Chapter IV

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The present study attempted to evaluate the reading comprehension of undergraduate learners in A.M.U. Evaluating reading comprehension means dealing with a number of factors and learner variables. This means probing into what comprehension is, how it is acquired, the differences between reading in the first language and in the second language, how reading relates to cognitive and perceptual abilities and its interface with memory, the complexities in analyzing to read aloud. The nature of what we read must have some relation to how reading takes place. The ESL undergraduate learners have to be probed for comprehension of the given text. Reading involves mental activity some of which is conscious and some automatic. The conscious activity involves a deliberate choice of process which has been probed, among the different levels of readers. The tasks which are given seeks to examine the reading process of sampling, predicting, confirming and correcting (Goodman, 1982).
The present study has been undertaken through studying the processes that the different readers engage in the different text types. This has been devised with a view to ascertaining the different levels of understanding the text. The observed difference were noted and the analysis was done for the different groups of undergraduates. This was then confirmed and the result arrived at.

The survey consisted of a pilot study aimed at 10 students each from the Science, Social Science and Arts stream. It consisted of undergraduate students, both boys and girls in A.M.U. The pilot study was undertaken with a view to ascertaining the relevance and validity of the questionnaire. The learners from the three groups were administered the test and the results were recorded. Few changes were made in the question sheet.

After this initial survey, the two groups of boys and girls from the three streams of Science, Social Science and Arts were given the questionnaire. A total of thirty were taken from each group making it a total of 90 from girls section and 90 from boys section. The questionnaire which was administered had a different set of questions for both the groups. For the Arts/Social Science group the comprehension passage was of a general nature while for the science students the topic was related to their background. The
groups were given 50 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire. Before answering the questionnaire the students were asked to fill up their profile sheet which attempted to assess their competencies in various languages and their inclination towards the target language.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part I consisted of ten multiple choice questions. Part II consisted of cloze test items with a view to ascertaining their comprehension. The scale of measurement had the following breakup in the response items—

i. Exact word

ii. Equally appropriate

iii. Semantically acceptable but syntactically unacceptable

iv. Syntactically acceptable but semantically unacceptable

v. Semantically and syntactically unacceptable

vi. No response

Part III was the editing test where the blanks gave them an option of one correct and incorrect answers. This was done with a view to checking the errors in comprehension. Part IV was the free recall test where the respondents had to recall in about 150 words
all what they had read in the comprehension passage. The analysis was done by breaking the sentence into clausal units and using the survey method of Faigley and Witte (1984) in analyzing the passage on the basis of deletion, permutation, distribution, substitution and no change in items.

The result of the six groups were calculated separately and analyzed. They were later compared to see the variation.
References
