Chapter III

PROFICIENCY IN READING
CHAPTER – III
Proficiency in Reading

'Reading gives the knowledge of life'

One who reads relates what he reads to his own experiences. The interprets and evaluates the material, exercises reason and imagination and fuses new ideas with previous learning to gain power to think independently.

3.1. Reading

Reading involves recognition of words and sentences and getting the message, and it involves critical and creative thinking.

3.2 Definitions of Reading

(i) "Reading is the total understanding of a message in a text". (Dash 2004:123)

(ii) William Grabe defines, 'Reading is understanding, interpreting or making sense of a given text'. (quoted from the Oxford Handbook of applied linguistics, 2002:51)
3.3 Types of Reading

Reading can be classified under four types. Skimming, Scanning, Extensive and Intensive reading.

Skimming is, quick running movement of one’s eyes over a text to get the main idea of it.
Scanning is, quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information.
Extensive reading is reading a longer text for pleasure. This an activity meant for global understanding.
Intensive reading is to extract specific information by reading a shorter text.
The purpose of this reading is to obtain details

Classification of Reading

1. Skimming - for general information
2. Scanning - for particular information
3. Extensive - for pleasure
4. Intensive - for details

3.4. Role of Reading in English Curriculum

Reading enables the students
i. To have practice in eye-movements along the lines of the print.
ii. To set introduced to new words (vocabulary)
iii. To have new ideas created
iv. To practice criticism and interpreting the quality of texts
v. To develop the ability to evaluate the material or literature.
vi. To gain power to think independently.
vii. To gather more information.

In short, reading is a developmental process that goes on throughout the year in the English Curriculum.

3.5 Exercises on Reading in Arts & Science and Engineering Courses

Text books of Arts & Science and Engineering Courses contain exercises on reading skill for the students' development in reading & understanding. The text books of both kinds of courses offer exercises on reading, but the number and types of exercises vary according to the nature of the course.

3.5.1 Arts & Science

This course offers General paper on English language in the I year. Each lesson in the text book contains an essay or a prose discussing on a specific topic and it is followed by some exercises involving the reading of
the text and responding. (Exercises for writing and Communication are also included)

1) Questions – related to the text or lesson.
2) Matching the words – related to the text.
3) Word Hunt - Fill ups – related to the text and relevant to grammar.
4) Completion of sentences – related to the text.
5) Saying True or False – related to the text.

The above type of questions were asked, and students are expected to answer those questions after reading the lesson.

3.5.2 Engineering Course:

This course offers paper on English for communication for the I year syllabus. English language paper gives focus on listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skill. No prose is prescribed, but passages related to Science is given and the following types of questions were asked to develop knowledge and skill in English language.

1) True or False statements.
2) Questions – eliciting short answers.
3) Choosing the correct answer.
4) Guessing Meanings of words from the context.
5) Note Making
6) Organizing information and ordering jumbled sentences.
7) Making the students to read for the purpose of skimming and Scanning to obtain the gist and specific information of the text.
8) Asking the students to identify the stylistic feature of the text.
9) Asking the students to answer questions pertaining to the content related to the text.
10) Conversion questions related to the conversions of Tables, Charts etc. into passages.

It is also found that Engineering Courses include more number of exercises on reading skill than those given by the Arts & Science courses.

3.6 Testing of Reading Skill

With more and more importance attached to reading skill, three comprehension passages were given to the students of Arts & Science and Engineering, in order to assess their skill in comprehending the passages given for reading. The test given to them was comprised of the following questions.
1) Multiple Choices.
2) True or False statements
3) Questions – Answers in sentences
4) Finding the roots of words
5) Meanings
6) Opposites
7) Expansion of nominal compounds
8) Questions related to structure
9) Voice
10) Tense.

All the above type of questions were set in relation to the three passages given so as to club the activities of reading and responding to questions. The students were expected to give the answers after reading the 3 texts.

**3.7 Purpose of the test**

These exercises were given to test the students’ skill in reading, to test the students’ comprehension of a piece of writing and analyzed the expression of what is comprehended, by giving appropriate responses to the questions asked, with or without modifying the structural or grammatical forms of the units carrying the information.
### Mode of Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Item No.</th>
<th>Type of the Text</th>
<th>Mode of Answering</th>
<th>Type of Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Word 1 (Structure)</td>
<td>Finding the root Word (10)</td>
<td>Based on the given passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Word 2 (Semantics)</td>
<td>Finding the synonyms (10)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Word 3 (Semantics)</td>
<td>Choosing the correct option (10)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Sentence 1 (Structure)</td>
<td>Converting the sentences into Active to passive and present &amp; future to past tense (10)</td>
<td>Based on the given text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Sentence 2 (Semantics)</td>
<td>Stating true or false (5)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Sentence 3 (Structure + Semantics)</td>
<td>Writing the answers to sentence for the questions given (5)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Discourse (Structure)</td>
<td>Identifying the repetitive structure</td>
<td>Based on the competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Discourse (Semantics)</td>
<td>Summarising the paragraphs</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Discourse (Structure + Semantics)</td>
<td>Suggesting topic</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 Reading Skill (Lexical)

In order to test the students skill in reading 3 comprehensive passages were given to them. In the 1st test, a passage with 2 paragraphs dealing with the concept "Second Language" was given. The second passage with one paragraph was about "Japan's Marketing Ability". And the 3rd passage was a reply letter from a dealer to a letter that contains 3 paragraphs.

For each passage 20 questions were asked and altogether 60 questions were asked in relation to 3 comprehension passages. 35 questions were related to words, 23 were related to sentence and the remaining 2 were related to discourse.

3.8.1. Root Word

Keeping word formation in mind, 10 words were taken from the passages and the students were asked to find out the root word for those 10 words. The words given were:

1. amusement 6. production
2. disposal 7. achievements
3. examination 8. development
4. reading 9. collection
5. yourself 10. exploit
16% of Arts & science students, 57.16% of Engineering students 43.33% Girls and 39.66% Boys have given the correct root words.

The correct and wrong responses given by the students are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct Responses</th>
<th>Wrong Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. amuse</td>
<td>1. amusement, amu, jolly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. dispose</td>
<td>2. dis, posal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. examine</td>
<td>3. exam, nation, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. read</td>
<td>4. re, bore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. you</td>
<td>5. self, great, yours, our, you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. produce</td>
<td>6. product, duction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. achieve</td>
<td>7. achievement, ment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. develop</td>
<td>8. development, ment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. collect</td>
<td>9. collect, tion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Exploit</td>
<td>10. ex.expel, explore, expose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On analyzing the responses it is found that Engineering students and girls responded well in this task.
Students gave the following wrong responses:

(1) **Word Repetition**

Some have written the given word 1) amusement - amusement, 2) collection - collection.

(2) **Prefix / Suffix**

Some have written the prefix / suffix as answers.  
1) disposal - dis  
2) reading - re / yourself - self  
3) development - ment.

(3) **Associated word**

A few have given some associated words as answers  
1) amusement - jolly, 2) examination - fear, 3) reading - bore,  
4) yourself - great, 5) Exploit - Expel, Explore, Expose.

(4) **Part of the word**

Some of the students have split the given words and selected one part of the word as answer.  
(1) examination - nation, (2) Yourself - Yours,  
(3) Production - duction

The responses show that students lack knowledge for word formation.
3.8.2 Choosing the nearest meaning

For testing the semantic knowledge of the students 10 words were selected from the passages and the students were asked to convey the meaning for those 10 words given by selecting equivalent words.

The words given are;

1) Desist
2) Enliven
3) Sequence
4) Fatigue
5) Concentrate
6) Triumph
7) Dedicated
8) Work house
9) Source
10) Necessitated

The following percentage of right responses were obtained. Arts and science students - 43.16%; Engineering students - 62%; Girls - 47.83% and Boys - 53.58%.
Both the correct and wrong responses given by the students are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiresomeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devote all attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public institution for the poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get far enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find yourself reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public institution for the rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the rich disabled people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On analyzing the responses of the students in choosing the correct synonyms for the words found in the text, it is found that Engineering students and boys performed better in that task.
Random selection of words from the options given (desist - start; work house - public institution for the rich, triumph - blossom, necessitated - Demanded) is a reason for giving wrong responses.

**3.8.3 Choosing the best option**

In order to test students' comprehension of the text, ten questions along with answer options were given to them and they were asked to choose the correct options, after reading a given passage. The questions are:

1. The main theme of this passage is
   a) Electronics industry in Japan  
   b) Industrial comparison between Japan and Britain.  
   c) The importance of original research in industry.  
   d) The role of Marketing efficiency in Industrial property.

2. The sad rule mentioned in this passage refers to
   a) The lack of variety in Japanese inventions.  
   b) The inability of Japanese to be inventive like the British.  
   c) The poorer marketing ability of the British.  
   d) The inability of the British to be industrious like the Japanese.
3. According to the passage, prosperity in industry depends upon,
   a) Marketing ability
   b) Productivity
   c) Official Patronage
   d) Inventiveness

4. It is evident from this passage that the strength of a country’s industry depends upon
   a) Electronic development
   b) Dedicated work force
   c) Original research
   d) International co-operation.

5. This letter seems to be a reply to
   a) a customer’s letter requesting the dealer to pay compensation for defective machine.
   b) a letter for replacement of an old washing machine with a brand new one.
   c) a letter requesting the dealer for free repair of a washing machine.
   d) a request to a dealer to send his mechanic for repairing a washing machine.

6. The washing machine is to be repaired due to
   a) Faulty Material
   b) Over loading
   c) Improper care
   d) Over use
7. From the letter it can be inferred that Mrs. Vahini
   a) Had been very careful in maintaining the washing machine.
   b) Had been running her home without a washing machine for the past three years.
   c) Had purchased the washing machine during the past three years.
   d) Was put to a lot of inconvenience due to the dealer fault.

8. "Your request" (2nd Paragraph, last sentence) refers to
   a) Mr. Viswanath’s request for return of the authorisation card.
   b) Mrs. Vahini’s request for a brand new washing machine.
   c) A customers request to a trader for free repair of a washing machine.
   d) None of these.

9. It appears that when the above letter was written, the washing machine was.
   a) At Mrs. Vahini’s residence.
   b) At Mr. Viswanath’s repairs shop
   c) Yet to be examined to find out the defect.
   d) Already repaired by Mr. Viswanath’s machanics.
The students responses are;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct response</th>
<th>Wrong response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. d</td>
<td>a / b / c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. a</td>
<td>b / c / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. b</td>
<td>a / c / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. c</td>
<td>a / b / d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. b</td>
<td>a / c / d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following percentage is got. Arts and Science students - 32.66%, Engineering students - 56%, Girls - 47% and Boys - 41.33%.

Engineering students and girls are better in choosing the right responses from the options.
3.9 Reading Skill (Syntactic)

To assess the reading comprehension of students, a passage was given for reading and five sentences were asked and the students were expected to write whether the sentences were true or false.

3.9.1 True or False

The five sentences given to the students are the following:

1) The British were not seem to exploit their inventions.

2) The Japanese success was understood at first.

3) Japanese were able to exploit their strengths in marketing recently.

4) Present and past tense are often used in the passage.

5) EXPLOIT is expand violently with loud noise.
Students response samples are

1) True / False
2) True / False
3) True / False
4) True / False
5) True / False

1. Most of the students are able to answer the questions which were directly taken from the text.
2. Some of the students were not able to answer to question three, since it needs an analysis of the text and converting the tense forms of sentences.

The percentage of right responses from the students are, Arts and science student - 34%; Engineering students - 54%; Girls - 53.33% and Boys - 65.33%. Engineering students and boys did better in this test.

3.9.2. Questions & Answers

Five questions were given to the students for eliciting.

The five questions asked are:

1) What is the use of learning a second language?
2) How many additional languages should one use?
3) Till when should one be not contented?
4) How is fatigue relieved by studying another language?
5) What is the disadvantage of studying many languages?

The right answers produced by the students for all the five questions are

1) Learning a second language gives pleasure.
2) One should use only one additional language.
3) One should not be contented until he finds real enjoyment in reading.
4) Studying another language rests the mental muscles, enlivens the mind by a different sequence and emphasis of ideas thus fatigue relieved while studying another language.
5) The disadvantage of studying many languages is, one may start to read only for amusement instead of seeing the use of reading for his life.

An example for wrong answers are given below.

1) The use of learning second language is to know the second literature.
2) One should choose many additional languages.
3) One should not be contented until he understands / learns the second language.
4) The mere form of speech excites the activity of separate brain cells and reading relieves fatigue.
5) Studying many languages results in confusion is the disadvantage of studying many languages.

The percentage of right responses from the students are as follows. Arts and Science - 52%, Engineering Students - 52%, Girls - 34% and Boys - 18%.

Both Arts and Science students and Engineering Students are in the same level in answering the questions and Girls are doing better when compared to boys.

3.9.3 Conversion of sentence

Considering sentence formation as the point of focus along with reading, 10 sentences in active voice form were taken from the passages, and given to the students and they were asked to convert those sentences into passive voice form.
The sentences given in Active voice form are:

1. We have lost no time
2. We guarantee our washing machines for three years against all defects.
3. We return your machine on Saturday.
4. You will get years of trouble-free service for your washing machines.
5. We cannot assume responsibility for repairs.

Students correct responses are:

1. No time has been lost by us.
2. Our washing machines are guaranteed by us for three years against all defects.
3. Your machine is returned to you by us on Saturday.
4. Years of trouble-free service for your washing machines will be gotten by you.
5. Responsibility for repairs cannot be assumed by us.

Students wrong responses are:

1. The time was not spend to us.
2. There has been guarantee for three years against all defects to our washing machines.
3. Our machine had been returned by you.
4. You may provided years of free service.
5. No responsibility will be considered for account.
Some factors which contribute to the production of wrong responses are:

1. Addition of words - (a) Addition of articles
The time was not lost by us.
(b) Addition of new words
Our washing machines are guaranteed by is for three years against all defects in workmanship.

2. Subject Verb Agreement:
No time have been lost by us.

3. Wrong word choices:
1. Our machine is returned to you by us on Saturday.
2. No time has been lost for they.

4. Change in words
1. No time has been lost for them.
2. No time has been spend by us.

The following right response score emerged: Arts and Science students -8%, Engineering students - 30.66%, Girls -10% and Boys - 32% in

In another test, students were given 5 sentences in present and future tense form drawn from the reading
passage and they were expected to write the past tense form of the sentences. This test is conducted to evaluate their skill in modifying the grammatical form of the input.

The sentences given in present and future tenses are:
1. We certainly agree with you that it is inconvenient.
2. We guarantee our washing machines for three years against all defects in workmanship.
3. You will get years of trouble-free service.
4. The directions for oiling are given.
5. Your machine is returned to you.

**Students right responses**

1. We certainly agreed with you that it was inconvenient.
2. We guaranteed our washing machines for three years against all defects in workmanship.
3. You would have got years of trouble-free service.
4. The directions for oiling were given.
5. Your machine was returned to you.

**Students wrong responses**

We were already agree with you that it is inconvenient.
We were guaranteed our washing machines for three years against all defects in workmanship.
You had get years of trouble free service.
The directions had been oiled.
Her machines has already returned by us.

Some of the factors contributing to the production of wrong responses are:

1. Addition of words
   a. We were guaranteed our washing machines for three years against all defects in workmanship.
   b. We already agreed with you that it was inconvenient.

2. Not changing the words
   a. We certainly agreed with you that it is in convenient.

3. Wrong placement of words
   a. Your machine was returned by us.
   b. Her machine was returned to you.

4. Modification of sentence
   a. The directions had been oiled.

Some of the student have not attempted to change the sentences into the expected form. The common strategies found in both the tests are,
1. Addition of words
2. Wrong placement of words and

The percentages of right responses, in relation to past tense conversion are; Arts and Science Students -20%, Engineering students - 39%, Girls - 6% and Boys 46%.

The overall percentage for both exercises are the following: Arts and Science students – 14%, Engineering Students - 34.83%, Girls - 8% and Boys 39%.

This indicates that the Engineering students and Boys do better in this task.

3.10 Reading Skill - Discourse

A test on reading skill includes 3 questions in relation to discourse. All the three questions were asked from the passages already given to them.

I - Do you find any repetitive structure in the given passage. If so give an example.

II - Summarise the given paragraphs into 2 sentences.

III - Suggest topic for the given passage.
I. With regard to the repetition of structure, only a very few of the students have given the response:

'The boy learns enough Latin to desist it, enough Greek to pass an examination; enough French to get from Calais to Paris, enough German to exhibit a Diploma; enough Italian or Spanish to tell which'.

1. Some students have written the repetitive words as the answers, 'choose well; choose wisely and choose on'.
2. And some students have failed to answer the questions.

The score obtained is as follows, Arts & Science students - 10%, Engineering Students - 0%, Girls - 10% Boys - 0%

II. When the students were asked to summarize 2 paragraphs from the text into 2 sentences a few of the students only attempted to write the expected answer.

The right responses from the students 'Reading gives more pleasure, rests the mental muscles, enlives the mind by a different sequence and emphasis of ideas'.

1. Most of the students have written the main ideas as the answer in phrase form. (Second Language and Reading) instead of writing two sentences.
2. Some have selected a sentence with repetition of some words from the passage and written it as answer. (Choose well, Choose wisely and choose one).

The percentage of correct responses are, Arts & Science Students - 10%, Engineering students - 10%, Girls - 20% and Boys - 0%

III. Regarding topic suggestion, after reading the given passage, some of the students have understood the content and theme are able to come out with appropriate answer. Some responses from the students are ;

1. Knowledge in two languages
2. Two languages and Reading
3. Reading in another language

Most of the students have selected some words from the passage as headline or topic, 'Real Enjoyment' 'trumpet for living' 'Access to second literature' etc. They might have selected such words since they appear to be attractive without minding the content.

The scores obtained for right responses are, Arts - 30%, Engineering - 30%, Girls - 15% & Boys - 15%.

The overall percentage of all the three tests: Arts and Science students 16.66%, Engineering Students - 13.33%, Girls - 15%, Boys - 5%. 

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The overall percentage exhibits that Arts and Science students and Girls are able to respond better than others, to questions related to text and discourse.

### 3.11 Overall Percentage on Reading Skill of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>30.60</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>58.38</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>46.05</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>31.77</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>44.85</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>40.77</td>
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<td>5.00</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall percentage on Reading skill of students displayed that Engineering Students and Girls did better in words, Engineering students and Boys did well in sentences, and Arts and Science students and Girls did better than others in Discourse. Among all the three categories students responded more in words. Next in sentences and minor in discourse. By holding all the percentage it can be concluded that Engineering Students and Girls and Better in Reading skills than Arts and Science students and Boys.
In the task of producing correct responses for different questions. The performance of the English medium students was better when compared to the performance of the students from Tamil medium. Most of the Tamil medium students have difficulty in understanding the reading, passage and responding appropriately. When they were able to understand simple words in reading, they lack the language in producing sentences to answer the questions asked.

By comparing the responses, related to the reading skill of English medium and Tamil medium students it is found that the performance of Tamil medium students is poor with the percentage 2.85 the students from English medium scored 39.46%. The overall percentage for right responses for reading skill of 42.31%.