis summarizes the empirical studies of the effect of instruction on route of SL learning. Since the majority of the studies are naturalistic SLA, they are not mentioned here (see Ellis, 1986).

Ellis concludes that "morpheme studies and longitudinal studies of SLA together indicate that although formal instruction may help L2 knowledge, this knowledge manifests itself in language use only where the learner is attending to form. It does not, therefore, except in a relatively minor way, affect the natural route of SLA which is evident in communicative speech" (Ellis 1985 a: 224). Taking these studies together, it is clear that the majority of them indicate that formal instruction does not alter the ’natural order’ of the grammatical morphemes when the learner is engaging in spontaneous communication. Nevertheless, both Ellis (1985 a) and Pica (1986 b) have pointed out that one of the problems with some of the studies conducted in an ESL context is that the subjects are neither purely ‘naturalistic’ nor ‘tutored’ instead they are more ‘mixed’ subjects for they benefit from both instruction and exposure from a wider context. As a result, it is difficult to know whether it is instruction or exposure that influences the order of development.
Despite these similarities, Perkins and Larsen-Freeman (1975), Lighbown (1985), Pica (1983a) and Pavesi (1986), showed that formal instruction has some effect on second language development, that is improved performance in terms of accuracy and fluency of usage. Pica (1983b) suggests that the process of SLA in the classroom may involve fewer stages and hypotheses than those that are found in a naturalistic setting.

So even if the linguistic environment is not an important determinant of the learning sequence, it is a major factor in determining the speed at which learners learn.

2.5. THE EFFECTS OF PEDAGOGICAL INPUT/FORMAL INSTRUCTION ON THE RATE OF SL DEVELOPMENT

Most of the studies which investigate the effect of formal instruction on the rate of development concentrate on the overall proficiency of SL learners. Ellis (1985a) gives a summary of twelve empirical studies in the same line of research, but expect one, the rest of them are concerned with second language learning in the culture and environment of the TL. Long and Sato (1983) provides a thorough review of eleven studies and concludes that instruction has a positive effect. This section includes studies which examine the effect of pedagogical input and conscious rule learning on the rate of SL development.

Schumann (1978) taught negation to an adult L2 learner during a period of seven months. Before instruction the learner’s use of negative was of the “No+V” type. The instruction only helped the learner to use the correct form of the TL structure in test like situations, while his spontaneous communication remained unaffected. Gaies (1983) in her experimental study taught a group of seventeen L2 learners of English with various native L1 backgrounds, how to relativise the object of preposition. This structure is supposed to be more difficult to relativise than the subject and the object, according to the Accessibility Hierarchy established by Keenan and Comrie (1977). She tested the learner’s ability to generalize the knowledge of relativising the object of preposition to other less difficult NP position in the...
hierarchy. Her hypothesis was confirmed, since the control group who had a normal syllabus was not able to generalise the rule to other relative pronoun functions. The result of the Gaies’ study (1983) suggests that even though instruction has no effect on the order of acquisition, it may help to speed up the learning process. Yet, it is not clearer whether the subjects were able to use their knowledge of relativising the object of preposition in spontaneous communication or not since Gass’ elicitation tasks (1988) focused on form. Clihara and Oller (1978) tested the relative utility of instruction on the rate/success of SLA with EFL adult learners in Japan at all proficiency levels. They used discrete point and integrative tests. From the results they concluded that instruction helps but exposure does not.

Ellis (1999) investigated the SL learners’ ability to use inverted wh-questions after three hours of audio-lingual instruction on this structure. He found no significant improvement in their ability to produce inverted wh-questions. However, he suggests that instruction may help some individual learners.

Studies in foreign language environment are so rare. Sorace (1985) is the only study which takes into account the effect of acquiring a SL (Italian) in a foreign language environment on IL variability of knowledge and use. In her study, she traced the evolution of the learner’s metalinguistic knowledge on six grammatical structures of Italian, and how it bore on his production in an oral picture description task and an informal conversation. She found a significant and positive correlation between the non-beginner’s performance on the judgment test and the two oral tasks; whereas a negative correlation was found with beginners. In other words, she found a growing consistency between the development of metalinguistic knowledge and performance. This consistency is directly proportional to the development of IL competence. This is the only study in which a correlation between metalinguistic knowledge and performance was reported.

The results from the studies reviewed above rather seem contradictory, particularly with respect to whether the developmental sequence can be manipulated through instruction. In fact, these diverse opinions as regards the effect of formal instruction on classroom SL development are not completely incompatible if we take
a closer look at the type of elicitation task used in these studies. As far as the experimental studies are concerned, researchers who rely on written or grammar tests such as sentence combining or a discrete point test, all reported a better learning effect; whereas those who make use of oral data seem to suggest that the effect is limited. With these findings, one may wonder whether there are differential effects of formal instruction or pedagogical input on classroom second language development.

2.6. THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE (LANGUAGE TRANSFER)

Among the wide range of factors which seem to shape up the IL system is the learner’s LI. The fact that the learner’s mother tongue is a source of knowledge for the L2 learner is known to everybody. While some researchers have claimed that all difficulties in learning a L2 arose from the interference effects of the native language and not from any inherent difficulties in the TL; many others (for example Corder 1977; Namser, 1971; Richards, 1971; Selinker, 1972) have insisted that a variety of factors are responsible for the problems encountered in SLL. As Richards notes:

"Interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in SLL many errors, however, derive from the strategies employed by the learner in language acquisition and from the natural interference of items within the Target Language" (Richards, 1971, p. 214).

In this way the importance of interference was downgraded. As the result, the subsequent theories proposed by researchers excluded L1 transfer as a significant learning variable. As McLaughlin (1990) has argued, the use of the L1 is merely one manifestation of a very general psychological process, that of relying on prior knowledge to facilitate new learning. Corder (1977) views interference as a learner strategy. He believes that learner’s L1 may facilitate the developmental process of learning an L2, by helping him to progress rapidly along the universal rout when the L1 and L2 are similar.

The research literature on the effect of first language reveals a considerable disagreement about how positive the L1 is in SLA. Regarding the role of L1, there are a number of variables at play. One possible variable as Corder (1977) notes is the
setting in which SLA takes place. He argues that whereas interference need not be a major factor in naturalistic SLA, it will always be present in classroom or foreign language learning. In classroom SLL, learners will always use their L1 knowledge due to lack of need and the availability on contact with TL.

Another variable is the level of proficiency the learners have reached. Taylor (1975) believes that the differences in the type and amount of errors produced by elementary and intermediate students show the fact that beginners rely more on transfer, so the learner’s stage of development determines the degree of reliance on L1 knowledge. Corder (1977) believes that when learners experience difficulty in communicating an idea because they lack the necessary TL resources, they will resort to their L1 to make up the insufficiency. This explains why L1 is relied on more at the beginning of the learning process than later.

The method of data collection and type of elicitation task will also affect the outcome. The last variable is how close or distant the L1 and L2 are.

A number of investigators working on L1 transfer have found evidence that L1 does make a difference, but this influence is not always predictable. The issue of concern in most of these studies is the percentage of the learner’s errors which are traceable to the effects of L1 (Ellis, 1985).

Dulay and Burt (1982) report 3% of all learners’ errors is the results of negative transfer from L1. however since the subjects in this study were Spanish speaking children learning English in natural environment, they argued that children do not organize an L2 in the basis of transfer or comparison with their L1. However, other research findings give a larger proportion of errors as the result of L1 transfer. The considerable discrepancy found in the percentage reported by these researchers may be the result of the variables mentioned above.

Bickerton (1983) found considerable mother tongue influence on the Pidgin English of Japanese speakers is lesser than extent in Filipino speakers.
Anderson (1983) interestingly points out the differential effects of positive and negative transfer from different language backgrounds. He does not admit the existence of universals of pidginization which are independent of transfer from the L1 was found, which are shared by pidgins, are related either to the first or target language.

Schwartz, & Sprouse (1994) investigated variation in cross-linguistic influence on IL lexicon as a function of perceived L1 distance. The purpose of the study was to determine whether among SL learners’ reference to L1 knowledge is more frequent and intense or not; especially when communicating with interlocutors whose first language(s) are similar to their own. The most common type of influence found was intra/interlingual or that showing an interaction of first and Internal Language (IL) knowledge.

Consequently L1 is an important source of knowledge which learners use both consciously and subconsciously to help them sift the L2 data in the input they receive and to perform in the L2 particularly when later research studies begin to recognize the role of L1 in SLA, thus it is important to uncover the relationship between classroom input and the learner’s L1 in the development of Internal Language (IL) system or in SLA.

2.7. RATIONALE FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Based on the review presented so far, and the rather inconclusive results from these studies, we have a case for investigating classroom SL development from the perspective of two different learning contexts and the type and amount of input and interaction each provides for the learner and its ultimate impact on their outcomes.

The factor easiest to control is access, from the point of view of input as well as opportunity to communicate. Furthermore, there exists the natural expectation that the study of guided SLA would yield evidence of considerable value to the language teacher more than the study of spontaneous acquisition ever could.
The controversy found in the results of the studies concerning the rate of development, justifies the need in searching for consistency of results across larger groups of learners with different first language backgrounds. So the issue of concern in the present study is whether different classroom learning contexts which signify different characteristics relating to that environment and the amount and type of input it provides would lead to differences in the rate of success and overall proficiency gained. Another related issue is the variability of IL knowledge and use. As mentioned previously, there are not many studies which tackle the effect of formal instruction and pedagogical input or the learner’s development of their IL knowledge on the one hand, and their ability to use this knowledge in different language situations on the other. That is, it is not yet clear whether formal instruction has its effect mainly on the classroom learner’s development at the level of knowledge or at the level of use, due to the lack distinction in previous research between these two dimensions.

In most of the studies reviewed, the reliance on oral data as the only source of information may only reveal a partial picture of the IL system. The discrepancy between knowing and using the IL structures may be minimal for naturalistic learners, but less for SL learners, since they have a greater amount of exposure and practice with the TL. However, the same assumption may not be true for pure classroom (formal) learners. In the present study oral, written and both oral and written tasks will be used, so that the subjects might better demonstrate their reading ability (competence) under different task conditions.

Compared with the vast amount of research conducted and data collected on learners of ESL/ESL, especially those learning in Target Language (TL) environment, research in FLL and SLL in the culture and environment of the first language has produced only a few studies that document actual IL development and variability. Where the comparison is made, it has almost been between second/foreign language learning with naturalistic first or second language acquisition. In these studies the target population and their first languages were English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French and German in almost all cases. No study has ever addressed the role of input in foreign and second language contexts and with native speakers of Hindi and Farsi.
Another issue frequently addressed by researchers is whether pedagogical (metalinguistic) input is facilitative in the process of reading ability. A number of researchers have begun to speculate the role of meta-linguistic input as acquisition facilitator (e.g. White, 1987; Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985; Schachter 1996), but the problem with most of these studies conducted in an ESL/EFL context is that the subjects are neither pure naturalistic nor tutored, instead they are mixed subjects since they benefit from both instruction and exposure to natural input (interaction/non-interaction). In other words, these studies may not have tapped the effects of pure classroom learning. As a result, it is difficult to know whether it is instruction or exposure per se that influences SL development. To compensate the previous studies failure, the present study aims at investigating the comparison of Iranian learners of English as a FL in Iran with that of Indian learners of English as a SL in India.

In the previous research, the linguistic areas of investigation were confined to the study of morphemes, article, negation, interrogation, verb tenses, reflexives, pronoun, subject/verb agreement, and only in a few cases adjective clauses. Other aspects of syntax have not been studied yet. No study has raised the question as how foreign language learners of English acquire complex sentences (sentences containing adjective clauses and noun clauses) when the only access to the TL is inefficient classroom input. In fact, nobody has actually tested the effect of the type and amount of input on SL and FL learning. In the present study an attempt will be made to investigate the contribution of input, availability of language use and instruction on the development of subjects IL system. In as much as cross-linguistic influence (transfer) is an integral part of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Referring to the external or situational factors we reviewed in this chapter, the amount and nature of input available and the range of opportunities for communication and language use are the primary causes of variability in the subjects' Internal language (IL) system, and indirect determinants of the rate of learning and the level of proficiency achieved. Based on the review presented so far, we have a case for investigating classroom reading development under three paradigms:
1. Learning context which signify different characteristics pertaining to that learning environment such as type and amount of formal instruction (pedagogical input) and nature of classroom activities.

2. Social context and the range of opportunities it provides for real language use, and the availability of natural input.

3. L1 background.

2.8 READING DEFINITION

Goodman (1967) refers to reading as a psycholinguistic game, and states that:

Reading is a selective process. It involves partial information which is processed. Tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected and redefined as reading progress (p.260) "to develop reading for many advanced students who are studying English as a second or foreign language, reading is both the primary means by which they become acquainted with the content of the subject area they are studying and the most important way in which they continue knowledge of the language itself (p. 154).

Goodman (1967) continues by mentioning that the needs of students in third countries are different from those of foreign students in the United States or United Kingdom. But, they probably share the same problems to some extent. These problems stem from syntactic complexity encountered in writing and lack of extensive vocabulary or a range of terminology specific to a specialized field of study, and are among the many problems that the students who study a foreign language encounter. Fries(1963) defines reading as “extracting three levels of meaning: (a) lexical meaning that implies the semantic content of words and expressions; (b) structural or grammatical meaning which derived from interrelationships among words, or parts of words or from the order of words, and (c) sociocultural meaning (the evaluation that people of our culture attach to the words and groups of words they are reading”(cited in Rivers,1968,p. 112). Grellet (1984) defines reading as,“understanding a written text through extracting the required information from it as
efficiency as possible" (p. 36). Rayner and Pollatsek (1989, p. 23) define reading as, "an ability to extract visual information from the page and comprehend the meaning of the text". Goodman, Haith, Guttentag, & Rao (1985) define reading as "a cyclical process by sampling, predicting, testing, and confirming. Goodman’s argument is that the good reader takes advantage of the redundancy inherent in language which enabling a reconstruction of the whole text although only a part of the graphic material has been extracted" (Johnson, 1982, p. 503). Rivers (1981) says "reading is both a source of information, a pleasurable activity and a means of consolidating and extending one’s knowledge of the language" (p. 259). In her view, direct reading which leads to comprehension is far from passive. The sound patterns represented by graphic symbols should be recognized and their combinations as language units identified. Structural cues, words that introduce phrases and clauses and the modification of meaning must be recognized. Word grouping and their relations with other word groupings should be distinguished. In the process of reading, all these abilities develop automatically.

2.9 THE CONCEPT OF READING COMPREHENSION

Alderson and Urquhart (1984) note perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents is called reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the process by which a person understands the meaning of a written or spoken language (Richard, 1985). Allen, Swain, Harley, & Cummins (1990) note that reading comprehension is the process of relating new or incoming information to the information already stored in meaning. So, comprehension is an active process of matching or associating. It is not one of the breaking complex units of language into simpler ones but is, rather, one of taking multiple units and building them into conceptual representations. Different types of reading are often distinguished, according to the reader’s purposes in reading and the type of reading used. They are literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, critical or evaluative comprehension, and appreciative comprehension.
2.9.1. Literal Comprehension

In literal comprehension, one reads to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a passage Hubbard, Thornton, and wheeler (1991). Literal comprehension focuses on ideas and information which are explicitly stated in the selection. Purposes for reading and teacher’s questions designed to elicit responses at this level may range from simple to complex. A simple task in literal comprehension may be the recognition of facts or the sequencing of incidents in a reading selection.

2.9.1.1. Recognition or Recall of Details: The student is required to locate or identify or to call up from memory such facts as the names of characters, the time a story took place, the setting of a story, or an incident described in a story, when such facts are explicitly stated in the selection.

2.9.1.2. Recognition or Recall of Main Ideas: The student is asked to locate or identify or to produce from memory an explicit statement in or from a selection which is the main idea of a paragraph or a larger portion of the selection.

2.9.1.3. Recognition or Recall of Sequence: The student is required to locate or identify or to call up from memory the order of incidents or actions explicitly stated in the selection.

2.9.1.4. Recognition or Recall of Comparisons: The student is requested to locate or produce from memory likenesses and differences among characters, times in history, or places that are explicitly compared by an author.

2.9.1.5. Recognition or Recall of Cause and Effect Relationships: The student in this instance may be required to locate or identify or to produce from memory reasons for certain incidents, events, or actions explicitly stated in the selection.
2.9.1.6. Recognition or Recall of Character Traits: The student is requested to identify or locate or to call up from memory statements about a character which help to point up the type of person he was when such statements were made by the author of the selection.

2.9.2. Inferential Comprehension

In inferential comprehension, one reads to find information which is not explicitly stated in the passage, using the reader's experience and intuition. According to Fromkin (1988) “inferring means the ability to derive additional knowledge from the original base” (p. 488). So, in answering inferential questions students are required to go beyond the immediate text. Barrett (1968) believes in these kinds of questions students have to make use of their own experience and intuition, and possibly predict the outcomes. The reader responds to information implied but not directly stated in the text. The reader must use all types of schemata, so these questions are not independent of the context (Hubbard et al., 1991 & Barrett, 1968). So, inferential comprehension is demonstrated by the student when he uses a synthesis of the literal content of a selection, his personal knowledge, his intuition and his imagination as a basis for conjectures or hypotheses.

2.9.2.1. Inferring, Supporting Details: In this instance, the student is asked to conjecture about additional facts the author might have included in the selection which would have made it more informative, interesting or appealing.

2.9.2.2. Inferring the Main Idea: The student is required to provide the main idea, general significance, theme, or moral which is not explicitly stated in the selection.

2.9.2.3. Inferring Sequence: The student, in this case, may be requested to conjecture as to what action or incident might have taken place between two explicitly stated actions or incidents; he may be asked to hypothesize about what would happen next; or he may be asked to hypothesize about the beginning of a story if the author had not started where he did.
2.9.2.4. **Inferring Comparisons:** The student is required to infer likenesses and differences in characters, times, or places. Such inferential comparisons revolve around ideas such as: here and there, there and now, he and he, he and she, and she and she.

2.9.2.5. **Inferring Cause and Effect Relationships:** The student is required to hypothesize about the motives of characters and their interactions with others and with time and place. He may also be required to conjecture as to what caused the author to include certain ideas, words, characterizations, and actions in this writing.

2.9.2.6. **Inferring Character Traits:** In this case, the student may be asked to hypothesize about the nature of characters on the basis of explicit clues presented in the selection.

2.9.2.7. **Predicting Outcomes:** The student is requested to read an initial portion of selection, and on the basis of this reading to conjecture about the outcome of the selection.

2.9.2.8. **Inferring about Figurative Language:** The student, in this instance, is asked to infer literal meanings from the authors figurative use language.

2.9.3. **Critical or Evaluative Comprehension**

In critical or evaluative comprehension, one reads to compare information in a passage with the reader's own knowledge and values. Evaluation is demonstrated by a student when he makes judgments about the content of a reading selection by comparing it with external criteria, e. g., information provided by the teacher on the subject, authorities on the subject, or by accredited written sources on the subject; or with internal criteria, e. g., the reader's experiences, knowledge, or values related to the subject under consideration. In essence, evaluation requires students to make judgments that have to do with its accuracy, acceptability, worth, desirability, completeness, suitability, timeliness, quality, truthfulness, or probability of occurrence. Examples of evaluation tasks related to reading are:

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2.9.3.1. **Judgments of Reality or Fantasy:** The student is requested to determine whether incidents, events, or characters in a selection could have existed or occurred in real life on the basis of his experience.

2.9.3.2. **Judgments of Fact or Opinion:** In this case the student is asked to decide whether the author is presenting information which can be supported with objective data or whether the author is attempting to sway the reader's thinking through the use of subjective content that has overtones of propaganda.

2.9.3.3. **Judgments of Adequacy or Validity:** Tasks of this type call for the reader to judge whether the author's treatment of a subject is accurate and complete when compared to other sources on the subject. In this instance, then, the reader is called upon to compare written sources of information with an eye toward their agreements or disagreements, their completeness or incompleteness, and their thoroughness or superficiality in dealing with a subject.

2.9.3.4. **Judgments of Appropriateness:** Evaluation tasks of this type require the student to determine whether certain selections or parts of selections are relevant and can contribute to resolving an issue or a problem. For example, a student may be requested to judge the part of a selection which most appropriately describes a character. Or he may be called upon to determine which references will make significant contributions to a report he is preparing.

2.9.3.5. **Judgments of Worth, Desirability or Acceptability:** In this instance, the student may be requested to pass judgments on the suitability of a character's action in a particular incident or episode. Was the character right or wrong, good or bad, or somewhere in between? Tasks of this nature call for opinions based on the values the reader has acquired through his personal experiences.

2.9.4. **Appreciative Comprehension**

Appreciation has to do with students' awareness of the literary techniques,
forms, styles, and structures employed by authors to stimulate emotional responses in their readers. Obviously, tasks which fall into this category will require varying degrees of inference and evaluation, but their primary focus must be on heightening students' sensitivity to the ways authors achieve an emotional as well as an intellectual impact on their readers. More specifically, appreciation involves cognizance of and visceral response to: (a) the artistry involved in developing stimulating plots, themes, settings, incidents, and characters, and (b) the artistry involved in selecting and using stimulating language, in general. Examples of tasks that involve appreciation are:

2.9.4.1. Emotional Response to the plot or theme: Tasks of this type are based on the assumption that the plot or the theme of a given selection has stimulated and sustained a feeling of fascination, excitement, curiosity, boredom, sentimentality, tenderness, love, fear, hate, happiness, cheerfulness or sadness. Provided this assumption is met, the students may be requested to determine what the author did in the process of developing the plot or theme that elicited a given emotional response.

2.9.4.2. Identification with Characters and Incidents: Some appreciation tasks should require students to become aware of the literary techniques and devices which prompt them to sympathize or empathize with a particular character, or to reject him, for that matter. Other tasks should require students to consider the placement, nature, and structure of events or incidents which cause them to project themselves into the action.

2.9.4.3. Reactions to the Author's Use of Language: In this instance, the student is required to recognize and respond to the author's craftsmanship as reflected in his selection of and use of words. Such tasks may deal with the connotations and denotations of selected words and the influence they have on the reader's feelings. In addition, students should at times note figures of speech, e. g., similes and metaphors, and the effect their use has on the reader.

2.9.4.4. Imagery: Tasks of this nature require the reader to recognize and react to the author's artistic ability to "paint word pictures." In other words, students
should become sensitive to the techniques an author uses in order to enable
them to see, smell, taste, hear, or feel things through reading.

In appreciative comprehension, one reads to gain emotional or other kinds of
valued response to a passage. In this regard, Chastain (1988) states that:

The reading goal is to read for meaning or to recreate the writer’s meaning.
Reading to improve pronunciation, practice grammatical forms, and study vocabulary
do not constitute reading at all because, by definition, reading involves
comprehension. When readers do not comprehend, they are not reading (p. 217).

Richards, John and Heidi (1992) explain that comprehension doesn’t happen
all at once. In his view, a single reading of a text book section does not necessarily
result in a satisfactory understanding of that section. Good comprehension is usually a
process. Comprehension is usually achieved gradually. "You move from a general
feeling about what something means to a deeper level of understanding"(p.
311). Richards et al., (1992) offers to: seven key skills which will increase reader’s
understanding of what s/he reads. These are recognizing definitions and examples;
recognizing headings and subheadings, recognizing signal words; recognizing main
ideas in paragraphs and short selections, knowing how to outline and knowing how to
summarize.

Smith (1978) made a distinction between two kinds of comprehension: There
are two ways of reading for comprehension:

Mediated Comprehension vs. Immediate Comprehension: Mediated
comprehension requires the prior identification of words, while Immediate
comprehension can be accomplished by going directly from the visual feature to the
meaning” (Smith, p. 8).

Rivers (1981) points out that” the student must be taught to derive meaning
from the word combinations in the text and to do this in a consecutive fashion at a
reasonable speed” (p. 261).
2.10. PSYCHOLOGY OF READING

The whole reading process involves two things: The eyes and the brain, so reading is visual as well as cognitive (Chastain, 1988; Short, 1993). The eyes provide the brain with signals responding to the printed marks on paper. The brain’s task here is decoding and interpreting the written message. After the identification of words, the brain’s responsibility is to create lexical or grammatical relationships between these words and phrases and to come up with a meaningful unit. The combination of these units will result in what is called comprehension. Reading without comprehension is not reading at all. Reading and comprehension are interrelated (Chastain, 1988).

2.11 FACTORS AFFECTING READING COMPREHENSION

A major factor in reading comprehension is background knowledge or schemata of the reader (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, & Goetz, 1977; Rumelhart, 1980). Prior knowledge can influence an interpretation of a text by providing an overall context for the information being encoded, comprehended and recalled. Gorman (1979) supports Spearritt’s (1972) view that:

Some independent components affect the process of understanding a text. These components include, reading word meanings, drawing inference from the context, recognizing the writer’s purpose, tone and mode, and following the structure of a passage (p. 155). In Gaskill’s view, the reading skill should be directed toward “the development and improvement of skills which are taught to aid in the reading process and comprehension is directed toward exposing students to a wide variety of reading selections and reading experiences in such a way as to foster independence in dealing with reading in the second language” (1979, p. 154). Edwards (1996) introduces Child’s (1987) model in which the way that purposes, experiences, and emotions are mapped into language by authors and readers are taught to affect comprehensibility. In his system, the communicative intent of the author is the main determinant of reading difficulty. Edwards (1996) states “As one moves up the scale of difficulty, texts may be characterized by increasing amount of one or more of the following elements: (p. 255)
(a) presence of the author’s voice

(b) individual or cultural specificity or markedness

(c) shared knowledge assumed; ideas left unstated or unexplained

(d) lack of explicitness; lower informativeness.

(e) abstractness

MacKay (1974) states that, "features of lexical inclusion and equivalence, anaphoric reference and intersentential connection from part of the linguistic system of all texts, and since the information in a text is signaled linguistically, an inadequate mastery of these features must hinder comprehension" (p. 255). Greenal and Swan (1995) mention that "effective reading means being able to read accurately and efficiently, and to understand as much of the passage as you need in order to achieve your purpose" (p. 2). They introduce several skills which facilitate reading comprehension. These are: - extracting main ideas, reading for specific information, understanding text organization, predicting and checking.

According to schema theory "a text only provides directions for listener or reader as to how they should construct meaning from their previously acquired knowledge, which is in fact the background knowledge. The previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata. In order to have an effective reading, the reader should relate the textual material to one’s own knowledge" (Green and Swan, 1995, p. 220).

Hudson (1988) states, "From the perspective of schemata theory, the principle determinant of the knowledge a person can acquire from reading is the knowledge he or she already possesses" (p. 185). A reader’s failure to activate the needed schemata may be either due to the lack of appropriate schemata as anticipated by the writer, or due to lack of enough cues in the text to be used in a bottom-up fashion to activate those schemata. One of the reasons for the former case is that "the schema is specific to a given culture and is not part of a particular reader’s background knowledge" Carrell and Eisterhold (1988, p. 240).
2.12. COMPONENT OF READING COMPREHENSION

Since reading is a very complex process, a great number of researchers (Chall, 1996; and Grabe, 1991) have tried to understand the process of fluent reading by dividing the reading process into some component skills. They have proposed at least six general component skills and knowledge areas (Grabe, 1991). These are (1) Automatic recognition skills, (2) Vocabulary and structural knowledge, (3) Formal discourse, structure knowledge, (4) Content/World background knowledge, (5) Synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies, and (6) Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring. An explanation of each of these component skills follow.

2.12.1. Automatic Recognition Skills

Automatic recognition skills occur when the reader is busy and even unaware of it. The reader’s mind automatically and subconsciously makes access to the necessary lexicon and does not resort to contextual cues (Grabe, 1991). However, these skills depend on the reader’s possessing a certain level of vocabulary and structure knowledge.

2.12.2 Vocabulary and Syntactic Knowledge

To understand and read any text fluently, sufficient knowledge of structure and words is very crucial. This idea of importance of structure for reading has been stated by some scholars (Eskey, 1988; Zimmerman, 1989). Furthermore, the knowledge of lexicon has an essential role in understanding any piece of discourse. Having obtained a substantial amount of vocabulary and structure knowledge, readers may be able to comprehend as well as evaluate what they read if they are fluent enough (Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003).

2.12.3. Formal Schemata

This kind of schemata refers to the previously acquired background knowledge that the readers possess about the differences in rhetorical structures such as differences in genre, differences in the structure of texts, poetry, newspaper articles (Carrell, 1983). Meyer (1977) holds that the schemata for expository rhetorical
organizations. These are: causation (cause and effect), comparison, collection (list), and description. He believes that each of these indicates a sort of different schema through which writers develop topics and the readers understand them.

2.12.4. Content Schemata

It refers to the background knowledge of the reader regarding background knowledge of the reader and the content area of the text (Meyer, 1977), for example, the knowledge about the customs of people, or the economy of countries. Are the kinds of background knowledge which refer to the content of the material which a reader should have before reading? So, the reader’s failure to activate an appropriate schema (either formal or content) during reading leads to different levels of non-comprehension. This failure to activate an appropriate schema may be either because of the writer’s not having provided enough clues in the passage for the reader, or it may be because of the fact that the reader does not have the proper schema predicted by the writer and so fails to understand: in both cases there is a mismatch between what the writer predicts the reader can do to get the meaning from the text and what the reader is really able to perform. The point is that the appropriate schemata have to exist and have to be activated while text processing (Carrell, 1984).


These strategies are mostly used by fluent readers, that is, in their reading a text, not only do they try to comprehend it, but they also evaluate the text and compare or contrast it with similar sources of information. In other words, as the readers move through the text, based on the information in the text, they predict the writer’s perspective or what the next statement would be.

2.12.6. Metacognitive Knowledge and Skills Monitoring

Metacognitive knowledge is defined as knowledge about cognition and the self-regulation of cognition (Baker & Brown, 1984). Generally, cognition includes recognizing the pattern of structure and organization, and using proper strategies to achieve certain purposes.
Monitoring of cognition refers to reader’s ability to recognize the available problems with information presented or the ability to obtain his specific goals. In sum, good readers have been observed to use more metacognitive strategies than fluent readers, a fact which is true of the older readers in comparison to the younger ones.

2.13. TYPES OF MEANING

EFL/ESL readers need to be able to read effectively while tolerating a certain amount of ambiguity and uncertainty. The tendency for many EFL/ESL readers while dealing with incomplete information in a passage is to stop and think about each unknown word and ask for help of look it up in a dictionary. This is a typical strategy of poor readers. However, one of the useful strategies readers can resort to when dealing with incomplete information is using the context and contextual clues to comprehend the passage. A context is the combination of vocabulary and grammar that surrounds a word. It can be a sentence, a paragraph, or a passage. Every context includes some clues that assist in understanding the passage. Contextual clues are words that are located elsewhere in a sentence or paragraph which help one to decipher unknown vocabulary word (Grabe, 1997). Context helps readers to make a general prediction about meaning. If readers know the general meaning of a sentence, they can also know the general meaning of the words in the sentence. Using context and its clues can help students understand the passage without stopping to look up every unknown word in a dictionary. Practice in reading aloud performed by the teacher and by students (when they have achieved enough proficiency) can also assist students in recognizing contextual clues such as intonation, stress, pause, and mostly those features indicated by commas and periods. During loud reading, the teacher can also attract students’ attention to other contextual clues such as the word, phrases, and sentences of even paragraphs surrounding a word or a phrase that can help student guess their general meaning. There are various types of meaning. For the purpose of this study, some types of them will be discussed: implicit and explicit meanings; primary and secondary meanings; and denotative and connotative meanings.
2.13.1. Implicit and Explicit Meaning

“People usually think of meaning as something that a word or sentence refers to” (Larson, 1984, p. 36). But to understand the meaning so adequately, one must be aware of the fact that there are various kinds of meaning. Not all of the meaning which is being communicated is stated overtly in the text. Discovering the meaning of the text to be comprehended includes consideration of both explicit and implicit information.

2.13.1.1. Implicit Meaning

Larson (1984) believe that when communicating through speaking or writing, the amount of information that people include in the text will depend on the amount of shared information that already exists between the speaker/writer and addressee. When we talk, we leave out some of the information (which is part of the meaning), since we believe that they are already known by the addressee. For example:

News broadcasters in the United States will make statements like, “the Regan tax will pass in the Senate today”. If the announcer said “the tax bill proposed by the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, was passed in the Senate of the United States today”, people would soon stop listening to this announcer. He is wasting their time telling them things they knew. It is shared information. (Larson, 1984, P. 38)

Thus, in the process of communication, some information or meaning because of the structure of the source language, or shared information in the communication situation, or because it has already been included elsewhere in the text. All of these points should be taken into account by language learners.

2.13.1.2. Explicit Meaning

Explicit information is overtly stated by lexical items and grammatical forms in the text. Actually, it is part of the total communication assumed by the writer. According to Larson’s (1984) classification, there are different kinds of information: referential, Organizational, and situational. Each of them will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.
2.13.2. Referential Meaning

Referential meaning is the kind of meaning refer primarily to a certain thing, event, attribution, or relation which a person can perceive or imagine in other words, it is what the communication is about (Larson, 1984).

According to Nida (1964), “referential meanings refer primarily to the cultural context identified in the utterance, …”(P. 70). He continued that referential meanings are generally considered as “dictionary meaning” and treated in terms of field / or context. Nida also in 1964 describes the domains of referential meaning as:

(1) Identifying the interna: context of a domain, i. e., recognizing the referents in questions.

(2) Contrasting the domain of one word with that of the others, i. e., defining the borders between semantically.

(3) Distinguishing the shared area between two words through listing synonyms, and further stated that for the analysis of semantic structure, a system which combines aspects of domains and context, is necessary(Nida, 1964).

2.13.3. Organizational Meaning

The information bits in referential meaning are put together and expressed in various combinations and from some packages. In largest units of discourse, these packages should be organized correctly and form organizational meaning”. For example, if an apple has been referred to in the text and then apple is referred to it again, the fact that it is the same apple is part of the organizational meaning of the text” (Larson, 1984, p. 36). In other words, organizational meaning puts the referential information together into a logical way (through cohesion, continuity, groupings, observing the old and new information in the text) and causes the text to be coherent.

2.13.4. Situational Meaning

Any message is produced in a specific communication situation, in which many situational matters, such as: the age, sex, cultural background, social status of
the speaker and hearer and the relationship between them, where and when the communication takes place, and so on, result in situational meaning. In situational meaning, the matter of formality or informality of situation is focused". For example, the same person may be referred to as John, Mr. Smith, Professor Smith, etc., depending on the situation. This choice carries Situational Meaning "(Larson, 1984, p. 37). In the discussion of different cultural background in situational meaning, a person from one culture may not understand the story written about an incident in another cultures since many information is left implicit.

2.13.5. Primary and Secondary Meaning

In primary meaning, there is one- to -one correlation between form and meaning. In secondary or Figurative Meaning, there is not one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. That is, a different form may be used to denote especial types of meaning. Actually, a word may have additional meanings very different from its primary meaning. Where the link is not through essential components, such meanings are called figurative meanings. Figurative meanings are always specific to a particular culture and language. Since they possess other meanings in addition to their first meaning, and since they are often arbitrary and conventional. For example the same trait is arbitrarily assigned to the rabbit, or to the spider, or to some other animals (Nida, 1964). It may be suggested that the Primary Meaning can somehow refer to the Denotative Meaning, and Figurative Meaning to Connotative Meaning of a word.

2.13.6. Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Of the other aspects of meaning, one can refer to Denotative and Connotative Meanings. Denotative meaning refers to the meaning which is referential, objective and cognitive. This kind of meaning is shared by speech community. Connotative meaning refers to the meaning which is associational, subjective, and affective. This type of meaning is personal and may not be shared by the speech community (Richards, John Platt and Heidi Platt, 1992).
Nearly, all of the words of language (excluding some words which have grammatical function) possess both denotative and connotative meanings. The connotation differs from one person or society to another even though the denotation of the two words is identical (e.g., dog in English and kelb in Arabic).

2.14. SEQUENCING READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Hukins (1995) defined questions as “complex linguistic structures designed to engage individuals cognitively and affectively in processing particular contents “(p. 114). At its simplest meaning, a question is an expressed request for information. These requests can take a variety of forms and can fall into a number of different categories depending on the context in which they are being studied. This context also influences the terms chosen to describe questions as well as their definitions Hukins (1969).

Linguistics have long concerned themselves with the grammar of questions (formal linguistics), the relationship between questions and answers (conversational analysis), and the function of questions (sociolinguistics) in the realm of strategy employed by instructions (Ellis, 1993).

Bloom (1956) introduces a classification for questions and creates taxonomy for categorizing level of abstraction of questions that commonly occur in educational settings. The taxonomy provides a useful structure in which to categorize test questions, since professors will characteristically ask questions within particular levels.

Sequencing questions may be accomplished through Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives. Here is an example of the taxonomy with questions that match each level of thinking (Bloom, 1956):

2.14.1. Lower Level Questions

Knowledge (recalling specific information, describe, name, state, tell, define) - Who was our first President?
Comprehension (interpreting, explaining, summarizing, interpret, summarize, state in own words) - Which month marked the most significant events leading to the Revolutionary War?

Application (using concepts, generalizations or skill in a new situation, demonstrate, use, predict, infer, act) - Using the mapping techniques we learned yesterday, how would you show someone to get from Boston to Philadelphia?

2.14.2. Higher Level Questions

Analysis (examining parts of a whole and their relationships, distinguish, examine, determine the cause and effect, explain the main idea)

How are the two neighborhoods alike?

How are they different? What does each of the figures in the political cartoon about the Revolutionary War represent?

What is the cartoonist trying to tell us?

Synthesis (putting parts back together to create a new whole, develop a plan, or communicate a new way)

From our study of cities during colonial times, what things do you think were the most important ideas to consider in building a new city during that time period in history?

What would you include in your dream neighborhood?

What proposal would you make to improve downtown Mr. Pleasant's Play Scope?

Evaluation (making a judgment using a specific set of criteria)

What do you think might have happened if the British won the Revolutionary War?
Whose perspective makes the most sense to you?

Which was the authentic part of the video?

2.15. CLASSIFICATION OF QUESTIONS FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEWS

One of the most frequent and time-consuming activities is the use of comprehension questions. Comprehension questions can be composed by teachers, book authors, or students. They can be presented in writing or orally. Questions can be asked before students read, while they read, or after they read. Getting the importance of reading, different scholars try to approach reading comprehension in the practical way in the classroom. Making appropriate exercises and test materials to assist in the mastery of these processes is one of the ways to approach reading comprehension in the classroom. Question and answer are common activities, which is said to help learners in the process of learning reading comprehension. Lehnert (1977, P. 70) proposes that, the ability to answer questions about a message is a better index of understanding than summarizing or paraphrasing. It is common to teach and test reading passages with a number of comprehension questions following them. Reading questions can be classified based on their forms such as multiple choice questions (MC), and WH questions, on the basis of their functions such as linguistically-based understanding questions, analysis, inference questions and those which are related to speed reading and recognition (Nuttall, 1996 & Alderson, 1990b).

Research examining categories of reading questions and textbooks frequently uses terms like referential-level questions and inferential-level questions to distinguish between information that is in the text and information that is not. Regardless of what term is given to different levels of questions, it is clear that some questions require more thinking and text comprehension than others.

2.15.1. Syntactic Questions

Four major syntactic categories—statements, questions, commands, and exclamations—are sufficient to describe simple sentences. These are commonly
referred to as declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. Interrogative sentences, or questions, can further be divided into two subcategories—Yes-No questions and Wh-questions—depending on the type of answer they would be expected to receive (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973). Although some linguists maintain that these two subcategories are sufficient to classify all questions, others subdivide the list to include a number of minor question types. Following is a simple taxonomy of question types arranged according to syntactic form.

2.15.1.1. Major Categories

1. Yes-no questions. These polar interrogatives begin with a verb (be, have, or do) or a modal verb followed by the subject. Are we meeting after class?

2. Wh-questions. These generally begin with an interrogative word (who, what, when, where, why, how). They are commonly known as information questions because they ask the responder to provide particulars.

   Who (whom, whose), where, when, and which are classified as Wh-questions. When is the meeting?

   What, why, and how are classified as broad Wh-questions they allow a wider range of responses. What is the meeting about?

2.15.1.2. Minor Categories

1. Alternative or disjunctive questions. These can take either the verb-subject form or the Wh-form. Disjunctive questions offer a choice of answer. Do you want to meet before class or after?

2. Tag questions. When a particle is added to the end of a declarative sentence, the entire statement becomes a question. This type of question generally seeks confirmation. We’re meeting after class, right?

3. Declarative or indirect questions. These are questions that appear on the surface to be statements, but the underlying form is that of a question. Assume we’re meeting after class is interpreted as are we meeting after class?
4. **Echoic questions.** These consist of a repetition of a portion of a preceding utterance and usually are a request for clarification. (a) We’re meeting after class; (b) After class?

2.15.1.3 A Cognitive Approach to Classification

Aschner, Gallagher, Perry, and Afsar (1961) identified the following five categories of thought processes (examples are from the course transcripts).

1. **Routine (R) questions.** These refer to procedural matters, structure of class discussion, and approval or disapproval of ideas. Are there any questions?

2. **Cognitive-Memory (C-M) questions.** These require the use of recall or recognition in order to reproduce facts and other items of remembered content. What are the five steps in Knowles’ self-directed learning model?

3. **Convergent Thinking (CT) questions.** The tightly structured framework of these questions requires the analysis or integration of given or remembered data, leading to one expected result. Based on this model, what are the goals of education?

4. **Divergent Thinking (DT) questions.** These questions permit an independent generation of ideas, directions, or perspectives in a data-poor situation. Why is learning necessary?

5. **Evaluative Thinking (ET) questions.** These questions are concerned with values rather than facts and convey a judgmental quality. Is this approach worth the effort?

2.15.2. A Pedagogical Approach to Classification

Unlike linguists, educators use a wide variety of terms to describe and categorize questions. Morgan (1991) selected 50 terms, 3 major categories, and 16 subcategories that have been used to describe questions used in the classroom. Hunkins (1995) identified an equally broad range of terminology as well as 8 classification systems. The following taxonomy of question types contains the
terminology pertaining to the current study.

1. **Educative questions.** The most basic distinction is the one between everyday questions and educative questions (Dillon, 1982; Hunkins, 1995; Morgan, 1991). Everyday questions arise spontaneously from the conversational circumstances. Educative, or productive, questions encourage students to view situations from alternative perspectives, to think, and to learn.

2. **Epistemic questions.** These are either display questions or referential questions. Display questions are those where the teacher already knows the answers. Referential questions are those to which the answer is unknown. In general conversation, most questions are of the referential variety (Weber, 1993). This contrasts with classroom interaction where display questions are common (Gaies, 1983). In the classroom, most student-initiated questions are referential, although instructors frequently respond by asking a display question (Markee, 1995).

3. **Transpersonal questions.** These “ask students to reflect on their inner life and also on the infinite, the big picture. Who they are and how they feel about themselves and their world” (Hunkins, 1995, p. 108).

4. **Initiating questions.** These questions are used to introduce a new discussion topic.

5. **Probing questions.** Probing questions can be used to remove ambiguity, to request elaboration, or to broaden participation.

2.16. **DIFFERENT CLASSIFICATION OF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Due to the importance of reading in English in today’s world, effective questioning will ensure effective learning. In this regard, different scholars define reading comprehension differently.

Prior to the development of probing and higher order questioning techniques comes the skill of asking questions. Too often beginning teachers lecture and tell
students rather than asking questions which can elicit the answers from the students themselves. Having achieved this goal, the emphasis can be placed on higher order questioning probing techniques.

Higher order questions are defined as questions which cannot be answered from memory or simple sensory description. They call for finding a rule or principles rather than defining one. The critical requirements for a “good “classroom question is that it prompts students to use ideas rather than just remember them (effective use of questions, 2002). Although some teachers intuitively ask questions of higher quality, far too many over-emphasize those that require only the simplest cognitive activity on the part of students.

While, probing requires that teachers ask questions that require pupils to go beyond superficial “first-answer” questions (Effective use of questions, 2002). This can be done in five ways: 1) asking pupils for more information and meaning; 2) requiring the pupils to rationally justify his/her response; 3) refocusing the pupil’s or class’s attention on a related issue; 4) promoting the pupil or giving pupil hints; and 5) bringing other students into the discussion by getting them to respond to the first student’s answer.

2.16.1. Questions by reference to form

Widdowson (1978) identifies four types of questions with reference to form such as (a) WH Questions, (b) polar (Yes/No) questions, (c) truth assessment, and (d) multiple choice questions. The first two types of questions have interrogated forms where as cases “C” and “D” do not have such an appearance. According to the author, there is a similarity between the first two categories because in both the reader is required to give a response. In the next two cases what the reader does is to assess the truth of the statement against what he understands from the text. Widdowson (1978, P. 98) advocates the use of types “C” and “D” by saying “I have been arguing that exercises for developing the reading ability should direct the learner to what goes on in his mind, to his mental behavior and not require him to provide anything like natural over response.”
As Widdowson (1978, p. 98) implies, types, “C” and “D” represent the formulation of propositions in the mind rather than the actual utterances. Been (1975) believes that Yes / No questions and MC questions can be oriented towards higher order cognitive activities.

Types “C” and “D” are not without problems, however. In type “C” one should recognize the truth of the statement. The reader may answer the questions by chance. In type “D”, if the distracters are to reflect genuine possibilities of misunderstanding, then the difference between them may be slight. The reader needs a high comprehension skill to discriminate between choices. But this discrimination does not prove the understanding of the passage.

2.16.2. Questions by reference to Function

In addition to the various forms that reading questions might have, questions can be classified due to their function. Function refers to the kind of understanding of the passage that the questions aim to elicit.

Closed

Have a short, fixed answer, for example “what day is today?” (Brown, 1994a).

Open

Typically require a longer, less limited response, for example “What did you do yesterday?” (Bloom, 1956; Bloom, Englehart, , Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

Display

Those questions which the questioner already knows the answer and is merely testing the respondent’s knowledge or understanding (Brown, 1994).

Referential

Those to which the questioner does not know the answer and is genuinely seeking information (Long & Sato, 1983).
Procedural

Relate to classroom, lesson and student control processes such as “who is absent today”? (Richards and Lockhart, 1994)

Convergent

Often have short answers which “encourage similar student responses” and require low level thought processing for example “Can you ski?” “Yes, I can”, “No, I can’t” (Aschner, Gallagher, Perry, & Afsar, 1961).

Divergent

Necessitate more wide-ranging, longer responses with higher level thought processing for example “Why is the Beatles’ music so popular in Japan?” (Aschner, Gallagher, Perry, & Afsar, 1961)

Rhetorical

Those which the questioner answers him/herself response (Champeau, Marchi & Coyle, 1997).

Interaction

Comprehension checks: “Elicits assurance from the listener that a message has been received correctly” (Champeau, Marchi & Coyle, 1997).

Instructional

Any question presented in the classroom. Presupposes that the question is intended to solicit learner production (Van Lier, 1988)

Conversational

Any questions asked out of the classroom (Long & Sato, 1983).
2.17. READING COMPREHENSION

Chastain (1988: 216) defined reading as a process involving the activation of relevant knowledge and related language skills to accomplish an exchange of information from one person to another. Reading is a receptive skill in that the reader is receiving a message from a writer. Reading is a complementary skill for language learning. Second language learners need to learn to read for communication and to read greater quantities of authentic materials. Nuttall (1961-7) defined reading as a transfer of meaning from mind to mind; the transfer of message from writer to reader. That reading is not a passive, but rather an active, and in fact an interactive, process has been recognized for some time in native language reading but it is only recently that second/foreign language reading has been viewed as an active rather than a passive process ((Dorn & Soffos, 2005).

“Early working second language reading assumed a rather passive, bottom-up, view of second language reading. It was viewed primarily as a decoding process of reconstructing the author’s intended meaning via recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up a meaning for a text from the smallest textual units at the bottom (letters and words) to larger units at the top (phrases, clauses, links). Problems of SL reading and reading comprehension were viewed as being essentially decoding problems, deriving meaning from print (AbiSamra, 2001).”

Finocchiaro and Bonomo (1973: 119-121) defined reading as a language related process. Students should be helped to respond the visual symbols which represent the same auditory signals to which they had responded previously.

2.17.1 Reading Purposes

Rivers and Temperly (1978) cited in Nunan (1999: 251) suggested seven main purposes for reading:

1. To obtain information about some topic.

2. To obtain instructions about doing some task.
3. To act in a play, play a game, do a puzzle.

4. To keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letters.

5. To know when or where something will happen or what is available.

6. To know what is happening or has happened.

7. For enjoyment or excitement.

2.17.2. Reading Skills

Urquhart & Weir (1998: 88, 90) described reading skill roughly as a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written texts. Thus unlike comprehension, which can be viewed as the product of reading a particular text, skills are seen as part of the generalized reading process.

Brown (2001) divided reading into fourteen microskills:

1. Discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.

2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.

3. Process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.

4. Recognize core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.

5. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.

6. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

7. Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.
8. Recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation.

9. Recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose.

10. Infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.

11. Infer links and connections between events, ideas, etc., deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main ideas, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.

12. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.

13. Detect culturally specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata.

14. Develop and use a battery of reading strategies such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts. (Brown, 2001, p. 307)

Davis cited in Alderson (2000) defined eight skills, as follows:

1. Recalling word meanings

2. Drawing inferences about the meaning of a word in context.

3. Finding answers to questions answered explicitly or in paraphrase

4. Weaving together ideas in the content.

5. Drawing inferences from the content.

6. Recognizing a writer’s purpose, attitude, tone and mood.

7. Identifying a writer’s technique.
8. Following the structure a passage. (Alderson, 2000, pp.9-10)"

Munby in Alderson (2000: 10-11) distinguished the following reading microskills:

- "Recognizing the script of a language
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding explicitly stated information.
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning
- Understanding the communicative value of sentences
- Understanding relations within the sentence.
- Understanding relations between parts of text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Understanding cohesion between parts of a text though grammatical cohesion devices.
- Interpreting text by going outside it.
- Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- Identifying the main point or important information in discourse.
- Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.
- Extracting salient details to summarize (the text, an idea)
- Extracting relevant points from a text selectively.
- Using basic reference skills.
- Skimming
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display. (Alderson, 2000, pp.10-11)”

Grabe (1991) cited in Alderson (2000: 13) proposed the following six component elements in the fluent reading process:

- “Automatic recognition skills
- Vocabulary and structural knowledge
- Formal discourse structure knowledge
- Content/world background knowledge
- Synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies
- Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring. (Alderson, 2000, p.13)”

Brown (2004: 187-188) distinguished seven microskills for reading comprehension:

1. Discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.
3. Process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
4. Recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.
5. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
6. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

7. Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

Brown (2004: 188) defined seven macroskills too:

1. Recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation.

2. Recognize the communicative functions of written text, according to form and purpose.

3. Infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.

4. From described events, ideas, etc., infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.

5. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.

6. Detect culturally specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata.

7. Develop and use a battery of reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts.

2.17.3. Reading Strategies

Brown (2001) stated some strategies for reading comprehension:

1. Identify the purpose in reading.

2. Use grapheme rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding (especially for beginning level learners).
3. Use efficient reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension

4. Skim the text for main ideas.

5. Scan the text for specific information.

6. Use semantic mapping or clustering.

7. Guess when you aren’t certain.

8. Analyze vocabulary.


Urquhart & Weir (1998: 94) categorized reading skills as follows:

- **Word related**: Use of context to define a word, synonym substitution, stated failure to understand a word.

- **Clause related**: Re-reading, inferences, addition of information, personal identification, hypothesis, stated failure to understand a clause.

- **Story related**: Use of information in story to solve a problem.

Urquhart & Weir (1998: 95) categorized strategies as follows:

- **Technical aid**: Skimming, scanning, and skipping.

- **Coherence detecting**: Identification of macro-frame, use of content schemata, identification of key information in text, etc.

- **Clarification and simplification monitoring**: Syntactic simplification; using synonyms, circumlocutions, etc. Change of planning, mistake correction, and ongoing self-evaluation, controlled skipping, repeated reading.
Brown (2004: 188-189) identified some strategies for reading comprehension:

1. Identify your purpose in reading a text.
2. Apply spelling rules and conventions for bottom-up decoding.
3. Use lexical analysis, prefixes, roots, suffixes, etc, to determine meaning.
4. Guess at meaning (of words, idioms, etc.) when you aren’t certain.
5. Skim the text for the gist and for main ideas.
6. Scan the text for specific information (names, dates, keywords).
7. Use silent reading techniques for rapid processing.
8. Use marginal notes, outlines, charts, semantic maps for understanding and retaining information.
9. Distinguish between literal and implied meaning.
10. Capitalize on discourse markers to process relationships.

2.17.4. Reading Processes

According to Goodman in (AbiSamra 2001), readers employ 5 processes in reading:

1. Recognition-initiation
2. Prediction
3. Confirmation
4. Correction
5. Termination
2.18. TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION:

According to Nuttall (1996), there are three factors involving in teaching or testing reading comprehension: readers, texts and the interaction between readers and texts. A prerequisite for satisfactory communication is that writer and reader should share the same point of view in the text. The background knowledge of the reader and the style of the writer are crucial in comprehending a text (Grabe, 2002). Sometimes the difficulty lies in the language of the text, i.e., vocabulary and syntax, sometimes in the topic of the text.

Therefore, in order to have an effective teaching program in general and for reading comprehension in particular, the followings are very important. The first one is the active involvement of the reader. According to Nuttall (1996), active involvement of the readers is the result of readers’ recognition of the problems. The readers first should realize the purpose of the reading, and engage in doing the reading tasks. This would be possible if we design task-based activities in our program of teaching.

Hawkins (1991) mentioned that there are three factors involving in teaching a lesson effectively: the teachers, the students, and the materials to be used in the classroom. Regarding the latter, he believes that teaching materials should be written purposeful and based on the specific criteria.

Nuttall (1996) mentioned that the purpose of reading program is to enable students to enjoy reading in the foreign language and to read the text independently and effectively. She mentioned that there is a level above the students’ level, which they can reach not by themselves but with teachers’ assistance. This level is called “next step” level.

Of course, learning doesn’t happen in vacuum. Learning is a co-operative effort. The teacher should program the class in the way the students interact with each other. (Nuttall, 1996) This could be achieved through jigsaw reading activities. By jigsaw reading activity, we mean group work activities and in this case group-work reading activities.
Text talk is another method which can be utilized in teaching reading comprehension (Nuttall, 1996). By text talk teaching method we mean to interrogate text. That is the readers should continually stop and ask themselves questions about the different theme of the text. For example, what the writer mean by saying that.

Duke and Pearson (1991) also devised another technique for teaching reading comprehension. In this technique, which is called visual presentation of text, the format of the text to be studied is very important. When it comes to comprehension, it might be paraphrased using the visual displays.

Systematic attention to the underlying organization of the texts is one of the techniques mostly used in approaching reading comprehension (Nuttall, 1996; Duke and Pearson, 1991). In this way, the readers not only will be familiar with the interrelationships of the ideas in the texts, but also can visualize the details as much as possible. (Duke, and Pearson, 1991:7)

We can make teaching more purposeful and vivid even in the difficult circumstances. If we teach reading for real life purpose, we can give the students a better understanding of the text. California Department of Education (1996) sees the achievement of such objective in using the reading task. It is mentioned, “a balanced and comprehensive approach to reading must have the reading task force” (p. 9). Tasked based program includes a balance, an organized, and explicit program aiming at the teaching word recognition part which itself includes: phonemic awareness, letter names and shapes, also at having an ongoing diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment process, and a powerful program which enhance individual tutoring for poor readers.

Phonemic awareness means that the understanding the spoken words and syllables is the result of understanding the sequence of elementary speech sounds and without phonemic awareness, spelling of words would be learned in a rote way. In adults, phonemic awareness is naturally reinforced.
Letter names and shapes of the letters in English should be worked on explicitly because they are very similar to one another. For doing so, there is a technique to teach reading comprehension which is called phonics.

Phonics is an organized program where letter-sound correspondences for letters and letters clusters are directly taught, blended, and practiced in words. After children have demonstrated initial levels of phonemic awareness, both phonemic awareness and phonics can be taught simultaneously. The procedure of teaching reading through phonics method starts with the introduction the whole word in correspondence with its pronunciation. The teacher reads the word and the students will acquire the visual shape of that word accompany with its pronunciation (Douglas, 2000). According to Celce-Murcia (1991), a phonics approach teaches the learners to sound out the words. In this approach, emphasis is on the letter to sound correspondence.

A new version of phonics approach has been referred to in Douglas (2000) as modern phonics approach. In this approach, pictograms alphabet- shaped pictures are used. The lesson starts with the teachers’ guidance using ABC pictures, flash cards, cassette and photocopied worksheets as well as puzzles and books. (p.2)

According to Hawkins (1991), reading materials should be graded according to the levels of readers. He identifies three approaches to teaching reading as basal approach, language experience readers, and literature based approach.

Basal readers are those who are limited in their language proficiency. The second approach is language experience approach whose emphasis is on vocabulary acquisition. In fact reading is an instrument by which the students can enhance their vocabulary. Duck and Pearson (2001) believe that acquiring vocabulary thorough reading is “personally meaningful and immediately useful”. The third approach is literature based approach in which reading materials are chosen form literary books. These include picture book, folk tales, fables, myths, epics, modern fantasy, poetry, modern fiction, historical fiction, and biography. There is also another approach which is called skill based approach.
Goodman in 1967 also proposed an approach, whole language approach, in which students focus on the whole words, sentences, or paragraphs in order to derive meaning.

‘Learner training’ (Paran, 1996) is another technique for teaching reading comprehension. The students should be equipped to make a conscious attempt on their part to find out what helps them to read and understand better. To Nuttall (1996) and Norma Decker (1993) conscious development of reading ability is important because the students are to equip for the future time. So the students should read a lot and has a lot of practice in using the skills with varied materials. (Nuttall, 1996)

SAIL or the students achieving independent learning program also teaches a package of comprehension strategies. Strategies emphasized in SAIL include prediction, visualizing, questioning, clarifying, making association, and summarizing. (Duke and Pearson, 1991)

Prediction is an important way of improving reading comprehension (Duke and Pearson, 1991). It is an effective individual comprehension strategy. It activates the background knowledge, previewing, and over viewing.

By questioning, the students would explore the meaning. Some of the initial questions may result in scanning or skimming activities (Nuttall, 1996). Another technique for asking questions responses is AQRs (Duke and Pearson, 1991). In this technique, the students involve in differencing the types of questions they could ask about the text.

2.18.1. Using SSR technique

Silent sustained reading, SSR, is another technique in which students didn’t feel they are being taught (Henninger, 2000)

2.18.2. Extensive reading vs. intensive reading program

Intensive reading involves approaching the text under guidance of a teacher or a task which forced the student to focus on the text. The important point is how the
meaning is produced. In extensive reading, however, we can in fact understand a text adequately without grasping its every point. (Nuttall, 1996; Hill and Lewis, 1990) distinguished intensive reading from extensive reading. They said that in extensive reading a general understanding of the text is enough while in intensive reading students should pay attention to more details. Accordingly, extensive reading gives students confidence.

2.18.3. Speed and Reading Comprehension

Reading is not only a mental but also a physical activity. It involves both vision and the movement of eyes. The relationship between reading speed and comprehension is complex, but creating a closed linked. Nuttall (1996) mentioned that a slow reader is likely to read with poor understanding. There are some approaches for improving reading speed such as using a card guide, project text, and CALL. Readers can use a cardboard mask, which they can move down the pages. This focuses the eyes on the line immediately.

OHP, or project texts are slides and particularly overhead project transparencies. They hold readers’ attention and improve concentration. The major advantage of such a way of teaching is that the teachers have a complete control over the students and can expose questions before and during or after reading of the text.

CALL is an abbreviation for computer language learning program, which is proposed by Jones and Fortes cue (1987, cited in Nuttall, 1996). In a speed reading program, students should keep a record of their progress, especially if the teacher set up a regular program of speed training. The students should be urged to beat their own records, not compete with one another.

2.18.4. Reciprocal Teaching:

Reciprocal teaching involves a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students. In reciprocal teaching, as mentioned by Duke and Pearson (1991), four comprehension strategies are used in order to fulfill this task of transferring the responsibilities: predicting, questioning, seeking clarification, and summarizing (p.12).
2.18.5. SQ3R Techniques:

SQ3R, which stands for five strategies of survey, question, read, recite, and review, are the most advises strategies of reading comprehension in literature. (Nuttall, 1996)

By survey we mean that the students should skim the text to make sure it is relevant and also to get the gist of the text. Then the students should pause to ask themselves some questions on the different parts of the text. After that, they may start reading carefully looking for the answers to those questions they have already made. The next step is recite in which they speak very slowly to themselves to answer their question and to fix their mind. The last step is review in which they think about what they learnt and try to organize the information in their minds.

2.18.6. Exploitability Techniques:

In this technique, the teachers would train their students to exploit the text through the same procedure mentioned above. It is facilitation for learning to improve one's competence (Nuttal, 1996).

2.18.7. Summarization:

Summarizing is another technique to improve reading ability. (Nuttall, 1996; and Duke and Pearson, 1991) there are at least tow major approaches to teaching summarization: rule-governed approach and teaching modeling. In rule-governed approach, the students are taught to follow a set of step-by step procedures to develop summaries. Thorough teaching modeling, group and individual practice, students learn to apply these rules to create brief summaries of the text. (Duke and Pearson, 1991)

2.18.8. Teaching critical reading through literature:

As cited in Norma Decker (1993), Tierney and Pearson (1983) posit that readers use his background knowledge to compose a text. The professional literature
support critical thinking in the classroom and encourages teachers in this aspect (Norma Decker, 1993).

2.18.8.1. Problem Solving and Learning to Reason Through Reading:

These two techniques for developing critical reading skills are important. Decker, (1993) describes an instructional model for problem solving, which promotes analysis, antithesis, and evaluation of ideas. She states that, “when we ask students to analyze, we expect them to clarify information by examining the component part. Syntheses involve combining of relevant parts into a coherent whole, and evaluation includes considering standards and then judging against them to verify the reasonable ideas” (p. 2).

2.18.8.2. Role Play in Reading Comprehension

Role-play (Nuttall, 1996) can be used over a wider range of genres. It is particularly appropriate when the teacher wants to focus on points of view rather than character in narratives.

2.18.8.3. Debate and Discussion

One way to approach reading in the classroom is to make students put forwards their own opinion. The difference between role-play and discussion is that in role play the students have to represent the view which they may not share but in discussion it is not so.

2.18.9. Computer

Among different techniques, the most recent one is using computer as an instrument for teaching reading comprehension (Heal, 1998).

2.18.10. Task Transformation Techniques:

Through task transformation, we can overcome the perils of L2 insufficient comprehension. Thus when comprehension fails during information search, the
students would try to transform the task completely or relatively into another technique (Irwin, 1986).

2.18.11. Clozer Procedure, as a Teaching Device

In cloze, the options are normally supplied by the students themselves in deciding what words would best fit each group. Also, cloze text can be used as a device to teach summary. (Nuttall, 1996)

2.18.12. Vocabulary Development

Reading comprehension and vocabulary learning or acquisition has a one to one relationship. Students' reading ability can be clearly estimated by measures of their vocabulary. Hill and Lewis (1990) mention that the productivity of the students' higher order comprehension process is limited by their vocabulary and reading fluency in two ways. First it influences the higher order processing, which is necessarily thought- intensive. Second, it effects the perception of the data from the text (Hill, 1994).

2.18.13. Different Approaches to Teaching Reading

A- The Top Down (Concept-Driven) Approach: The "top down" approach emphasizes readers bringing meaning to text based on their experiential background and interpreting text based on their prior knowledge (whole language).

B- The Bottom Up (Serial) Approach: The "bottom up" approach stipulates that the meaning of any text must be "decoded" by the reader and that students are "reading" when they can "sound out" words on a page. It emphasizes the ability to de-code or put into sound what is seen in a text. It ignores helping emerging readers to recognize what they, as readers, bring to the information on the page. This model starts with the printed stimuli and works its way up to the higher level stages. The sequence of processing proceeds from the incoming data to higher level encodings.
C- The Interactive Approach: For those reading theorists who recognized the importance of both the text and the reader in the reading process, an amalgamation of the two emerged the interactive approach. Reading here is the process of combining textual information with the information the reader brings to a text. The interactive model stresses both what is on the written page and what a reader brings to it using both top-down and bottom-up skills. It views reading as the interaction between reader and text. The over reliance on either mode of processing to the neglect of the other mode has been found to cause reading difficulties for SL learners. The interactive models of reading assume that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text. In this model, good readers are both good decoders and good interpreters of text, their decoding skills becoming more automatic but no less important as their reading skill develops (AbiSamra 2001).

Duzer (1999) described reading Approaches as follows:

Most of what is known about reading comes from first language reading research. English as a second language (ESL) teachers need to consider how this research may or may not apply to reading in a second language. The following is a discussion of the approaches behind reading instruction. The predominant approach to reading in the 1950s and 1960s was "bottom up," based on the phoneme or smallest meaningful unit of sound. Readers derive meaning in a linear manner, first decoding letters, then words, phrases, and sentences to make sense of print. Rapid word recognition is important to this approach, which emphasizes sight reading of words in isolation. When word recognition becomes automatic, the reader is not conscious of the process. Recent research has again focused attention on the role that this decontextualized component of reading ability plays in the reading process.

Psycholinguistic: Through the late 1960s and 1970s, the psycholinguistic or "top down" approach to reading, where meaning takes precedence over structure, became dominant. Although readers make use of sound-letter correspondence and
syntactic knowledge, they draw on their experiential background knowledge (schema) to predict the meaning of the text and then read to confirm or correct their predictions.

**Interactive:** Approaches that draw on schema theory are also referred to as interactive approaches. The reader and text interact as the reader uses prior background knowledge and knowledge from the text to derive meaning. How this happens is still being explored by second language reading researchers.

Other reading approaches are also considered interactive. These approaches, often the subject of first language research, view the reading process as the interaction of both bottom up and top down skills. They focus on how the various aspects of reading (e.g., word recognition, eye movement, and background knowledge) contribute to the reading process.

**Critical Literacy:** In the 1980s and 1990s, psycholinguistic views of reading have been questioned by a social theorist perspective that regards reading as both a social and psychological activity. Critical theorists view reading as a social process that takes into account the relationship and interaction between author and reader. Meaning flows from an understanding of the cultural, social, and political contexts in which the reading takes place (Duzer, 1999: 1).

### 2.19. TESTING

“Testing is defined as the use of tests or the study of the theory and practice of their use, development, evaluation, etc. Testing has traditionally provided a measure of growth or achievement by which the success of students’ learning has been evaluated. Additionally, testing provides significant information about student morale and anxiety levels, an opportunity for a special kind of intensive study referred to as reviewing for a test and diagnostic tips that come to the teacher as feedback (Mousavi, 1999: 404).”

Brown (2001: 384-385) maintained that test is a method of measuring a person’s ability. A test is at first a method. It is a set of techniques and procedures that requires performance or activity on the part of the test taker. Next a test has a purpose
of measuring. Some tests are broad and inexact but others are quantified in mathematically precise terms. That is the difference between formal and informal assessment. Also being measured is the person’s ability or competence. A test samples performance but infers certain competence. Finally a test measures a given domain. In the case of proficiency test e.g. it involves only a sampling of skills.

Bachman (1990: 54-55) asserted that the single most important consideration in both development of the language tests, and the interpretation of the results is the purpose or the purposes the particular tests are going to serve. The major purposes of language tests are first as source of information for making decisions within educational programs and the second is as indicators of abilities and attributes that are of interest in research in language, language acquisition, and language teaching.

Farhady, Jafarpur, & Birjandi (2001) mentioned that testing is an important part of every language teaching and learning experience. Well-prepared tests can help learners in two ways: first encourage and motivate learners in learning the subject matter. As a matter of fact good instruction can not do much if it is not accompanied with appropriate evaluation. Appropriate evaluation gives the students a sense of achievement and decreases their dissatisfaction, frustration, and complaints about the educational program. Second testing can help learners prepare themselves and learn the materials. Repeated preparation helps them to master the subject. They can benefit from the test results and discuss over the results.

2.19.1. History of Language Testing

Weir (1990: 2-21) divided language testing into three different approaches:

1. The Psychometric- Structuralist Era

The advantages of testing discrete linguistic points are that they yield data which are easily quantifiable, as well as allowing a wide coverage of items. Tests which focus on discrete linguistic items are efficient and have the usual reliability of marking associated with objectively scored tests, but both discrete point approach and
the various formats employed in it suffer from the defects of the construct they seek to measure.

2. The psycholinguistic-Sociolinguistic Era

From psycholinguistic point of view, language is something more than a taxonomic structure and more like a dynamic, creative, functional system. It is recognized that language is full of redundancy and it is difficult to say that any unit of language is indispensable for communication. Sociolinguistic contribution focuses on the concept of communicative competence with regard to Chomsky’s notion of communicative competence to cover not only knowledge of rules for forming grammatical sentences but also rules for using those sentences in appropriate situations.

3. The Communicative Paradigm

The validity of tests which claim to be communicative is a function of the degree of understanding of communication and communicative ability on the part of the test constructor.

Only a few current theories of language use seem amenable to the demands of language testing. So it is essential to be precise about the skills and performance conditions for any tests which claim to assess communicative language ability. Test constructors must identify important components of language use in particular context.

Farhady et al. (2001) divided language testing into three stages:

Traditional Tests

These tests are related to the grammar-translation method in language teaching. Teachers with no training in teaching and testing would emphasize on language as well as using the language. Students had to memorize language rules and word lists. After this stage language testing entered a more scientific stage that was due to impacts of structural linguistics and behavioristic psychology. Thus objective
tests were devised to measure different elements of language. Another reason for the
development of the objective tests is the unreliability of the subjective tests. Multiple-choice
items are the most popular types of objective tests. Multiple-choice items have
their own problems; they provide testees with no more than the item context. Testees
do not have any information about the speaker and the situation then choosing the
correct response is really difficult. After this stage testing many tests moved toward
global testing i.e. cloze and dictation.

Testing Communication

In this stage language teaching is becoming increasingly concerned with
communication, so traditional tests failed to act appropriately regarding the teaching
goals. Many procedures were changed in order to assess students’ ability
communicatively. Every part of language is assessed in a communicative situation
related to certain language function.

McNamara (2000: 13-22) mentioned nearly the same divisions:

Discrete Point Tests

They were influenced by structuralist linguistics and saw language as
consisting of mastery of the features of the language system. Testing focused on the
grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. There was a tendency to atomize and
decontextualize the knowledge to be tested, and to test aspects of knowledge in
isolation.

Integrative and Pragmatic Tests

The demand for language tests which involved and integrated performance on
the part of the language user increased as the number of students wishing to study at
the universities in Britain and the US increased. It led to the development of the tests
which integrated knowledge of irrelevant systematic features of language
(pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) with an understanding of the context. As a
result a distinction was drawn between discrete point tests and integrative tests such
as speaking in oral interviews, the composing of whole written texts, and tests involving comprehension of extended discourse (both spoken and written).

McNamara (2000) and said that language use was seen as involving two factors (1) the on-line processing of language in real time (2) a “pragmatic mapping” component, that is, the way formal knowledge of the systematic features of language was drawn on for the expression and understanding of meaning in context. A test of language had to involve both of these features. He proposed the Unitary Competence Hypothesis, that is, the performance on a whole range of tests (Pragmatic Tests) depended on the same underlying capacity in the learner.

**Communicative Language Tests**

Hymec’s theory of communicative competence greatly influenced language teaching and testing. Communicative language tests came to have two features (Hymes, 1971):.

1. They were performance tests, they required the learner to be assessed in an extended act of communication, either receptive or productive or both.

2. They paid attention to the social roles that learners might assume in the real world.

**Impact of the Theory of Communicative Competence on Teaching and Testing**

According to McNamara (2000), a new theory of language began to exert a significant influence on language teaching and language testing from the early 1970s onwards. This new theory was Dell Hymes’ theory of communicative competence, which “greatly expanded the scope of what was covered by an understanding of language and the ability to use language in context, particularly in terms of the social demands of performance” (Hymes, 1972: p.1 6). The theory of communicative competence initiated a profound shift from a psychological perspective on language which views language as an internal phenomenon, to a sociological perspective which focuses on the external and social function of language.
Hymes (1972) takes Chomsky’s dichotomy between ‘competence’ and ‘performance’ (Chomsky, 1965) as the point of departure for his argument that Chomsky’s grammatical competence is not a sufficient basis for a total view of communication. Before Hymes (1971), linguistic theory was dominated by Chomsky’s dichotomy between competence and performance. Chomsky (1965) used the word ‘competence’ to refer to the underlying competence of “an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community” (p. 3).

This underlying competence refers to the knowledge of the language system which includes rules of morphology and rules of how linguistic elements can be combined to generate well-formed sentences. Performance, on the other hand, refers to the actual use of language (production and comprehension) in real time. Real time production comprehension is constrained by a number of factors such as “memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic)” (p. 3). Therefore, according to Chomsky (1965) performance cannot reflect the underlying competence which his theory of grammar attempted to account for.

The linguistic community accepted Chomsky’s dichotomy but some linguists such as Hymes (1972) thought that the notions of ‘competence’ and ‘performance’ as described by Chomsky were somehow limited. In Hymes’ opinion, Chomsky’s linguistic theory makes linguists see performance as “an imperfect manifestation of an underlying system” (1972, p. 272) and its main objective is to reconstruct the grammatical structure of a language through its use in performance. Research in the areas of language learning and acquisition has reinforced this dichotomy between knowledge about language rules and forms and knowledge that enables a person to interact communicatively in a given speech community.

These developments in linguistic theory manifested themselves in the field of second language teaching with a radical change of the methodological models. The introduction of the concept of communicative competence in linguistic theory set the basis for the new communicative approach to second language teaching, which advocated a radical change when compared with Audiolingualism. Valle sums up the
differences between the two models thus, the differences between the two models can be summarized in the following shifts in focus: from to meaning; from word and sentence-level context to discourse-level context; from accuracy to fluency; from rote structure drills to meaningful, real* language use; from made-for-classroom materials to authentic materials; and from discrete point tests to integrative tests of communicative competence. (p.8)

The most comprehensive attempt to elaborate a theoretical framework for the communicative approach came from Canale and Swain (1980). In their paper, Canale and Swain examine “currently accepted principles” of communicative approaches to second language learning, which leads them in turn to develop “a somewhat modified set of principles which is consistent with a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the consideration of communicative competence” (p.1). This led to the emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT) which marks the beginning of a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the 20 century, one whose ramifications continue to be felt today. According to Richards and Rodgers, communicative language teaching refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures. Richards and Rodgers (p. 172) provide the following outline of these principles,

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

2.19.2. Kinds of Tests

Farhady, Jafarpur., & Birjandi (2001: 17-27) divided language tests based on their function:
Prognostic tests are used to predict the future course of action about the examinees, (selection, placement, and aptitude tests). The purpose of selection tests is to provide information based on which the test taker’s acceptance or non-acceptance into a program can be determined. Placement tests are used to determine the most suitable channel of education for test takers. Aptitude tests are used to predict test takers, success in achieving certain objectives in the future.

Evaluation of attainment tests deal with the extent to which test takers have learned the materials they have been taught (Achievement, proficiency, and knowledge tests). Achievement tests are designed to measure the degree of students’ learning from a particular set of instructional materials. Proficiency tests focus on measuring the overall language ability of the learners. Knowledge tests are used in situations where the medium of instruction is a language other than the learners’ mother tongue. In these cases, second language is used as the language of the tests to measure the test takers’ knowledge in areas other than the language itself.

Brown (1996: 1-8) divided language tests based on the decision purposes:

1. Norm-referenced tests are designed to measure global language abilities. Each student’s score on such a test is interpreted relative to the scores of all other students who took the test. Such comparisons are usually done with reference to the concept of the normal distribution. Proficiency tests and placement tests are in this category.

2. Criterion-referenced tests are usually produced to measure well-defined and fairly specific objectives. Often these objectives are specific to a particular course, program, school district, or state. The interpretation of scores on a criterion-referenced test is considered absolute in the sense that each student’s score is meaningful without reference to the other students’ scores. In other words, a student’s score on a particular objective indicates the
percent of the knowledge or skill in that objective that the student has learned. Achievement tests and diagnostic tests are in this category.

Bachman (1990: 58-67) had nearly the same divisions based on the decisions about the students:

Selection or entrance test is to decide whether a student enters a program or not. If the purpose of the test is to determine whether or not students are ready for instruction, it may be referred to as a readiness test.

Placement test is used to group students homogeneously according to the factors such as language ability, language aptitude, language use needs, and professional or academic specialization.

Information from language tests (diagnostic tests) can be used for diagnosing students’ areas of strength and weakness in order to determine appropriate types and levels of teaching and learning activities.

Formative evaluation is used for providing continuous feedback to both the teacher and the learner for making decisions regarding appropriate modifications in the instructional procedures and learning activities.

Tests, which are based on the content of the course, are referred to as achievement or attainment tests. Tests that are used to determine whether or not students have mastered the course content are called mastery tests.

One decision about individual students that is seldom based solely on qualitative information is the summative evaluation of student progress, typically in the form of grades or marks, at the end of an instructional course. In most cases grades are assigned on the basis of performance on tests in addition to classroom performance.

2.20. ASSESSMENT

Lambert & Lines (2000) defined language assessment as a fact of life for teachers, part of what teachers do; it is an organic part of teaching and learning; and using assessment evidence is part of the planning process.
“Performance assessments require learners to use prior knowledge and recent learning to accomplish tasks that demonstrate what they know and can do. There is a direct link between instruction and assessment. A variety of performance assessments provide a more complete picture of a learner’s abilities than can be gathered from performance on a pencil-and-paper standardized test.

For adult ESL/ESL, ‘performance assessment reflects current thought about second language acquisition: Learners acquire language as they use it in social interactions to accomplish purposeful tasks (e.g., finding information or applying for a job). The performance may be assessed simply by documenting the successful completion of the task or by the use of rubrics designed to assess various dimensions of carrying out the task (e.g., rating oral presentation skills on a scale of 1-5). Both instructors and learners can be involved in the development of evaluation guidelines and in the evaluation procedure itself (Bachman, & Palmer, 1996).

Although performance assessments provide valuable information to learners, instructors, and other program staff, their use for accountability purposes is currently limited. These types of assessment are time consuming to administer and score. To produce the reliable, quantifiable data required for high stakes assessment, performance assessments would need to be standardized. That is, for each level, tasks would need to be developed (and agreed upon) that would represent level completion; scoring rubrics and guidelines for evaluating performance would need to be in place; and administrators and evaluators would need to be trained” (Duzer, 2002: 3-4).

2.20.1. Assessment Purposes and Language Proficiency

The categorization of tests and assessment procedures by purpose is generally done with relatively familiar labels such as ‘proficiency’, ‘selection/exemption’, ‘placement’, ‘achievement’, and ‘diagnostic’. Cohen (1994) sees proficiency and achievement testing as serving a variety of purposes, rather than being purposes in themselves. Basically, proficiency testing matches the administrative purposes and achievement testing matches instructional purposes. Within these two categories —
With proficiency/administrative testing, we are addressing the need to know someone's general ability or level of knowledge without reference to a particular instructional sequence. That is, we are interested in what they know, what they can do, not what they have learned. The reference point is some sort of ability or set of skills that exist outside of any particular curriculum. Most often, this reference point is a context or situation in a particular institution or industry. Note that this institution may be a school or university, but the individual is being tested or assessed not in relation to their achievement of particular objectives in the curricula of those institutions but in relation to their general preparedness to enter those settings and succeed. An example of a proficiency test is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

According to Lynch (2003), the information from a proficiency test can serve many specific purposes. In addition to an understanding of the individual's general ability or level of knowledge, we can make decisions about whether they should be selected or exempted from a particular job or course of study. Depending on the degree to which our proficiency test specifically matches the requirements or objectives of the workplace or curriculum of study, the proficiency test can also be used to make decisions about placement (into a particular area of work, or a particular level of a course).

To assess or test for achievement is to determine the degree to which an individual has learned a set of pre-specified objectives or curricular material. This purpose for assessment typically occurs at the end of an instructional sequence, such as at the end of an academic term, or at the end of a particular teaching and learning unit within that term. Individual students are being assessed in relation to the goals for that instructional sequence: how well did they learn the material that was presented and practised in class? Examples of achievement tests are the typical midterm and final examinations given in many language classrooms. However, within the achievement/instructional category of assessment, other forms appear, along with a variety of
specific purposes. Johns in O’Malley & Pierce (1996: 98-99) identified four major purposes for classroom-based assessment of reading:

- Studying, evaluating, or diagnosing reading behavior.
- Monitoring student progress.
- Supplementing and confirming information obtained from standardized and criterion-referenced tests.
- Obtaining information not available from other sources.

For second language learners, other purposes of assessment are:

- Initial identification and placement of students in need of a language-based program, such as ESL or bilingual education.
- Movement from one level to another within a given program.
- Placement out of ESL/bilingual program and into a grade-level classroom.
- Placement in a special education classroom.
- Graduation from school, or university.

"Policymakers use assessment to:

* Set standards
* Focus on goals
* Monitor the quality of education
* Reward/sanction various practices
* Formulate policies
* Direct resources including personnel and money"
Administrators and school planners use assessment to:

* Identify program strengths and weaknesses
* Designate program priorities
* Assess alternatives
* Plan and improve programs

Teachers and administrators who make grouping decisions use assessment to:

* Perform individual diagnosis and prescription
* Monitor student progress
* Carry out curriculum evaluation and refinement
* Provide mastery/promotion/grading and other feedback
* Motivate students
* Determine grades

Parents and students use student progress assessment to:

* Assess student strengths and weaknesses
* Determine school accountability
* Make informed educational and career decisions (Dietel, Herman, & Knuth, 1991: 1)."

Lambert & Lines (2000: 109) mentioned four purposes of the national assessment system: Assessment should be:

- Formative: Supporting learning: planning next steps.
- Diagnostic: Identifying learning difficulties.

- Summative; Systematic recording of attainment.

- Evaluative: Judging effectiveness of local education authorities, schools and teachers by using assessment data as performance indicators.

Lambert and Lines (2000: 151) stated Ways in which good formative assessment can influence learning:

1. Raising levels of motivation to learn
   - By building a sense of success
   - By building a sense of independence and value as a learner.

2. Deciding what to learn
   - By helping identify what is important to learn
   - By discriminating through teacher feedback between strengths and weaknesses.

3. Learning how to learn
   - By encouraging an active or participatory approach to learning.
   - By showing that there are various ways to learn and choices can be made.
   - By inculcating self awareness and monitoring of progress against goals.
   - By developing confidence to apply learning to new contexts.

4. Evaluating Learning:
   - Practicing how to apply criteria to assist making judgments about the effectiveness of learning.
   - Using judgments to consolidate and/or prepare for next steps.
Brown (2004) stated that assessment is a misunderstood term in current education. Testing and assessment are usually used synonymously. However testing is a subset of assessment, assessment is an ongoing process but testing is one-shot. Tests can be used as a device among the other tasks in order to assess students' performance.

2.20.2. Validity and Reliability of Assessment

"Professional judgment is the foundation for all assessment. The measurement of student performance may seem "objective," given such practices as machine scoring and multiple-choice test items, but even these approaches are based on professional assumptions and values. Whether that judgment occurs in constructing test questions, scoring essays, creating rubrics, grading participation, combining scores, or interpreting standardized test scores, the essence of the process is making professional interpretations and decisions (McMillan, 2000, p.78).”

Gipps (1994) stated that in studying the validity of performance assessments, one should think carefully about whether the right domains are being assessed, whether they are well defined, whether they are well sampled, whether-even if well-sampled one can infer to the domain. Gipps (1994) states validity as of task-driven rather construct-driven performance assessment. He criticized some measurement practitioners for focusing on particular products or performances while using “construct language” to infer score meaning, ignoring issues of domain coverage and generalizability. “Trustworthiness of a measure consists of its credibility and auditability (p.100).

Alternative assessments are in and of themselves valid, due to the direct nature of the assessment. Consistency is ensured by the auditability of the procedure (leaving evidence of decision making processes), by using multiple tasks, by training judges to use clear criteria, and by triangulating any decision making process with varied sources of data (for example, students, families, and teachers). Alternative assessment consists of valid and reliable procedures that avoid many of the problems inherent in
traditional testing including norming, linguistic, and cultural biases (Brown & Hudson 1998: 654-655).”

These mentioned researchers state that good assessment information provides accurate estimates of student performance and enables teachers or other decisionmakers to make appropriate decisions. The concept of test validity captures these essential characteristics and the extent that an assessment actually measures what it is intended to measure, and permits appropriate generalizations about students' skills and abilities. For example, a ten-item addition/subtraction test might be administered to a student who answers nine items correctly. If the test is valid, we can safely generalize that the student will likely do as well on similar items not included on the test. The results of a good test or assessment, in short, represent something beyond how students perform on a certain task or a particular set of items; they represent how a student performs on the objective which those items were intended to assess. (Dietel, Herman, & Knuth, 1991: 2).”

“Teachers and administrators need to know not only that there is error in all classroom and standardized assessments, but also, more specifically, how reliability is determined and how much error is likely. With so much emphasis today on high-stakes testing for promotion, graduation, teacher and administrator accountability, and school accreditation, it is critical that all educators understand such concepts as standard error of measurement, reliability coefficients, confidence intervals, and standard setting. Two reliability principles deserve special attention: (1) Reliability refers to scores, not instruments; (2) Typically, error is underestimated” (McMillan, 2000: 5).

“As with reliability, validity has certain technical terms and issues associated with it that are essential in helping teachers and administrators make reasonable and appropriate inferences from assessment results (e.g., types of validity evidence, validity generalization, construct under representation, construct–irrelevant variance, and discriminate and convergent evidence). Of critical importance is the concept of evidence based on consequences, a new major validity category in the recently revised Standards. Both intended and unintended consequences of assessment need to
be examined with appropriate evidence that supports particular arguments or points of view. Of equal importance is getting teachers and administrators to understand their role in gathering and interpreting validity evidence “(McMillan, 2000: 5).

2.20.3. Criteria for Valid Performance-Based Assessments:

2.20.3.1--Consequences: Does using an assessment lead to intended consequences or does it produce unintended consequences, such as teaching to the test? For example, minimum competency testing was intended to improve instruction and the quality of learning for students; however, its actual effects too often were otherwise (a shallow drill and kill curriculum for remedial students).

2.20.3.2--Fairness: Does the assessment enable students from all cultural backgrounds to demonstrate their skills, or does it unfairly disadvantage some students?

2.20.3.3--Transfer: Do the results of the assessment generalize to other generalizability problems and other situations? Do they adequately represent students' performance in a given domain?

2.20.3.4--Cognitive Complexity: Do the assessments adequately assess higher levels of understanding and complex thinking? We cannot assume that performance-based assessments will test a higher level of students’ understanding because they appear to do so. Such assumptions require empirical evidence.

2.20.3.5--Content Quality: Are the tasks selected to measure a given content area worth the time and effort of students and raters?

2.20.3.6--Content Coverage: Do the assessments enable adequate content coverage?

-Meaningfulness: Are the assessment tasks meaningful to students and do they motivate them to perform their best?

2.20.3.7--Cost and Efficiency: Has attention been given to” the efficiency of the data collection designs and scoring procedures? (Performance-based assessments are by nature labor-intensive” (Dietel, Herman, & Knuth, 1991: 2).
2.20.4. Assessment and Feedback

“The purpose of feedback will differ in different situations, but feedback is nonetheless important. For example, the purpose of feedback in the form of scores from a diagnostic pretest administered at the beginning of a course will be to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the knowledge or skills covered in the course. In other words, the scores will be interpreted diagnostically: A low score on a particular objective indicates that a student needs to work hard on that objective, and a high score on another objective shows that the student already has mastered the knowledge or skill involved in that objective (and that the student should focus energy on other, weaker objectives). Thus in a diagnostic pretest, the feedback is given in terms of what the students need to do about each course objective (Brown & Hudson 1998: 668-669).”

Obtaining feedback from students is the most common and direct method of finding out how our assessment designs are working and overall what difficulties or disappointments students may have experienced a number of methods for collecting feedback are in most common usage, namely questionnaires, focus groups and interviews.

Questionnaires: the basic questionnaire format can be utilized in three different ways- in class, by post or over the internet. Davidson & Goldfish has proposed some principles to consider in designing a questionnaire in Morgan, Dunn, Parry, & O’Reilly (2004: 269-270):

- Provide an explanation of why you are asking these questions.
- Give clear instructions on how to complete questionnaire.
- Decide whether to use open-ended questions or closed questions, or if a mixture of the two would be best.
- Make sure your questions are written in clear and unambiguous language.
- Be consistent in your style, e.g. use check boxes or Likert scales not a mixture of both.

- Keep the questionnaire as short as possible; put more delicate issues at the end.

- Try to adapt an existing questionnaire that has already been trialed, or make time to pilot your own questions with a small sample.

- Include a note of thanks at the end.

Focus Group: A focus group is a group of involved people who are called together to answer a semi-structured set of evaluation questions you have prepared. The group might consist of some students who have volunteered to take part or who have been invited through your sample selection.

Interviews: There are different ways of gathering information using interviews:

- Structured interviews: which are based on some fixed questions which are answered by all respondents?

- Semi-structured interviews: There are some questions to keep respondents focuses on the topic but respondents can add any relevant experience and comments from their own perspectives.

- Unstructured interviews: It begins with one main focus question, but can take a much more responsive pathway since the interviewer pursues topics as they emerge in discussion with respondents.

2.20.5. Characteristics of Assessment

Aschbacher listed several common characteristics of alternative assessments in Brown & Hudson (1998), stating that they

1. require problem solving and higher level thinking,

2. involve tasks that are worthwhile as instructional activities,
3. use real-world contexts or simulations,
4. focus on processes as well as products, and
5. encourage public disclosure of standards and criteria.

Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters offered a somewhat different set of characteristics in Brown & Hudson (1998). In their view, alternative assessments
1. require students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
2. tap into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills;
3. use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
4. approximate real-world applications;
5. ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment; and
6. call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

Huerta-Macias said in Brown & Hudson (1998) that alternative assessments
1. are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities already in place in a curriculum,
2. allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class everyday,
3. provide information about both the strengths and the weaknesses of students, and
4. are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered.

"...An impressive list of positive characteristics for alternative assessments that should appeal to most language teachers and testers alike:
1. require students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
2. use real-world contexts or simulations;

3. are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities;

4. allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day;

5. use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;

6. focus on processes as well as products;

7. tap into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills;

8. provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students;

9. are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered;

10. Ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment;

11. encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria; and

12. call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles

2.20.6. Different Kinds of Assessment

Brown & Hudson (1998) described three basic assessment types: (a) selected-
response (including true-false, matching, and multiple-choice assessments); (b)
constructed-response (including fill-in, short-answer, and performance assessments);
and (c) personal-response (including at least conference, portfolio, and self- and peer
assessments).

Selected-Response Assessments

Selected-response assessments present students with language material and
require them to choose the correct answer from among a limited set of options.
True-false

True-false assessments present a sample of language and require the students to respond to that language by selecting one of two choices, true or false. The primary strength of true-false assessments is that they focus on the students' abilities to select the correct answer from two alternatives.

Thus true-false assessments provide simple and direct indications of whether a particular point has been understood. One problem with true-false assessments is that, in order to produce items that discriminate well, test writers may be tempted to write items that are tricky, that is, that turn on the meaning of a single word or phrase or that depend on some ambiguity. Most teachers prefer to create straightforward assessments wherein students who know the answer get it correct and students who do not know the answer get it wrong.

Matching

Matching assessments present students with two lists of words or phrases from which they must select the words or phrases in one list that match the ones in the other list. The main advantages of matching assessments are that they are relatively compact in terms of space and have a low guessing factor (for instance, only 10% for 10 items if extra options are supplied). Matching assessment is generally restricted to measuring students' abilities to associate one set of facts with another, which in language testing usually means measuring passive vocabulary knowledge (i.e., the students' ability to match definitions to vocabulary items).

Multiple-choice

Multiple-choice assessments require students to examine a sample of language material and select the answer that best completes a sentence or best fills in a blank in the sentence from among a set of three, four, or five options. Multiple-choice assessment, like matching assessment, has the advantage of a relatively small guessing factor. Whereas true-false assessment has a 50% guessing factor, multiple-choice assessment typically has a 33%, 25%, or 20% guessing factor depending on...
whether there are three, four, or five options. Multiple-choice assessment also has the advantage of being useful for measuring a fairly wide variety of different kinds of precise learning points.

**Constructed-Response Assessments**

Constructed-response assessments require students to produce language by writing, speaking, or doing something else. Hence, these assessments are probably most appropriate for measuring the productive skills of speaking and writing. Constructed-response assessments can also be useful for observing interactions of receptive and productive skills, for instance, the interaction of listening and speaking in an oral interview procedure or the interaction of reading and writing in a performance assessment in which students read two academic articles and write an essay comparing and contrasting them.

**Fill-in**

Fill-in assessments give a language context with part of the context removed and replaced with a blank. To answer, students are required to fill in the blanks. Fill-in assessment comes in many shapes and forms, from single-word fill-in items in single sentences to cloze passages with many blanks embedded in a longer stretch of text. Fill-in assessments have the advantages that they are fairly easy to construct, are flexible in what they can assess, and are quick to administer. Moreover, like the other constructed-response types, fill-in assessments measure the students’ abilities to actually produce language, albeit small amounts of language, and open up the possibility of assessing interactions between receptive and productive skills (for example, in a listening cloze, students must listen to a passage while reading it and filling in the blanks).

**Short-answer**

Short-answer assessments require the students to scrutinize a question or statement and respond with a one or more phrases or sentences. The advantages of short-answer assessments are that they are easy to produce and are relatively quick to administer. One disadvantage of short-answer assessments is that they focus on
Performance assessments

Performance assessments require students to accomplish approximations of real-life, authentic tasks, usually using the productive skills of speaking or writing but also using reading or writing or combining skills. Performance assessments can take many forms, including fairly traditional tasks like essay writing or interviews or more recent developments like problem-solving tasks, communicative pair-work tasks, role playing, and group discussions.

In short, by definition, the performance assessment has three requirements:

(a) Examinees are required to perform some sort of task, (b) the tasks must be as authentic as possible, and (c) the performances are typically scored by qualified raters.

Personal-Response Assessments

Conference assessments typically involve the student visiting the teacher’s office, usually by appointment, to discuss a particular piece of work or learning process, or both. More importantly, conferences are different from other forms of assessment in that they focus directly on learning processes and strategies (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). For example, consider a series of conferences conducted to discuss multiple drafts of students’ compositions. During the conferences, the focus could be on students’ views and worries about the learning processes they are experiencing while producing and revising their compositions. In total, the advantages of conferences are that teachers can use them to (a) foster student reflection on their own learning processes; (b) help students develop better self-images; (c) elicit language performances on particular tasks, skills, or other language points; or (d) inform, observe, mold, and gather information about students. Naturally, such advantages are offset by certain disadvantages. In the case of conferences, the disadvantages are that
they are relatively time-consuming, difficult and subjective to grade, and typically not scored or rated at all.

Portfolio, for decades, photographers, models, graphic artists, and practitioners of similar vocations have collected portfolios of their work in order to show their work and skills in a compact and convenient form. Recently, language teachers have begun using portfolios in order to encourage their students to select, compile, and display their work. We define portfolio assessments here as purposeful collections of any aspects of students’ work that tell the story of their achievements, skills, efforts, abilities, and contributions to a particular class. However, several other definitions exist for this fairly new type of assessment, which might more aptly be called a family of assessments (Wolf, 1989).

Portfolio assessments may strengthen student learning in that they (a) capitalize on work that would normally be done in the classroom anyway; (b) focus learners’ attention on learning processes; (c) facilitate practice and revision processes; (d) help motivate students, if well-planned, because they present a series of meaningful and interesting activities; (e) increase students’ involvement in the learning processes; (f) foster student-teacher and student-student collaboration; (g) provide means for establishing minimum standards for classroom work and progress; and (h) encourage students to learn the meta-language necessary for students and teachers to talk about language growth.

Portfolio assessment is an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in selecting samples of student work for inclusion in a collection, the main purpose of which is to show the student’s progress. The use of this procedure is increasing in the language field, particularly with respect to the writing skill. It makes intuitive sense to involve students in decisions about which pieces of their work to assess, and to assure that feedback is provided. Both teacher and peer reviews are important. Perhaps the greatest overall benefit of using portfolio assessment is that the students are taught by example to become independent thinkers, and the development of their autonomy as learners is facilitated (Hancock, 1994: 1).
It is important to remember that a portfolio is much more than a simple folder of student work. A wide variety of portfolios exists: working portfolio, performance portfolio, assessment portfolio, group portfolio, application (e.g., for college admission) portfolio, and so forth. Depending on the purpose, one is likely to find any of these items: samples of creative work; tests; quizzes; homework; projects and assignments; audiotapes of oral work; student diary entries; log of work on a particular assignment; self-assessments; comments from peers; and comments from teachers (Hancock, 1994: 1).

Self-assessment and Peer-Assessment

According to some scholars (Bernhardt, 2005; Bonnet, 2004; Brantmeier & Vanderplank, 2008) self-assessments require students to rate their own language, whether through performance self-assessments, comprehension self-assessments, or observation self-assessments. Performance self-assessments require students to read a situation and decide how well they would respond in it. Similarly, comprehension self-assessments require students to read a situation and decide how well they would comprehend it. In contrast, observation self-assessments require students to listen to audio- or videotape recordings of their own language performance (perhaps taped in natural situations or in role-play activities) and decide how well they think they performed. A variant of the self-assessment is the peer assessment, which is similar to the self-assessment except that, as implied by the label, students rate the language of their peers. Self-assessments have a number of advantages. First, self-assessments can be designed to be administered relatively quickly. Second, they inevitably involve students directly in the assessment process. Third, in turn, such involvement may help students understand what it means to learn a language autonomously. Finally, both the students’ involvement and their greater autonomy can substantially increase their motivation to learn the language in question.

2.20.7. Difference between Traditional and Alternative Assessment

Traditional tests are one-shot and standardized exams, but alternative assessment is continuous, and long-term. Traditional ones are timed and multiple-choice format but alternative assessment is untimed, free-response format. Traditional
ones contain de-contextualized test items. Alternative assessment contains contextualized communicative tasks. In traditional tests scores suffice for feedback, but in alternative assessment there is individual feedback and washback. Traditional tests are summative, norm-referenced, product-oriented, and non-interactive. Alternative assessment is formative, criterion-referenced, process-oriented, and interactive. In traditional assessment students focus on the "right" answer, but in alternative assessment students should answer open-ended and creative answers.

Traditional assessment fosters extrinsic motivation; however alternative assessment fosters intrinsic motivation.

2.20.7.1. Formative Assessment

The essence of formative assessment is that undertaking the assessment constitutes a learning experience in its own right. Writing an essay or undertaking a class presentation, for example, can be valuable formative activities as a means of enhancing substantive knowledge as well as for developing research, communication, intellectual and organizational skills. Formative assessment is not often included in the formal grading of work, and indeed many believe that it should not be (Lambert & lines, 2000; East, 2010).

2.20.7.2. Summative Assessment

In contrast, summative assessment is not traditionally regarded as having any intrinsic learning value. It is usually undertaken at the end of a period of learning in order to generate a grade that reflects the student’s performance. The traditional unseen end of module examination is often presented as a typical form of summative assessment (Lambert & lines, 2000; East, 2010).

2.20.7.3. The Link between Formative and Summative Assessment

The distinction in evaluation between summative and formative was introduced by Scriven (1967). Formative evaluation occurs while the programme is being implemented and developed. The goal is to recommend changes for improving it, and, towards this end, it focuses on programme processes. Typically the outcome
of a formative evaluation is numerous small-scale recommendations for change. Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a programme's natural term or cycle. The goal is to make an ultimate judgement about the programme's worth, whether it has succeeded in meeting its objectives or not. Typically the outcome of a summative evaluation is a formal report to be used in large-scale decisions such as whether to continue funding the programme or not.

Most people involved in language programme administration and evaluation (Brown, 1989) would say that few, if any, programmes are ever entirely completed in terms of development, making summative evaluation difficult in its extreme form. In fact, most evaluations represent a combination of formative and summative. If we are interested in judging the ultimate worth of a programme, we are usually open to explanations of why it is or is not working, and recommendations for improvement. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) also discuss this formative versus summative distinction as 'confirming' versus 'innovating'; that is, sometimes our motivation for evaluation is to decide whether or not our current practice (programme) is doing what it should; at other times our motivation is to bring about innovation or change in those practices.

When a strict summative evaluation is called for, Brown et al.,(1989) points out it is best to avoid doing it in 'crisis mode'. One way around this problem is to make formative evaluation an ongoing part of programme process, so that the necessary information and procedures for gathering it are available without disruption (or at least with minimal disruption) to the normal running of the programme. This leads to another way of looking at evaluation purposes: responding to external mandates and demands versus internal motivations for evaluation.

Often, the purpose of an externally motivated evaluation is to arrive at a summative or combined summative-and-formative judgement of the programme by looking at material indicators, for example, the programme's resources (books, media, professional credentials of staff, classroom space) as the primary indicators of its worth.
Besides looking at the material indicators, or other programme 'products' (such as achievement test scores), another purpose for evaluation is to examine how the materials are used and the products achieved. The major purpose here is to understand programme process, and several models for doing this type of evaluation.

2.20.7.4. The Characteristics of Effective Assessment

According to (Lynch 1996), effective assessment purposes are the interaction between audience and goals, with the following as the key questions:

• Who is requesting the evaluation?

• Who will be affected by the evaluation?

The people identified by these questions are usually referred to as the 'stakeholders.' They are the ones who are most centrally concerned with what the evaluation will be able to say about the programme. Particular evaluation stakeholders, or audiences, tend to have particular evaluation goals, or purposes, which can be ascertained with the following questions:

• Why is the evaluation being conducted?

• What information is being requested and why?

With different audiences for the same evaluation context, there will be the possibility of different, and even conflicting, goals. Sometimes Effective evaluation purposes are communicated at the beginning of the evaluation process and remain fairly constant; at other times they evolve and change over the course and, as a result of, the evaluation. In this regard, Angelo(2004), mentioned the characteristics of Effective Assessment as following:

**Valid**

Assesses what is actually taught. The assessment should measure what is intended. For example, to assess practical ability, it should look at how the results were obtained in addition to the results themselves.
Reliable and consistent

It should provide information for improving student learning. Assessment criteria and marking schemes should be robust so that grades are consistent when more than one assessor marks the work or when one assessor marks the work on different occasions.

Transparent

Focuses on the process as well as on the products of instruction and it should be clearly aimed at meeting the learning objectives for the educational learning.

Fair

All students should have the same opportunity to succeed. Provides useful, timely feedback to those being assessed and those most affected — the students and teachers. Assessment should be carried out at various points during the term of instruction.

Efficient and manageable

Deadlines for course work should be staggered across modules and not just within one module to make assessment manageable for both students and the tutors. The assessment should be streamlined to ease the burden of marking and giving feedback.

Effective Feedback

Actively involves both teachers and students. Students should always be given advice on their progress and have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Uses multiple and varied measures.

2.21. ASSESSING LANGUAGE SKILLS

There is a long tradition of discussing and categorising language tests based on the four skill areas of reading, listening, writing and speaking. There is a long
tradition of discussing and categorizing language tests based on the four skill areas of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Most tests will involve a combination of language skills. For example, it is rare, if not impossible, to have a test that measures listening and nothing else; usually some reading of text or speaking is involved as well. Perhaps it is best to think of the four skills not as part of the language ability being tested, but as 'the means by which that ability is realized in the performance of tasks in actual language use situations' (Douglas 2000: 38). For the purposes of this chapter, I will retain the notion of reading, listening, writing and speaking tests as both the means for resting and ability being tested, along with some examples of tests that integrate these modalities at the end of the section.

2.21.1. Approaches to Assessing Reading

The testing of reading is most often discussed in terms of skills and sub-skills that define the reading process (Hughes 1989: 116—17; Lumley 1993: 233-4; Weir 1997: 43 cited in Lynch.2003). Reading theory, and its models of the reading process, shapes the way these skills are conceptualised. The psycholinguistic (Goodman 1967; Smith 1978) and 'top-down' (Coady 1979; Steffenson et al. 1979 cited in Lynch,2003) models of reading identify particular reading skills as being essential to successful reading. Hughes refers to these skills as 'macro' and Weir(1997) labels them as reading for 'global comprehension'. This range of skills includes:

- identifying the main purpose and audience for the text;
- skimming for main ideas;
- making propositional inferences;
- scanning for specific information;
- identifying the overall structure of the text and its arguments.

The 'bottom-up' model of reading focuses on skills that are commonly referred to as 'decoding', 'micro', or 'reading for local comprehension' (Weir 1997: 43).
Alderson (2000) identified methods of assessing reading as:

**Introspection**

It can be used in order to give insights into strategy use in answering traditional test items, and thus may be potentially useful for the validation of tests of processes and strategies.

**Interviews and Talkback**

They can be used in order to get information about how students read the text and the way they approach the text, e.g. strategies they use and etc.

**Classroom Conversations**

The simple conversation between an assessor-usually the teacher- and a reader, or readers in a group, can be used in class, but not in large-scale testing situations. In such conversations, readers can be asked about what texts they have read, how they liked them, what the main ideas of the texts were, what difficulties they have experienced, and what they have found relatively unproblematic, how long it has taken them to read, why they have chosen the texts they have, whether they would read them again, and so on.

**Immediate-Recall Protocol**

In this method students are asked to read a text, to put it to one side, and then to write down everything they can remember from the text. This technique is often held to provide a purer measure of comprehension, since test questions do not intervene between the reader and the text. It also claimed to provide a picture of learner processes.

**Miscue Analysis**

Miscues are experienced when, in reading aloud, the observed response is different from the expected response that is the actual word or words on the page.
Self-assessment

Self-assessment is increasingly seen as a useful source of information on learner abilities and processes. Weeden et al. (2002: 73) described self-assessment as a review process that involves the learner in:

- reflecting on past experience.
- seeking to remember and understand what took place.
- attempting to gain a clearer idea of what has been learned or achieved.

Self-assessment would involve pupils in:

- sharing responsibility for the organization of their work.
- keeping records of activities they have undertaken.
- making decisions about future actions and targets.

2.21.2. Different Meaning of Task

Several different definitions and uses of the term 'task' exist throughout the literature, ranging from rather general to quite specific, and these are summarized in below. The researcher also uses the word 'task' in slightly different ways. So what characteristics do the tasks in these studies have in common?

- In carrying out a task the learners' principal focus is on exchanging and understanding meanings, rather than on practice of form or pre-specified forms or patterns.
- There is some kind of purpose or goal set for the task, so that learners know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the task, for example, to write a list of differences, to complete a route map or a picture, to report a solution to a problem, to vote on the best decorated student room or the most interesting/memorable personal anecdote.
• The outcome of the completed task can be shared in some way with others.
• Tasks can involve any or all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
• The use of tasks does not preclude language-forced study at some points in a TBL lesson, though a focus on specific grammar rules or patterns will not generally come before the task itself, as this could well detract from the real communicative purpose of the subsequent interaction.

What then would not count as ‘tasks’? Activities requiring learners to use language patterns they have just been taught or been told to use, would not count as tasks in this sense, for example, completing a transformation exercise, acting out dialogues or taking part in role plays with set parts. The principle focus in such activities is not on learners expressing and exchanging their own meanings but on practicing pre-specified language forms or functions and displaying their ability to ‘produce’ these patterns. (See Skehan, 1998: 95-6.)

The task characteristics listed above can apply to many different types of task. While there is no definitive way to classify tasks, a broad classification that is based on cognitive processes consists of six categories: listing tasks; ordering and sorting tasks; comparing tasks; problem solving tasks; sharing personal experiences; and creative tasks (See J. Willis, 1996a).

2.21.3. The move towards Task-Based Learning Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained considerable support from academic and practitioner circles during the last decade of the 20th century. In this approach, tasks are used to promote language acquisition by means of language use. In the countries and contexts represented in this book, English is being taught as a Foreign Language with a view to enhancing international communication. However, the examination systems in many of these countries often put a premium on formal accuracy and, as a result, teachers often prioritize the teaching of grammar (Willis, 1996 a). Teachers model the target language forms and get students to repeat them, and then ask questions intended to elicit the target forms in response, for example,
what time do you usually get up in the morning? To elicit: I usually get up at 7.15. (Note that ‘I don’t know really, it depends.’ would not be an acceptable response in this situation.) This approach steams from behaviourist learning theories and the language thus produced is commonly called ‘display’ language; students are expected to respond using a word or pattern that conforms to the teacher’s expectation of the specific form to be used, rather than on conveying meaning or message (Willis, 1996 b). The label given to one such approach is presentation, practice, production, also known as ppp. (For an explanation and discussion of PPP see Willis (1996b: iv-v).

However, we all know that what is taught is not necessarily what is learned. And although PPP lessons are often supplemented with skills lessons, most students taught mainly through conventional approach such as PPP leave school unable to communicate effectively in English (Stern, 1983). According to Stern (1983), language teaching has always tended, for a variety of reasons, to stand apart from other subjects. In recent times there has been a particular reason for this, to do with influence of Chomsky’s view that first language acquisition is distinct from general cognitive acquisition. This paradigm has been taken into second language acquisition, and as a result parallels between foreign language learning/teaching and the learning/teaching of other skills have largely been avoided. Language teachers have tended to take their inspiration from what is known about first language acquisition, not general skill acquisition. This, together with the isolation .Stern (1983) notes, has contributed to what might be regarded as a somewhat inward-looking attitude in the language teaching field. This situation has prompted many ELT professionals to take note of the findings from second language acquisition (SLA) research studies and to turn towards holistic approaches where meaning is central and where opportunities for language use abound task-based learning in one such approach and many of the writers in this book have moved from PPP to TBL For a fuller account of the move towards TBL (Willis, D. and J. Willis, 2007).The scholarly study of tasks has been addressed from two different perspectives: a) as units of syllabus design -similar to grammar forms, lexical items, notions, functions, communicative skills- and b) as classroom teaching units.
Within the first perspective, an aspect which has received substantial attention from researchers is the sequencing of tasks or the determination of the factors by which tasks could be “arranged in an increasingly order of difficulty” (Widdowson 1990: 148).

However, no studies have focused on the cognitive dimension of the sequencing of tasks viewed as classroom teaching and assessing units in oral, written and oral-written skills, i.e., the sequencing of the phases which “reflect the chronology of a task-based lesson” (Ellis 2003: 243). The objective of this study is to assess the relationship between effective reading tasks and proficiency: meaning making among Indian and Iranian Students. The psychological foundation of task in the sequence of the stages in this study is defined by Kunnan (1998).