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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 READING AS A LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

Language can be characterized as a form of social behaviour to determine relationships and the problem of discovering ways and means for utilizing information for better integration of personality as it is essentially a human behaviour and plays an important role in human activities. Language does not simply mean speech. A human child can transfer the concrete or abstract qualities of a thing to another, only because of language. In this way the uniqueness of our linguistic behaviour is its main quality, which broadens our cognitive thought process.

Language develops through imitation and social learning. Human beings are born with what might be hypothetically conceived of as a language acquisition device, which enables them to process whatever linguistic data that come their way and achieve a grammatically sound competence in their native language (Chomsky, 1968), giving grounds to the nativistic theory of language acquisition, as the environmentalists emphasize on learning terms.

Language is a code for conveying the thoughts and feelings of one individual to another which has been accepted and is mutually understood by both and may be oral grouping of words into statements- written or still may be gesticulated through body movement, when it is oral it may be speaking, involving listening, which later on, leads to writing, an effort to decode this written material is reading. Thus reading is an important skill behind language acquisition and provides for a language experience, which acts like the threshold for the knowledge amassment- the ultimate goal of reading.
Reading is not merely profitable in acquiring knowledge but it can be an immense source of pleasure and happiness as it portrays the society and takes one to the different lands (imaginatively) and provides varied experiences to provide an enriched expression, one of the goals of language acquisition. Hence, it not only has educational value but also recreational value and provides for a fuller language experience.

However, at the level of 3+, reading includes two fundamental skills only, they are:

i) Decoding the visual symbol.
ii) Attaching meaning to the symbol to get the meaning.

If the above-mentioned skills are inculcated in a pupil, then the question of reading difficulties doesn’t arise under normal circumstance, for which, the identification of the reading readiness of the child is necessary. When Reading readiness is aptly enriched, is very fruitful; and in case the child is forced to read when it is not ready it’ll regress the reading ability and makes the child dislike reading, which would be very harmful for the development of its reading performance, a subsidiary of the whole language development and knowledge acquisition.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF READING AS A SKILL OF LANGUAGE

Reading is a decoding process. It is a very complex process involving many physical, intellectual and often emotional reactions. Moreover, it entails the ability to recognise graphic symbols and their corresponding sounds. It is impossible to learn to read without this ability, which extends to complex groups of sounds called words. In other words, there are three important components in the reading skill: these are the recognition of the graphic marks, the correlation of these with formal linguistic elements, and the correlation of these with meaning. Reading becomes meaningful only if we get the meaning associated with the
graphic symbols though our ability to recognise the semantic content of the
graphic symbols and the sounds they represent. This act of reading is of
two kinds: the skill of reading aloud and silent reading which gives way to
intensive reading from extensive reading. The advancing world is full of
knowledge explosion and it should be continuously updated, it is for this;
one needs the reading skill – ‘The Arch of knowledge’. This can be
qualitatively achieved through intensive reading.

Hence, it can be rightly emphasized that reading can make language
soar to the heights of expression and communication, as Francis Bacon
aptly says ‘Reading maketh a full man’. It opens new avenues of
knowledge and enriches ones linguistic abilities in lieu with speaking and
writing skills and moreover supplements them.

Globally, a giant step has been taken towards communicative
approach by the language teachers as well as learners, for which the
emphasis is laid on speaking and writing skills. Speaking and writing
skills can never be developed adequately without sound reading exposure.
There are many studies (McCullough et al, 1946; Smith and Tate, 1953;
Smith & Dechant, 1961; Smith, 1971; Barr, 1974) to prove reading is the
process to acquire knowledge and development of other language skills.

The raw material of knowledge must come to the child through self
and individual experience, which can be provided only through reading.
Often teachers have found out that the children who have less reading
exposure have problem with their communicative skills and personality
(Barr, 1974; Jhonson, 1990) Hence, the language teacher should always
realize her enormous responsibility and help the child to develop adequate
reading ability and must stress on learning the special skills, methods and
vocabulary needed for understanding what the child reads.
Understanding the utility of 'Reading', the teacher should make it pleasurable by teaching reading contextually—words and phrases, and testing their comprehension later, selection of suitable reading material, exposure to the library activities, teaching them to enjoy reading through play way methods are very much necessary for an effective reading program.

Reading, however, is more than a sensory process. It is more than a skill to be learned through practice; it also is a conceptual and thinking process. Conceptual thought is required to react with meaning to the word, the sentence, and paragraph.

Perception refers to the interpretation of everything that we sense. We give meaning to what we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. At a very elementary level, such as when the perceiver sees a black dot on a white background, sensation may dominate perception and the percept may have few characteristics not found in the stimulus. At a more complex level, the sensation is clothed with the perceiver's wealth of past experience and values, and the percept reflects the biological and environmental characteristics of the perceiver.

Thus, although reading begins with the sensation and the subsequent recognition of the printed symbol, the critical element in the reading act is the meaningful response rather than the recognition of the symbol. Perception must include the arousal of meaning. To understand the meaning of a word the reader needs to have some awareness of the experiences that the word stands for. Beginning readers frequently become so engrossed with the mechanical aspects of reading, with word identification and pronunciation that they fail to understand the need for comprehension.
Reading, which requires interpretation of what is read, occurs only when the reader understands what he is reading. 'Kapelski'(1991) notes that reading is the reconstruction of the event behind the symbols and Klausmeier(1974) points out that reading should bear the same relationship to experiences or events that a map bears to the territory which it is supposed to represent.

Thus, here decoding of symbol has limited connotation to the child unless the meaning is perceived based on adequate experiential background. The child’s reactions to the printed word are determined by the experiences that he has had with those objects or events for which the symbol stands. This is what we mean by perception. Perception is a consciousness or awareness of the experiences evoked by a symbol.

Reading first decodes the visual symbols and then allocates meaning to them for further comprehension, further it helps in the process of thinking under the stimulus of the written material.

Reading is a complex skill which involves several abilities such as the;

1) Ability to recognize / identify the visual symbols

2) Ability to associate visual symbols with vocal symbols and finally with their meanings (initial level)

3) Ability to interpret the visual symbols to get their meaning.

4) Skill of word recognition (sight recognition, phonics, word/structure reading in sense group)

5) Skill of comprehending the reading material

6) Skill of organizing the reading material

7) Skill of locating information

8) Skill of reading aloud

9) Skill of reading silently
Yet as far as the infants of 3+ are considered, it is expected of the reader to be able to read aloud the alphabet/number/two or three lettered words on the page and associate the emitted to an object as perceived by them.

Hence the very basis of decoding symbols based on their experiential perception leads to the thinking process, which provides a foundation for their Learning Readiness, leading onto Reading Readiness.

'Learning takes place more efficiently when a person is ready to learn. Readiness comes about through the combination of at least three processes. They are 1) Growth 2) Prior experience 3) Desire to learn. This 'desire to learn' or 'learning readiness', as defined by Lefrancois (2000) is being 'ready for a specific type of learning' and depends on the on physical maturation, development of intellectual skills, acquisition of important background information and perhaps motivation. Further, Garland(1978) is of the opinion that this same 'learning readiness' paves way to 'reading readiness' as the child fine tunes the skill of 'learning to read'. Hence, this aspect of learning readiness, when identified as the basis of acquiring reading skill, is labelled as 'reading readiness', which further enables the child pick up the reading skill with the help of adequate teaching mechanisms.

1.3 TEACHING READING

In lieu with the above arguments a reading (language) teacher has to keep the following guidelines in mind to attain success in teaching reading:

1. Language training should accompany reading instruction on every step of the way. A linguistic background for reading lessons should be continuously built at each stage of growth.
2. Reading success depends upon the student's aural-oral experience with words. Development in reading closely parallels development in listening and speech. Reading involves the same language, the same message, and the same code as hearing of spoken words. The only difference is that in reading the contact is made on the central nervous system by light vibrations through the eyes; in hearing, it is by sound vibrations through the ears.

3. Every reading lesson should be an extension of language and a means of developing the student's linguistic skill.

4. If the student cannot sound the individual phoneme, he probably will not be a good oral reader. He will have difficulty with phonics. He may also have more difficulty in transmitting meaning.

5. Genuine reading proficiency may mean the ability to read language structure. The best reader may be one mentally aware of the stresses, elongations of words, changes of pitch and intonation, and rhythms of the sentences that he reads. If he reads the way the writer would like it to have been said, true communication of meaning may be possible.

6. The student's comprehension of speech and his oral use of language should be checked frequently.

1.4 READING READINESS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Teaching a child to read will be a waste unless the child is ready to read, and this aspect of the child's willingness to read is termed as "readiness". The concept of reading readiness is classified in Newcaxton Encyclopaedia (1980) like this - "Before a child is put to the task of reading, he should have reached a stage when he actively wants to read and he should have been given practices in the various perceptual skills upon which reading depends, like - recognition of difference, scanning a page
from left to right, matching words to pictures and to one another, and so forth. A child who is ready and prepared, will experience reading with pleasure from the start and will press on to more and more achievement where as a child put prematurely to the task may learn mainly a hatred of reading that’ll take years to eradicate. Individual differences in reading readiness can be considerable, so that it is unwise to expect any particular child to be at a particular stage at a particular age. For best ultimate results, each child should be provided with an opportunity to work at his own level and at his own pace.

Readiness affects learning of school subjects (Perkins, 1969), especially reading readiness on reading achievement (Goins, 1958; Durkin, 1961; Dykstra, 1962; Sutton, 1964; Barret, 1965), this suggest that if the child is ready to read it helps in subsequent progress in reading at school and may contribute to the child’s development of a positive self image and favourable attitude towards learning.

Not only the maturity factor but also the other factors are involved in the enhancement of reading readiness. Dechant (1969) opines, ‘Reading readiness is the developmental stage at which constitutional and environmental factors have prepared the child for reading instruction’.

Thus, reading readiness is a fusion of a number of different strands of cognitive development: visual perception of letter forms, auditory discrimination of phonemes, language development, integration of sensory systems, and adequate mental ability. In the area of affective development, the most important characteristics probably are a desire on the part of the child to read and a curiosity about what the words on a page say. Tests of reading readiness usually do not measure affective factors, since they are very intangible. A factor in readiness to read that is difficult to quantify is persistence at a task. Frequently the obverse of this trait, labelled short
attention span, is named as a handicap to learning to read, but the presence of persistence is given scant positive consideration. Readiness assessment should provide the teacher with some guidelines about each of the factors in development that are critical in reading.

Taking a cue from the presentation in the previous pages, it is found that the development of languages and the cognitive abilities are unique only to the human clan. But for language, transmission of culture would have come to stand still and human beings would have been one of the inferior animals. So for this development of language faculty one should enable oneself to enhance the four important skills, they being:

a) Listening
b) Speaking
c) Reading
d) Writing.

To enhance these skills one should possess the readiness to learn, language and this would be left handicapped without the reading readiness. Hence, to inculcate both language and reading readiness one has to use effective instructional methods as opined by Ausubel (1963) which would further lead towards appropriate functional adequacy of cognitive faculties.

Thus, the functional adequacy in cognitive terms depends on perceptual sensitivity and the discriminative capabilities of the child. Sensation, perception and the consequent building of objects, which greatly depends on the instructional methods is closely related to enhance language faculties. This in turn is considered as one of the main aims of language learning.
1.5 NEED FOR AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

There are empirical studies to substantiate that reading readiness affects reading as it is also described as the 'teachable moment for reading' (Havinghurst, 1953). This very expression denies that unless a child is not ready to learn then the whole teaching program becomes a waste. Many studies have upheld the importance of visual discrimination and proved it's positively significant relationship with reading readiness (Mc Hugh, 1962; Dykstra, 1962; Clymer, 1964; Barett, 1965). It was also found that reading readiness has a high predictive value on the language achievement in general and reading achievement in particular (Krishnamurti, 1971; Pikulski, 1973; Lennon, 1979 Gowan & Scheibel, 1979; Patel, 1983; Manjula, 1990). Through the review of all these studies, it can be concluded that reading readiness affects reading and it clearly indicates that higher the reading readiness higher would be the language achievement (Kalavathi, 1994), when such is the case then it is necessary to take adequate steps and introduce certain methods, modes and strategies to enhance reading readiness. The review also clearly indicates much work was done on RR around 1960s and slackened in between and is being revived now.

The present pre school scenario also indicates that the children of 3+ are admitted to L.K.G and are introduced to reading alphabets' numbers and two or three lettered words. But it is pathetic to note that the teachers who introduce the children to reading do not emphasise on the components of reading or take pains to find out whether the child is ready to read. Further, the present urban preschool scenario also presents a vivid picture of a child entering a preschool as early as one+ (chain of international preschools like - Eurokids, Kangroo kids, Headstart etc) and acquiring reading ability through effective reading programs and strategies. The west has also gone ahead with its preschool reading programs for children in the
age group of 2+ itself (Dodge, 2002; Bicket, 2002; Leipzig, 2001) as indicated by some of the websites (www.rgtr.com, readingrockets.com, ncte.com and homeschooling). The children who are devoid of these opportunities show lesser interest in reading.

This clearly indicates that lack of reading readiness is basically a product of lack of training (Ausubel, 1963) and if due cognisance is not given to this fact, the language development, especially the reading performance of the pupils will suffer the most and can act as major deterrentalist for further language acquisition in particular and language and knowledge acquisition in general. Further, it was found out that the strategies to enhance reading readiness are not a much researched area (Doll, 1953; Schonnell, 1961; Downing, 1963; Lynn, 1992) and none has been devised especially for specific Indian conditions, for the age group of 3+, which is the most crucial school entrant period of today’s urban scenario with the acceleration of child development (in cognitive, affective and psycho-motor areas) and, hence a need for the pragmatic analysis of the lacuna in this field arose and also enrichment/developmental programs were felt very much necessary.

Numerous studies have stressed on the positive significant effect of reading readiness on language achievement in general and reading achievement performance in particular (Pikulski, 1973; Lennon, 1979; Krishnnamurti, 1971; Gowan & Scheibel, 1979; Manjula, 1990; Kalavathi, 1994) but the lacuna lies in the age factor and the Indian conditions, where not many tests have been constructed and conducted to test the effect of reading readiness on reading performance and no enrichment strategies have been developed, especially at the chronological age of 3+. All the Indian studies have taken I standard pupils (5+ age group) as their samples. Further, except for a lone study by Patel (1985) none of the studies have identified the underlying factors of reading readiness for the Indian
children, let alone the enhancement of these factors through introducing tasks/strategies/techniques to enrich it and hence the need for the pragmatic analysis of the lacuna in this field and its enrichment programs were felt after the review of literature both empirically and theoretically. Thus, the study intends to shed more light experimentally and generate further purthance on developing the effective training strategies and a reading readiness package and exercises at the most crucial period of the preschool entrants.

The traditional idea of maturation which assume that merely living longer would develop the abilities needed for reading has been shattered by analysis of the problems of teaching reading to children from the lower socio-economic level. The Morphett and Washburne (1931) paper, which established a mental age of 6 ½ years for reading, has lost favour among reading teachers in the west, as evidence has accumulated that many children with mental ages below this level have learnt to read before coming to school, this very same fact has also been emphasized in the present study by the researcher. The lack of particular pre-reading skills, in addition to lack of desire and lack of persistence at a task, often handicap children. For the child whose motivation is doubtful, it is extremely important that readiness be developed prior to competitive reading. This can be done through many strategies and have been fruitful (Patel S.K. 1983), while doing so the following points should be kept in mind.

1. Children become ready to read at different ages.
   A. Girls are usually ready to read before boys of the same age.
   B. Boys may lag by several years.
   C. Same-sex siblings may be ready for reading at vastly different ages.

2. Stressful early reading experiences make children reluctant readers (and reluctant learners).
3. Some authorities think that children who are forced to read and write before they are ready are more likely to develop dyslexia than children who are left to learn at their own pace.

4. Children raised in a language-rich environment have larger vocabularies, are more competent verbal communicators, and are more colorful writers.

5. Children learn the concepts of good writing by reading books (and magazines) that are well written.

Further, as said earlier, age is also a contributing factor, be it the chronological or mental age, educationists and reading researchers, down the ages have emphasized that there should be a minimum mental age of six or six and a half to begin to read (Barr, 1956; Morris, 1959) but was attacked and refused by later researches (Lynn, 1963; Downing, 1963; Dechant, 1964; Dodge, 2000). There are few foreign studies which provide the evidence of very young children under the age of three, learning to read (Lynn, 1963; Dodge, 2000) but none at all, in the Indian arena. However, a careful study of cases described to evidence the reading readiness under 3 years of chronological age suggests that, in the first instance the children concerned, were above average children; instruction was individual and enjoyable; by ‘reading’, was really meant the recognition of letters or of words, in a condition where “English was the mother tongue and first language”.

Hence, a truer assessment of the evidence of early reading should include only those studies which relate to children of average ability and normal or near normal classroom situations, in a condition where “English being a foreign language has been taught as a first language”, only then studies can have relevance in a critical re-examination of the minimum age concept. Holmes (1962) has pointed out:
Other things being equal, the earliest age at which a child can be taught to read is a function of the amount of time or help that the teacher can give to the pupil.

Thus, there arises a question of the role of teaching reading at the appropriate age. Further all the reviewed studies have their samples at the age of $4\frac{1}{2} - 6\frac{1}{2}$, where as in the practical situation the children are being exposed to reading at $3+1$ itself, which itself provides scope to question – At what age do the children really start reading?

The researcher felt the need to study the children of $3+1$ on their reading performance on two counts, they being:

1. Evolutionary acceleration of cognitive, affective and motor skills (children are showing a trend to acquire all the skills earlier than the expected age).

2. Invasion of communication and technology leading towards an enriched knowledge explosion and acquisition environment (access to T.V, educational toys, books catering to preschoolers, compact disks with interactive programs and reading packages.)

Though the present study deals with the sample of the children of $3+$, the age controversy is adequately analyzed and the need to find out whether one could find reading readiness in children as early as the $3+$ group is substantiated.

Further, research shows that early intervention to identify the weakness/ neglected components are necessary; otherwise it might lead to learning disabilities like reading dyslexia or specific reading disability (Stanovich, 1992; Lefrancois, 2000), and the website www.readingrockets, also provide rich information regarding how 2 year olds also learn to read leaving alone 3 year olds, for whom there are different reading programs.
Hence, it is strongly felt that 'the underdeveloped components of RR which are neglected while teaching children to read (not the maturationally weak but neglected due to lack of appropriate learning activities) should be taken care of, by providing adequate enriching strategies'.

It is strange, but true that certain streams of schooling (I.C.S.E/I.G.C.S.E) in a country whose mother tongue is not English, introduces English as first language. Since the children are from urban, elite & educated families, where the child has a multi language exposure, of which English plays a major role, makes the English language acquisition easier. Hence, the researcher felt that instead of discussing the transition of English from first language to second language, to treat it as first language itself as there was an environment for the children to acquire English. Hence, the present study was also chosen to test the reading readiness for English language which is supposedly a foreign language (international language and the language used as mother tongue in most of the urban elite homes) accepted and taught as the first language / mother tongue in most of the English medium schools in the urban areas.

The present day school scenario also presents a lacuna in teaching reading as one of the important skills required for the whole language development. In the allotted periods, the English teacher is more worried about finishing the syllabus than inculcating the language skills. Further, most of the teachers are more worried about the comprehension than the achievement of the skills or testing of the skills, let alone devising strategies to provide an enriching reading program. Especially, reading is shown the corner and most of the teachers are ill equipped about the prerequisites of the reading skill, let alone reading readiness. There is also a dearth of researches in this specific area of developing appropriate strategies and applications in the area of reading readiness, to support the practitioner.
1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

This study involves the following variables, which are conceptualized and defined operationally for the purpose of research:

1. READING READINESS:

Dictionary of education (1923) defines reading readiness to be - 'A level in concept development, is a requisite for learning to read, usually understood to imply a chronological age of six years and IQ of hundred or more, So special handicaps (such as severe personality maladjustment, mutism, faulty vision or hearing etc.) to influence with progress, the physical and mental maturation is necessary for undertaking instructions in reading at a given level of difficulty.

Reading readiness is also described as a stage in development, acquired either through maturation or through previous learning or both, the individual child can learn to read easily and profitably (Downing and Thackray, 1967).

To sum it up the researcher found Robinson’s (1968) definition adequate as he opines 'reading readiness can be defined as various combinations of abilities which result from nature and nurture interacting with each other.'

The present study defines ‘reading readiness’ is a complex of factors like visual (recognition, recall, sequential memory, Discrimination, closure), auditory (recognition, recall, sequential memory, comprehension, discrimination), visual-auditory association, visual motor co-ordination and concept formation (Qualitative, general, spatial and color) which prepares the child to be ready to read. The scores obtained on the reading readiness test battery developed by the investigator represent it.
2. READING PERFORMANCE

Reading performance is the end product of the process – reading readiness. Linguists have mainly associated pronunciation, comprehension and speed (Dechant, 1971) as the factors of reading.

Karlin (1971) opines that reading is the sequential development of skills and habits extending from the lowest primary levels through the highest grades, is one cornerstone of the developmental reading – within this concept of continuous growth is the idea that children learn a kind of reading at each successive level. The reader develops his reading skills and habits along a continuum, each step of his progress leading to a logical next step. At no time can all the steps be taken, for by the very nature of the reading act, to complete a step on the way to reading maturity is to make another step possible, hence the researcher found it suitable to conceive the term ‘performance’ than ‘achievement’ to this continuous act of reading – Reading performance.

In the present study, reading performance involves only two aspects viz, pronunciation and comprehension as the age group is only 3+ and the scores obtained on reading readiness test battery developed by the investigator represent it.

3) MOTHER – CHILD INTERACTION

Research studies in Psychology in the last few decades have accounted for the parental interaction and the child’s achievement and personality, and puts forth two ways in which unique types of thinking, feeling and modes of acting of a particular group of people get transmitted to the next generation:

a) Directly and formally as in educational programs.

b) Informally through parental interaction with their children. Not all parent child interactions arise from the deliberate intention on the part
of the parents to train the children; some of these might arise out of care taking and some out of expressions.

Seers, Maccoby and Lewin (1957) write, actually every interaction between two people has an effect both on their present actions and on their potentialities for further actions. An affectionate hug or a reprimand not only influences what the child is doing at that moment, but adds a small change into his expectations of what will happen in future similar occasions. This expectancy, in turn, increases or decreases the probability that he will act the same way in the future. The process of influencing the child is greatly facilitated when the child develops his language skills.

Symonds (1949) and Reeds (1995) opine that ‘The essence of parent child interaction lies more in how a parent feels than in what a parent does.’ As it is commonly observed, mother spends much time with her preschooler and takes care of almost all the activities of the child. Hence mother-child interaction is considered as a variable influencing reading readiness of the child. It was also considered that the educated urban mothers would interact with their wards in English, which paves way for first language development.

In the present study, the level of mother child interaction was represented by the responses of only the mother on the parent child interaction scale by NCERT. Due to the non-availability of mother-child interaction scale, the mother-child interaction was measured using parent child interaction scale, where in the responses of only the mother was considered and interpreted using the usual criteria of M+1SD and M-1SD (Norms given for parent-child interaction scale was not used). This scale intends to measure parent – child interaction over the verbal patterns of the home, parental guidance, by way of academic guidance or achievement, activities of the family involving the child, willingness to devote time to the child, sharing of personal feeling and experience and parental use of
reward / punishment to encourage learning, approval of the child’s behavior, giving of gifts and money.

4) PEER INTERACTION

According to the Dictionary of education (1923) peer is ‘another of one’s age or status’. Though the parents lay the foundations for social behavior, it is the peer group, which enables the child to develop and practice the skills of co-operation and competition, autonomy and independence and leadership and follower ship (Piaget, 1929). Thus, social interactions with social acceptance by peers constitute a very important stage in the development of the child from dependence to autonomy. One of the important problems for the child after three years is to get along with his peers. Parental love and protection do not offer the child the same satisfaction as do peer relationships. Acceptance and rejection of the peer group mean more to the developing child, it not only affects the personality, popularity, leadership aspect and friendship but also academic achievement.

In the present study it is intended to study the extent of peer interaction and identify the ‘stars’, ‘isolates’ and ‘mediocre’ through the sociometric technique i.e., by plotting peer group matrices.

5) CRITERION REFERENCE TEST (CRT)

As defined by Popham and Hersek (1969), “a criterion referenced test is one which is used to ascertain an individual’s status with respect to some ‘criterion’ (1983, p.3). According to Martuza (1977), “A criterion referenced test is a test used to describe the students performance in terms of his mastery in a well defined content domain ... by comparing his performance with some pre-set standard or criterion for success” (1977, P.7), rather than with the performance of others as in norm – referenced
testing. In the words of Thorndike and Hagen (1979, P.55) "Criterion referenced test means

i) The tasks are drawn from and related to a specific instructional objective.

ii) The form of presentation of the tasks and response to them is set in accordance with the defined objective and

iii) A level of acceptable mastery is defined in advance, with which the performance of each student is compared."

The word 'Criterion' in a criterion-referenced test for many refers to a 'passing score' or 'cut off score' or 'minimum proficiency level.' However, for some, the word 'criterion' refers to clearly defined standard (form, level etc.) of behavior in a specified domain / content area/ task.

In the present study 'criterion' is considered as defined by Thorndike and Hagen. The word 'criterion' refers to tasks drawn from specific instructional objective and its relative level of performance with accordance to mastery, which means that the child will be provided with different and many activities till he achieves mastery of the identified criterion (the child was provided with 2/3 activities for the underdeveloped criterion and further activities were stopped, only after ascertaining that the child had achieved the criterion).

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study, which is being both qualitative and quantitative in nature, is mainly aimed at identifying the underdeveloped components of reading readiness among children of 3+, designing suitable strategies to develop the identified components of reading readiness and trying out the same to study its effectiveness. It also intends to analyze qualitatively the responses
of the children of 3+ towards the introduced strategies. The specific objectives of the study are given below:

1) To identify and select components of reading readiness (RR) and Reading performance (RP).

2) To develop a valid and reliable battery of test on RR and RP for the age group of 3+.

3) To study the relationship between RR (overall) and its different components.

4) To identify the underdeveloped components of RR in children of 3+.

5) To design strategies to develop the underdeveloped components of RR and RR (overall), and RP among children of 3+.

6) To study the effectiveness of the designed to develop the identified components of RR and RR (overall) and RP among children of 3+.

7) To study the relationship between RR and RP (overall and component wise) in children of 3+.

8) To study the relationship between a) RR and (parent) mother child interaction (MCI) b) RP and (parent) mother child interaction.

9) To study the relationship between a) RR and peer group interaction (PGI) b) RP and peer group interaction.

10) To qualitatively analyze the management/principal and the practicing teacher’s outlook on RR and RP and the responses of the children of 3+ towards the introduced strategies.
1.8 HYPOTHESES FOR VERIFICATION

1. There is significant positive relationship between overall Reading Readiness (RR) and its components.
2. The designed strategies are significantly effective in developing the identified components of RR in particular and overall RR among children of 3+.
3. The children of EG will perform better than those of CG on RP.
4. There will be significant positive relationship between RR and RP (overall and component wise).
5. There is significant relationship between (a) Reading Readiness and Mother child interaction (b) Reading Performance and Mother child interaction.
6. There is significant relationship between (a) Reading Readiness and Peer Interaction (b) Reading Performance and Peer Interaction.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Regarding Objective 10 the following research questions are raised;

1) Are the school managements/principals and practicing teachers aware of the RR concept and programs?

2) Do the schools provide for strategies to develop RR before introducing reading to the child?

3) What are the responses of the children towards the introduced strategies?

4) What are the most preferred strategies?
1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1) This being an experimental study is restricted to urban English medium schools wherein children are exposed to spoken English at home and play home.

2) The present study examines only the psychological, environmental and personal factors, and excludes the emotional and physiological factors of RR.

3) The component of 'speed' in reading is not considered in the study, as it is too early to test the speed of reading among the children of 3+.

4) The variation in month wise chronological age of children were not considered in the study as the variation of age was of only 3 months (children's admission age ranged between 3 years 6 months to 3 years 9 months) and its influence on RR might not be considerable.