1. REINFORCING READING IN YOUNG MINDS

1.1. Aim
To enhance the reading skills of the undergraduate Engineering students of Karunya University

1.2. Objectives

• To assess the reading habits and skills of undergraduate Engineering students of Karunya University
• To use strategies for enhancing their reading habits & skills
• To teach reading methods of both direct and indirect kind
• To understand the need of including in the time-table periods, reading hours in which teachers help older boys and girls to form study habits, to understand what they read and to build up a deep and lasting interest in reading.
• To lead students to effective comprehension and interpretation by regarding it as responsibilities of the college as of schools.

1.3. Need for the Study
The Tamil Newspaper ‘Dhinamalar’, on November 15, 2013 reported that 40% of school students in Tamil Nadu do not possess reading skill due to the ‘All Pass Scheme’ of the Tamil Nadu Government by which school students up to the ninth standard are not failed. The subsequent classes and common examinations become a great challenge for them later because by then they have completely lost their reading habits.
Many students entering college today do not have the reading skills needed to do effective work in their courses. A related problem is that students often lack the skills required to think in a clear and logical way. What is needed is the need to develop effective reading and clear thinking. Students now live in a culture where people watch an average of over five hours of television every day. All that passive viewing does not allow much time for reading. Reading is a skill that must be actively practiced. Therefore it is necessary to make our students think why we read, and also reinforce the benefits of reading in their minds.

1.4. What is Reading?

Reading behavior is receiving communication, making discriminative responses to graphic symbols and decoding graphic symbols to speech (Gibson). Reading may be defined as the act of receiving meaning from a written form. It is the ability to interpret linguistic sounds in their graphic and symbolic representation. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. Like all language, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader’s prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement.

1.5. Reading for Perception

According to Rosalind Percy (Teaching of English, p. 199), perception is the basis of all science and knowledge. It is the process of getting, interpreting, selecting and organizing sensory information. Reading like listening is a decoding process. It involves
physical, intellectual and emotional reactions. In the process of reading, one becomes familiar with the sound system of the language.

Perception entails the ability to recognize the graphic symbols in print and connect it to their corresponding vocal sounds. The perception extends from sounds to words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and chapters. Rosalind Percy points out three components in the skill of perceiving:

- Recognition of the graphic symbols,
- The correlation of these with formal linguistic elements and
- The correlation of these with meaning.

Reading becomes meaningful only if we get at the meaning behind the graphic symbols and the sounds. The two organs that play a major role in perception are the Eye and the Brain. They engage in a transactional way. The eye picks up the print like a vacuum cleaner that sweeps up dirt on a carpet. Whatever is picked goes into a bag, here the brain. Print is recorded by the eye and the brain processes it. Or what the brain directs, the eye perceives from the print. Brain determines what is relevant and important.

![Fig. 1 – Perception through the eye and the brain](Rosalind Percy, *Teaching of English*, 199)
So perception is both visual and non-visual. Non-visual is memory or what the brain already knows. While the eye moves from one end of the book to the other i.e. from left to right it has its fixation points and jumps from one fixation to another. Whatever is gathered between these fixations is called the Eye Span. So the eyes of a good reader have good and long eye span and he may take in phrases and sentences. Unwanted, irrelevant and even print errors are taken in. But the brain processes it all. With knowledge stored already. For example read the following sentence.

“New Delhi is the Capitol of India”.

The reader reads through the sentences normally as any other sentences even though there is a spelling error in the word ‘Capitol’. It is because the already stored knowledge knows the correct spelling “Capitol; Hence there is no hindrance to the reading. So we find that perception takes place as a normal activity. As the speed of reading improves perception also improves.

Dr. G. Manivannan (2011) points out that a language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and communicate to others. It is a communication by word of mouth. It is the mental faculty or power of vocal communication. It is a system for communicating ideas and feelings using sounds, gestures, signs or marks. Any means of communicating ideas, specifically, human speech, the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language. This is a system for communication. A language is the written and spoken methods of combining words to create meaning used by a particular group of people.
“Written languages use symbols (characters) to build words. The entire set of words is the language’s vocabulary. The ways in which the words can be meaningfully combined is defined by the language’s syntax and grammar. The actual meaning of words and combinations of words is defined by the language’s semantics. (Manivannan)

1.6. Mechanics of Reading

What happens when we read? Our eyes do not move smoothly along the printed line but in a series of jerks. The actual reading is done in a flash when the eye pauses between two eye spans. We think that we understand what we read by nothing the meaning of each successive word. It has been proved experimentally that the eye of the reader moves along the line by a series of jumps. Occasionally the jumps are short ones extending over a single word, but generally there are jumps over several words – or whole sentences some times. In a poor reader the eye regresses or goes back often.

The number of words which the eye takes in (understands) in one jump is called the Eye span of an individual. The longer the eye span, the more fluent is the reader, the shorter, the poorer. Mature reading habits are marked by widening of the eye span, reduction in backward movements of the eye and shortening of the duration of fixation pauses. Poor readers become conscious of individual letters ‘B-a-d bad’, and lose sight of the whole word. They murmur as they read, their eye goes back often and they use their finger or pencil to point to individual words in print.

So the teacher should make reading interesting through a number of activities, like drawing a sketch and writing a sentence underneath. He may use flash cards instead,
to help them and identify the objects or actions. Some commands may be flashed on cards; pupils read and carry out the commands.

1.7. Process Involved in Reading

Language is a part of human psychology, a kind of behaviour, the immediate function of which is communication. It is ‘a system or arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates’. ‘It is a patterned system of arbitrary sound symbols’, according to general linguistics theory.

The various systems of language that operate at different levels are: a system of organizing sounds, making words, arranging words, organizing meaning and visual symbols for writing. Corresponding to these levels a language has five structures:

- Phonological
- Morphological
- Semantic
- Graphic
- Syntactic

The graphic structure is the visual representation of the spoken language. In a hierarchical organization the Semantic Structure is the deepest while the Phonological Structure is superficial.

Students must be made to understand that language is basically speech, while many languages have a written form in which few graphic symbols, such as letters, punctuation marks, etc., are used to represent the sounds. Students should be told that each alphabet does not represent each phoneme of a language; that in English there are 44 phonemes, while the Roman alphabet has only 26 letters; that it differs from language to
language. They can be introduced to phonemic transcription, and how it can be referred to in dictionaries like the Advanced Learners’ Dictionary of current English.

The sound system of a language also involves stress and intonation. These are Supra Segmental features of a language, while vowels and consonants are Segmental features. The emphasis (stress) in words and in longer phrases or sentences could bring about change in the meaning. Similarly the intonation on the sentence could either sound like a request or an angry command.

After perceiving the symbols and the sounds, a reader has to be taught to make sense of all these put together. As language’s primary function is communication one must understand what the writer wants to communicate through his writing. The reader should be able to arrive at the meaning, distinguishing fact from opinion, guessing and interpreting. Thus, we note that reading has all these processes of Symbol, Sound and Sense.

1.8. **Reading helps in bettering our communication skills**

Reading helps in bettering our communication skills. Bettering our communication skills aims at:

- Empowering students for career opportunities and economic development.
- Reading improves their overall language skills as well as critical thinking, oral presentation, interviewing, debate, and research skills as needed by future engineers and technical experts.
- Reading helps to increase their awareness of issues and concerns of businesses in emerging technologies.
1.9. **Reading is a thinking process (Betts)**

English ability acquired throughout the studies makes students productive, creative and confident in the use of technology and understand the impact of technology in the region and worldwide; and aware of the work environment. They will be able to develop work related skills, develop values and attitudes about work, employment and the workplace and take their place as confident communicators, critical and imaginative thinkers, lifelong and active participants in technology fields.

1.10. **Reading to seek for facts and improve knowledge**

Students who read do better at college. And they don’t just do better at subjects like English and Communication. They do better at all subjects and they do better all the way through college. In books we may find all the wisdom and knowledge which has been attained by men. We need to know what books to use, and how to use them. We need to establish the accuracy of facts and be dissatisfied with the guesses and wide generalizations which mark the immature mind. The scientist or technologist, and any person who wants to be accurate will use reading to check facts and discover errors by the use of books. The young adult, as he begins his training in his workshops, or at the accounts desk, will turn to his books and check and re-check until he is sure that he is right.

Dr. Manivannan points out that the latest and the most advanced discoveries and inventions in science and technology are being made in the universities located in the United States of America where English language is the means of scientific discourse.
1.11. Reading maketh a full man (Francis Bacon)

Reading has always been a great source of knowledge. Today reading is a must for social and economic advancement and has become a compulsory need to know more and learn more. The importance of reading has been realized with everybody trying to make a conscious effort to read more. Even in the olden days when reading was not cultivated or encouraged, there was a substitute for it in the form of religious sermon or oral tradition. With the advent of the printing machine in many households the family would sit together for an hour or so in the evenings and listen to books being read aloud. Today we not only read, we also read more and more and catch up with the events taking place around us.

Reading skills are essential to succeed in society. Those who are good readers tend to exhibit progressive social skills. A person who is widely read is able to mix with others. He is a better conversationalist than those who do not read. He can stand his ground. Reading broadens the vision. A good reader can interact with others in a far better way because reading has widened his vision and point of view. Thus a widely-read man is a better conversationalist and is able to see the other side or point of view.

Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. A student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader. Good reader can understand the individual sentences and organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments and detect implications. Good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are employed in and they can do it quickly. Educational researchers have also found a strong correlation between
reading and vocabulary knowledge. Students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. This is very surprising, since the best way to acquire large vocabulary is to read extensively and if you read extensively you’re likely to be or become a good reader.

Books are very faithful friends of a reader. They never betray but accompany the reader, either sitting alone or traveling. Those who are habitual of reading feel comforted with books. It soothes and relieves tension and loneliness. Medically it also plays a vital role to eradicate depression and unrest. Books are great assassins of boredom. It just kills the boring time.

In this advancing world where everything is moving fast, to keep the pace, we need to do things that benefit us. Reading is no doubt a stupendous benefit. It can make a stagnant, barren mind rich and cultivatable. It pours rich thoughts to our minds. Reading also helps one to see the present in relation to the past and the future and thus develops a historical perspective.

Reading no doubt brings out the best of man. But care should be taken to ensure that reading doesn’t become a substitute for real life. The moment one ceases to enjoy the ordinary pleasures and happiness of life and is content to enjoy them vicariously through fictional and historical representation, one loses all the benefits of reading and loses contact with life.

As a result of reading books over a period of time, a learning process is formed. This learning process has to be carefully passed on to our next generation. But with the cinema and television taking up a great deal of attention of children, teenagers and even adults are losing their habit of serious reading.
Dr. Manivannan, who based his assumptions of language on psychology made claims that “language is nothing but a habit formation”. According to him, language is learnt through use, through practice. In his view, “the more one is exposed to the use of language, the better one learns”.

The spoken word is so often used to disguise our thoughts, but in books we can read what men and women thought in the past, and what they are thinking in lands far away, where we would not even understand the spoken word. Through reading we become part of a big community of civilized people; so many different minds of different ages and races and places; so many people whose wisdom and experience are greater than our own.

1.12. Reading is a psycholinguistic game (Goodman)

Those students, who read often and widely, get better at it. “Reading exercises our brains. Reading is a much more complex task for the human brain than watching TV is. Reading strengthens brain connections and actually builds new connections. Reading improves concentration” (best books for kids.com, 2012). Reading improves “a child’s vocabulary, leads to more highly-developed language skills and improves the child's ability to write well” (best books for kids). Readers use a variety of reading strategies to assist with decoding (to translate symbols into sounds or visual representations of speech) and comprehension. Readers may use morpheme, semantics, syntax and context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words. Readers integrate the words they have read into their existing framework of knowledge.

Language is something specific to humans. It is the basic capacity that distinguishes humans from all other living beings. Language remains potentially a
communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes.

1.13. **Psychologists’ views on reading**

Reading is among the most common and highly developed human skills, yet it has received little sustained attention from psychologists and remains largely the area of therapists and educators. As a result there are more studies on how one learns to read and why he or she may fail to read, than on how one does read when he or she can.

**1.14. Reading Ability**

The factors involved in reading ability are:

- General maturity
- Level of general intelligence
- Abilities of visual and auditory recognition and discrimination of word patterns
- Environmental factors in reading ability
- Emotional attitudes of interest, individual application and confidence.

These five sets of factors, mental and environmental, act interdependently to produce the composite power of reading ability.

1.14.1. **General Maturity**

We may define degree of general maturity as the level of growth reached by a pupil as assessed by development in a number of different directions in relation to chronological age. We may, therefore, think of any 18-21 year-old as having grown: (a) physically (b) intellectually (c) socially and (d) emotionally. Obviously development in each of these four fields is uneven in most students; there is often a difference in the levels reached in the four areas. Sometimes, of course, there is development beyond the
norm, so that some of them are advanced intellectually, their social behavior is superior to that of most of their friends and they show stable emotional attitudes. At the other end of the scale are college students, whom we all know, are physically and mentally subnormal and socially retarded. The pattern of growth is very much an individual matter and hence to lump together measures of different kinds and to call the product general maturity has severe limitations. But nevertheless, it is a serviceable concept for use in educational and psychological work, provided we are continuously careful to note the many separate deviations that it may blur.

Increasingly during the past two decades, general maturity has been stressed as a factor in reading ability. This has been due to the attention that has been drawn to the relation between immaturity and reading failure leading to the postponement of formal reading and to the introduction of programmes of preparatory reading or reading readiness, of varying quality and length. Therefore, teachers should wait at the college level before launching all students on the same formal task for which some are not at that point sufficiently well equipped to succeed.

If students are physically or mentally or experientially immature, then we are predisposing many of them to failure in early reading instruction if we do not first do something about their particular immaturity. Vocabulary development, environmental background, motivation, physical maturity, particularly of vision and hearing, mental maturity and emotional stability, are all involved in producing reading achievement. But we must remember that there are also plenty of examples of students who come from good schools are completely normal, but who fail to progress in reading.
1.14.2. Level of General Intelligence

While measures of intelligence may be a guide in planning reading instruction, and in terms of expectancy of result, yet we should provide for each pupil’s reading needs with something of an open mind. There are not a few intelligent children who fail to make normal progress in reading, and numerous examples of rather dull pupils who can read quite fluently.

1.14.3. Abilities of Visual and Auditory Recognition and Discrimination of Word Patterns

In addition to general intellectual power, ability in reading requires normal powers of perception in respect to the visual and the auditory patterns of words. These aptitudes, partly inborn, partly acquired, embrace firstly an ability to discriminate and to remember the visual patterns of words, and secondly, the ability to associate sound units of words with the correct groups of letters – partly a breaking – down and partly a building-up process. Obviously, efficiency in these abilities is to some extent dependent upon normal powers of sight and hearing. Defects in either of these senses can cause acute reading deficiencies. This is evident from the causes of pupils whose intelligence, sensory powers, language background and emotional attitudes are normal, but who exhibit gross reading disability in either the visual or the auditory perceptual fields.

1.14.4. Environmental Factors in Reading Ability

Environmental factors in reading ability are language background and extent of experience – the former dependent to a large extent on the latter. Although the college does and can do much in the matter of language background and general experiences with which speech and vocabulary are so intimately entwined in their growth, yet this element
in reading ability is a concomitant of home conditions. There is now substantial research evidence establishing the close relationship between reading and social factors. But home background is a wide and embracing term and includes influences of an emotional as well as a material kind, influences subtle as well as direct in their effects.

Home background can include:

- economic conditions such as relate to income of the family, size of home, sufficiency and regularity of meals, sleep, etc.;
- opportunities for play and for social experiences of different kinds - these, of course, are linked with the growth of concepts and vocabulary;
- nature and amount of speech and language patterns of children particularly as they are influenced by the talk of their parents;
- attitudes towards reading and writing, the amount of reading done in the home and the availability of books of varying levels of difficulty;
- quality of family life in terms of inter-parental relationships as they influence the child’s security and personality growth generally.

1.14.5. Effect of Adverse Emotional Conditions

While research has generally revealed that pupils with rich informational backgrounds and high verbal opportunities make more rapid progress in reading than those whose backgrounds are meager, yet it would seem that these conditions are also linked with the kind of emotional relationships between parents and children that exist within the family unit. There is ample evidence to show that disability in reading is very frequently associated with adverse emotional conditions within the family, such as those of overt parental hostility, parental rejection, neurotic conditions, and separation of
parents. Superior reading ability is associated with the number of books available at home, the educational level of the parents, and the favourable attitudes of the child to his school or college.

1.14.6. Emotional Attitudes of Interest, Individual Application and Confidence

Ability in reading, as with other learning skills, is just as sensitive to positive and negative emotional attitudes. The student learns best when he is eager to try and when he is interested. Some teaching methods produce these attitudes, others result in certain students developing a feeling of failure and frustration. Some teachers, too, show a sensible attitude towards the student’s reading problems by widening his experiences, praising his efforts, and not expecting unduly high standards in the early stages. Others do the opposite by limiting the child’s opportunities, robbing him of confidence, or pushing him along too fast, ultimately into the abyss of confusion. Some students need extensive therapeutic help before remedial teaching can even commence. Others need opportunities for emotional expression parallel with their specific instruction in reading. In fact, those working with cases of reading failure are almost inclined to regard every case as one of personality disturbance as well as poor reading achievement.

1.15. Reading is the act of responding to printed symbols so that meaning is created (Jenkinson)

Reading is done mainly for two reasons. We read to gather information and for pleasure. Information gathering is a cognitive process. We read referential material to obtain factual information. We also read to develop our knowledge so that we can manipulate ideas effectively and even influence the behaviour of others. Reading for
pleasure is purely for emotional gratification. For both these kinds of reading to be successful, one should have a clear comprehension of what he is reading.

Reading with full comprehension of a written material is a skill. A good reader has to be actively aware of his responsibility to get at the meaning of what he is reading. For this he has to go through three stages of reading:

1.15.1. Recognition stage
Recognition stage involves recognizing the spoken word in its written form.

1.15.2. Structuring stage
At the Structuring stage the reader sees the syntactic relationships of the item and understands the structural meaning of those items.

1.15.3. Interpretation stage
The third stage is Interpretation stage. The reader comprehends the significance of words, phrases, sentences in the overall context. He is now in a position to distinguish between facts and opinions. This is the stage when one actually reads for information or pleasure. This is the ultimate aim and the whole process of reading is geared to attain this.

The Semantic patterns of lexical items are clearly understood by a person who reads well. He is able to comprehend the relationship between the author and his text, between the reader and the text, between the text and the culture. He becomes an expert in getting the clues from the title, author, publisher, date, the blurb, the index and the list of contents.

Training the pupils in reading for comprehension can be done by selecting books that are not too difficult or unfamiliar. They should be trained to read fast under timed-reading projects. Books for intensive and extensive reading should be suggested.
Skimming and scanning should be practiced to hunt for what they want and then to do a
detailed study. Preferably silent reading of the material should be encourages which
enables focused reading. Besides increasing their academic grades, it gives motivation for
further reading.

1.16. **Reading enhances our creativity**

“Reading develops a person’s imagination. This is because when we read our
brains translate the descriptions we read of people, places and things into pictures. When
we’re engaged in a story, we’re also imagining how the characters are feeling. We use
our own experiences to imagine how we would feel in the same situation. Reading helps
students develop empathy” (Best books for kids.com).

1.17. **Reading gives us Pleasure**

Much of our reading is for pleasure. Reading is a great form of entertainment. A
paperback book doesn’t take up much space so it can be taken anywhere. Books kill
loneliness and boredom. Books can be read while waiting in a queue, while waiting for a
friend who’s running late or during a flight delay at an airport. Reading relaxes the body
and calms the mind. These days people seem to have forgotten how to relax and
especially how to be silent. Sources on best books for reading reports that the constant
movement, flashing lights and noise which bombard our senses when we’re watching
TV, looking at a computer or playing an electronic game are actually quite stressful for
our brains. On the other hand, it reports, that when we read, we read in silence and the
black print on a white page is much less stressful for our eyes and brains.

Reading, of all the language skills, opens up before us new worlds of experience.
Books are our never failing friends giving us enjoyment. There is no much literature -
ancient and modern – in English, particularly fiction and drama and a wealth of scientific literature that we cannot keep pace with it. Our students need to read all this and much more.

They need always to read newspapers, journals and magazines and keep up to date. In our day to day life we need to read several reports, articles, notices, directions, timetables, road and street signs and plenty of other printed materials to lead an intelligent and purposeful life.

The school student will benefit immensely if he is trained to read English through different stages of his education. He will forever cherish the reading habit and enrich his life with people’s experiences recorded in books. He should be stimulated to read all these and talk about them. Very few schools, unfortunately, draw up any plan for teaching reading systematically and providing books and other materials outside their environment to improve the reading skills of their students.

A.W. Frisby says that the importance and pleasures (of reading) are not sufficiently appreciated. Reading helps us to spend our free time pleasantly and to enter onto the life of the world and of spiritual matters. We should encourage the students accordingly.

The Kothari commission recommended that English must be taught in India as a library language. i.e. mainly for reading purposes only. Our students should be able to read books on science and technology and other disciplines and gather information. They should read for pleasure. Thirdly their knowledge of language improves with more and more reading.
1.18. Importance of Reading in English and its Special Relevance to India

Having been ruled by the British for over two centuries has given Indians an easy access to mastering English language, and innumerable opportunities for advancement in the field of science and technology. Many Indians have become so skilled in English language and have won many international awards for creative and comparative literatures during the last few years. Of late Indian authors, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga have won the prestigious booker prizes for their books *The God of Small Things*, *The Inheritance of Loss* and *White Tiger*.

Over the years, English language has become one of our principal assets in getting a global leadership for books written by Indian authors and for films made by Indians in English language. English language has brought many advantages to us at the international level. It comes to our aid in our commercial transactions throughout the globe. It is the language of the latest business management in the world and proficiency in English has brought laurels to many Indian business managers. English is a means not only for international commerce; it has become increasingly essential for inter-state commerce and communication.

In India, people going from North to South for education or business mostly communicate in English, which has become a link language. Keeping this in mind, the Parliament has also recognized English as an official language in addition to Hindi. All the facts of history and developments in present day India underline the continued importance of learning English in addition to vernaculars.

Some of the states of India are witnessing popular increase in public demand for teaching of English language from the primary classes. The great demand for admission
in English medium schools throughout the country is a testimony to the attraction of English to the people of India. Many of the schools in the country have English as the sole or additional medium of instruction.

A language attracts people because of the wealth of literature and knowledge enshrined in it. English poses no danger to Indian languages. The Indian languages are vibrant and are developing by the contributions of great minds using them as their vehicle of expression. English is available to us as a historical heritage in addition to our own language. We must make the best use of English to develop ourselves culturally and materially so that we can compete with the best in the world of mind and matter. English language is our window to the world (Dr. Manivannan).

English language is one tool to establish our viewpoint. We can learn from others experience. We can check the theories of foreigners against our experience. We can reject the untenable and accept the tenable. We can also propagate our theories among the international audience and readers.

We can make use of English to promote our worldview and spiritual heritage throughout the globe. Swami Vivekananda established the greatness of Indian view of religion at the world conference of religions in Chicago in 1893. He addressed the gathering in impressive English. Many spiritual gurus have since converted thousands of English people to our spirituality by expressing their thought and ideas in masterful English. English has thus become an effective means of promoting Indian view of life, and strengthening our cultural identity in the world.
English is an immensely varied language, having absorbed material from many other tongues. It is spoken by more than 300 million native speakers, and between 400 and 800 million foreign users. It is the official language of air transport and shipping; the leading language of science, technology, computers, and commerce; and a major medium of education, publishing, and international negotiation. For this reason, scholars frequently refer to its latest phase as World English.

1.19. The community of Authors and Readers

There are the great teachers like Mohammed or Jesus or Plato. There are people in this community who can present to us a picture of our own world, so that we seem to see it more clearly. There are people who have thought of an idea and have given us their thought in a book. The man who invented the wheel did not need to write a book. But the men who evolved a method of using the power of water to generate electricity needed to describe their method very clearly in order to help other people to make use of their ideas. Some men have experienced great suffering or intense love, or have seen great courage. They have given us the opportunity to recognize, in our lives, or in the lives of other people, the same kind of experience, so that we can better understand ourselves and other people. Some authors have laughed at the world, or at a little piece of it; and we can laugh with them.

Through books we can become greater than ourselves. Alone we face the world and all the confusing people, places and events in the world, each with his own puny intelligence, and limited experience. Of course, we might learn from watching other people. But in that way each community would learn slowly, and each step in the
progress of civilized man would have to be taken over and over again. Reading can help us to make use of the past and of the experience of great and noble people.

1.20. Training in Comprehension

Comprehension has different purposes. A consideration of the function of reading in relation to different forms of material immediately suggests that understanding and interpreting differ in purpose in different situations. The boy who so avidly wants to know how to train pet dogs requires to extract an accurate step-by-step understanding of what he reads so that he can put it into practice. The boy who is reading about racing cars and their drivers is mostly satisfying his curiosity at an enjoyment level, in much the same way as he goes to the cinema. He brings away with him a few facts but it is immaterial whether he remembers them or not, except to recount them to his peers. So with different material in different situations the purpose and level of understanding varies. The dog trainer is not unlike the student; he must understand and remember all the facts, the only difference being that some of the facts remembered by the student are worthless and will not stand the test of practical application.

On the other hand, the student may at times just skim certain passages to glean the main general idea, or he may read an article, a play or a novel to supplement his knowledge or experience in a general way, or from a particular angle. At other times he must search his material with top level intellectual power to select facts that fit into an argument or a theory. On still other occasions he must marshal every fact with completeness and closeness, discarding irrelevant issues, if he is to make the correct inference or arrive at a logical conclusion.
There will be situations also in which the reader may be seeking to interpret the deeper and perhaps more sensitive or aesthetic meaning of the writer or the poet through his choice of words or phrases, his form of imagery or rhythm, or the nature of his plot or the philosophy of his message.

Now while all these various forms of comprehension and interpretation in reading come only through much reading allied at times to writing, it should be the function of the teachers to help students to make the fullest use of reading in every sense. In other words, it should be a major objective of colleges these days to lead children to effective comprehension and interpretation.

No doubt some of the weakness found in colleges regarding these aspects of reading instruction lies in the fact that they are not regarded as responsibilities of the college but of schools. Too often colleges believe that children will have developed powers of comprehension and study skills for themselves. While this is probably true of the top thirty or forty per cent of students, it is not true of the majority. We need to include in our time-table periods when we help older boys and girls to form study habits, to understand what they read and to build up a deep and lasting interest in reading. American research has shown that we can contribute considerably to the improvement of comprehension and the development of study skills by teaching methods of both a direct and an indirect kind.

1.21. Types of Reading

Reading is an active receptive skill. It involves a lot of simultaneous activities with the reader decoding the message, getting the information that he wants,
understanding the meaning and message of the author, predicting and interpreting and so on. So reading to be a fruitful activity, pupils should be taught how to read.

There are innumerable ways in which reading can be done and they all fall under certain types of reading. Each expert in this field has his own way of suggesting the types of reading. They suggest types like close reading, rapid reading, speed reading, systematic reading, evaluative reading, in-depth reading, reading aloud, silent reading, skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading.

1.21.1. Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is taught at the initial stages for the pupils to recognize the phonic sound symbols and learn to intimate after the teacher. This will help in learning the proper pronunciation of the words, stress, intonation and pauses. This kind of monitored reading will help in reading with feeling and expression while the mistakes are corrected too.

Having introduced the subject matter of the lesson orally first, the teacher should demonstrate reading aloud, by drawing their attention to word groups and sense groups. They would listen and repeat after him. He should drill the correct forms, when they go wrong. Their manner of reading shows if they are reading with understanding or not.

Reading aloud, like Speaking is a great art. Some people read their radio talks or their lecture script very fluently and meaningfully. Though the occasions in life for such reading aloud are rare, it is a useful training to be given to the students. In our classrooms, silent reading has greater importance than reading aloud. From the learning point of view, reading aloud in fact makes their silent reading more meaningful.
For training the students in reading aloud, the teacher should acquire a good knowledge of phonetics and should have a good ear for detecting errors. He should be a good model Reader observing correct pronunciation, stress, intonation and pauses. Pupils imitate their teacher. He should stop them when they go wrong and correct them, drilling the correct sounds.

The aim should be to make them fluent readers with comprehension. To ensure reading with understanding, the matter to be read should be orally explained before they are asked to read it aloud.

A lot of reading aloud by rotation goes on in our classrooms. It must be seen whether the pupils are reading with understanding or only “barking at print”. A.W.Frisby says “The danger of too much reading aloud as a method of teaching reading is that it may lead to short circuiting of the meaning whereby the written word does not convey meaning but becomes merely a symbol for a collection of sounds and is translated straight in sounds”. Poor readers tend to concentrate on individual words as they read. Reading aloud should not become a habit. A pupil may tend to read the text loudly without comprehending anything. This will slow down one’s reading and waste one’s energy. The noise could be a disturbance to others nearby.

As said earlier too much reading aloud will eclipse the meaning from the students and they will end up deciphering words only. The teacher, by his model reading should draw their attention to word groups and sense groups and how to pronounce them together. Reading aloud can be art, if done well. This is best done as intensive reading with Detailed textbooks.
1.21.2. Silent Reading

On the other hand Silent Reading is what every pupil must learn soon. It is an efficient way of reading and is useful to everyone. The speed of reading will increase and time and energy is saved. The pupil can concentrate on the meaning and assimilate more information, without bothering about pronunciation. Whatever he might choose to read, he can read at his own pace enjoying what he is reading.

Most of our adult reading is silent reading. The signs of good silent reading are

- Widening of the eye span
- Reducing the backward movement of the eye as one reads.
- Shortening the duration of fixation pauses between eye jumps.

After the pupils have learnt about 300 words orally, silent reading may be started. The teacher may draw a sketch on the blackboard and write a paragraph underneath for silent reading. He could also use graded story books of which there are plenty now-a-days, to practice silent reading.

Silent reading helps one to develop speed and comprehension. The speed of reading may be 100 to even 1000 words per minute. Pupils must practice and increase their speed. Silent reading helps pupils to work at their own pace. The matter to be read silently must be easy to read. Too many difficult words in the passage will hinder speed. They should be spaced conveniently at the rate of one to fifty running words. Unfamiliar grammatical forms like “will have gone”. “Would have left” must be reduced.

Good silent reading skills prepare the pupils for library reading on their own. The teacher should have a few lessons from the supplementary Readers read silently every week. He should see that there are no lip movements and no backward movement of the
eye as they read. A few comprehension questions, local and global, may be set for pupils to answer, after they have read the passage. In the library period multiple copies of books may be circulated and silent reading organized. Then there may be question and answer and discussion sessions based on the passage. The teacher may introduce the pupils to all the story books in the library.

1.21.3. Skimming

Skimming means going through a text to find out its suitability of content for a specific purpose. Before starting to read a text in detail, the reader should take a moment to preview the text. Read quickly, without pausing to study the details. This is called skim reading or skimming. The reader should quickly find out the following:

- The target audience
- The type of text
- The purpose of the author
- The content of the text

When a person reads for information or for the simple pleasure of reading, his primary object is only general comprehension and not a language study. He locates topic sentences and ignores passages or paragraphs. He wants to focus only on what interests him. It is a kind of superficial reading with the eyes running over the text and stopping only where he finds what he wants. When a pupil wants to locate a particular word he skips many pages and thumbs through the dictionary until he locates the word. He locates the word, reads the meaning and then closes the book. He doesn’t bother to read anything more than that.
1.21.4. Scanning

Rosalind Percy (p. 193) explains that scanning is done when a person wants to have a thorough study of the text. His aim is to comprehend everything and study carefully even the structure and vocabulary of the language. Just as the scanning done by a physician is to locate and diagnose the cause of a sickness, the person scanning wants to have a detailed study of what he is reading. When a pupil wants to have a detailed study of a word, he would read every other information related to the word. He would learn the meaning or definition, the origin of the word, the synonyms and antonyms of the word, whether it is a noun or an adjective, the different shades of meaning for the same word, and even how the word is pronounced. So here he does a mini research on the word and that is Scanning.

1.21.5. Extensive Reading

Rosalind further explains that extensive Reading is a non-detailed study of a text, or books and magazines. It may be done for the purpose of collecting some information or merely for pleasure. Extensive Reading aims at cultivating reading habits, enriching knowledge, enabling pupils to read with comprehension and speed. Language study is not its aim, but it is only a byproduct. Supplementary Readers are prescribed at the school along with intensive readers, for the purpose of extensive reading. Pupils are always encouraged to read extra. This will inculcate in them a passion for reading and it settles down like a hobby, a pastime. No teaching is expected to take place in the class with regard to these supplementary readers. Reading is done as a home assignment, after a brief introduction by the teacher. Or it is done in class, if a period is allotted, as a silent reading. The teacher can test their comprehension by asking a few questions. The pupils
should be encouraged to consult a dictionary if they want to know the meaning of an unfamiliar word only if those words are crucial to their understanding of the text.

Smt. Mehrunisa and Prof. V. Ganapathy (*Teaching of English*, p. 20) explain that extensive reading involves reading in quantity without bothering to check every unknown word or structure. Our main purpose in helping our students with extensive reading should be to train them to read fluently in English for their own enjoyment and without the aid of a teacher. Students are encouraged to read widely on subjects which interest them personally (artistic, political, social, scientific) and share what they have enjoyed with their fellow students. They are expected to be able to discuss not only the content but the implications of what they have enjoyed with their fellow students. They are expected to be able to discuss not only the content but the implications of what they read.

Reading now becomes a technique, not an end in itself, and language becomes a vehicle, a tool and a model. The material that the students are encouraged to read should be more easily and readily accessible in language and content than that which is studied intensively.

Extensive Reading should play an important part in the process of second language learning for several reasons. First, it is an activity that can be carried out by the student, on his own, outside the classroom. It thus complements the learning that takes place in the classroom because it provides valuable reinforcement of language already presented in the classroom as well as gives students useful practice in skills such as inferring meaning from the context when structures and vocabulary are not familiar. Besides, class time is limited and the amount of reading needed to achieve fluency and
efficiency is very great. So extensive reading is necessary. Moreover, it may be the only way in which a student can keep contact with English after s/he has completed the course.

Furthermore, as extensive reading is, or should be, reading for pleasure on topics that interest the students, it increases their motivation and gives them a more positive attitude towards the target language. It may also provide the student an excellent opportunity to increase reading speed, particularly because this skill is rarely developed in the ordinary English classroom. As the students are reading for pleasure, they will be eager to know what happens next and will therefore try to read faster. Thus, the more students read extensively, the faster they learn to read.

Although extensive reading involves a lot of reading out of class, some class time has to be devoted to it both to maintain the students interest in it and or train them how to cope with longer texts. Students who have not acquired the reading habit are often put off by the long books usually prescribed for supplementary reading. They need guidance and encouragement through an organized programme.

This is the same as silent reading which was discussed in the foregoing paragraphs. Most extensive reading is done at home. The teacher should give them lists of graded books for the purpose. In higher classes extensive reading must be made compulsory, followed by summaries of books read.

Articles, reports and books bearing on the subjects of the curriculum may also be suggested for reference.

1.21.6. Intensive Reading

Intensive Reading on the other hand as explained by Rosalind Percy (p. 194) is a detailed study of a text. This is when language study takes places. So a carefully selected
and graded text is prescribed and the students are introduced to new lexical items and new structures. Grammar learning is devised as exercise at the end of each unit, in order to help them learn the correct usage of structures. Intensive Reading is done like a scanning. Activities starting from silent reading, pair and group work, and jigsaw puzzles are planned in teaching Intensive Readers.

After all the oral work involving essential patterns and colloquial forms of utterances has been done, teacher and pupils should settle down to intensive reading of the prescribed course book. To make intensive reading profitable, careful treatment of vocabulary and grammar may be made. Vocabulary in lesson may be classified as Passive or Active and their meanings given. Active vocabulary needs a through treatment with contextual meaning and self-explanatory sentences. Passive vocabulary may be looked up in the dictionary by the pupils.

1.22. Literature Survey

For a thorough understanding of reading, the scholar has referred to the following books:

1. Dr. K. T. Sivarajan, V. Ramakrishnan and K. Mridula (English Language Education. Calicut University: Kerala, India. 2007) state that reading is a symbolic behavior. They quotes Goodman who says that reading is a psycholinguistic game. They explain that reading behavior is receiving communication, making discriminative responses to graphic symbols and decoding graphic symbols to speech.

2. Martin Montgomery, Alan Durant, Nigel Fabb, Tom Furniss and Sara Mills, in their book Ways of Reading - Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English
Literature (III Edition, Routledge: London and New York, 2007) introduce basic techniques of reading and problem solving. They present the dimensions along which language may vary, and give attention to issues of historical change, gender and social position. They also explore questions of meaning and include modes of indirection such as irony and allusion. The respective roles of the author and the reader in the process of creating and constraining meaning are explained here.

3. Penny McKay, in his book Assessing Young Language Learners (Cambridge Language Assessment Series. Cambridge University Press: UK, 2007) talks about the assessment need of practitioners who are working with young language learners. He describes assessing of reading in a foreign or second language at school, assessing reading through computers, the nature of reading ability, the scope of reading ability to be assessed in young learner language programmes. He propounds a framework for assessing reading ability as a theoretical construct and elaborates on issues in the assessment of the reading of young language learners, choosing which comprehension questions to ask and how to ask them. He discusses assessing children’s reading vocabulary, differentiating between reading problem and learning problem, classroom assessment of reading, observation, interview with parents, teacher-student reading conferences, oral reading, types of reading assessment tasks for young learners, read and do tasks requiring action responses, reading and retelling, read and do tasks requiring a short written answer, reading and answering true or false questions, reading and picture matching, reading and answering multiple choice items, reading and completing charts – information transfer, cloze and gap filling tasks etc.

5. Francoise Grellet, in *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1986) explains reading and reading comprehension, Reading techniques such as sensitizing, improving reading speed from skimming to scanning, aim and function of the text, organization of the text according to different thematic patterns, understanding meaning, non-linguistic response to the text, assessing the text etc.

6. J. Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren in *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1972) talk about the activity and art of reading, the goals of reading, the difference between learning by instruction and learning by discovery, present and absent teachers and the levels of reading.

7. Ann Woodlief and Marcel Cornis in “On the Reading Process: Notes on Critical Literary Philosophy and Pedagogical Practice” (*Intertexts: Reading from a Writer's Perspective*. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2002) explain how to become a demanding reader, what is analytical reading, the reciprocal art of reading etc.