CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance of Language
1.2 Position of English Language in India
1.3 The place of English in the School-Curriculum
1.4 Language Skills
1.5 Reading in context of Second Language
1.6 What is Reading ?
1.7 Reading Aloud Vs. Silent Reading
1.8 Reading Comprehension
   1.8.1. Sentence Comprehension
   1.8.2. Paragraph Comprehension
1.9 Factors influence Reading Comprehension
1.10 Rationale of the present study
1.11 The problem
1.12 Operational definitions of Key Items
1.13 Objectives of the Study
1.14 Formulation of Hypotheses
1.15 Delimitations of the Study
CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance of Language

"The first sound a child makes on coming into the world is one of discomfort, it is a cry, a reflex action and the child does not expect a response." (Sunday magazine - The Hindustan Times).

A child's first cry makes sure that he is alive. In the beginning the child does not know how to behave in a social context and cannot even express himself. Gradually he learns to crawl, walk and ultimately talk. As a child grows up he tries to express himself through his limited vocabulary. He soon learns to correlate the meanings. A child comes into the world with everything to learn or experience. Dean writes, "Language is a response to experience and rich experience is essential to language development."

The need of language can be realized best by those who suffer from the loss of speech, though it is beyond their power to explain it. In fact, we take speech for granted and are hardly aware of our interdependence upon it. It is difficult to conceive a society without it. Language seems to have born with the inception of the human race, so the credit goes to it for helping the survival of mankind. Not only this, it has also helped our race to mature by transmitting our culture and civilization to coming generations. The enormous development in various walks of our life has been possible only through language. Science, Technology, Religion, Art could make progress only with the help of language. Bloomfield says that each community is formed by the activity of language. Hence in order to know the culture of some people it is essential to know the language of these people.
Man is gifted with a rare quality of speech, which is defined to the other living beings. No doubt, birds, insects and animals produce particular sounds in a given situation, but these sounds cannot be called 'speech' and hence they do not 'talk'. In other words only man is gifted with this special type of communication. Dechant writes, "Man like the animal, can communicate through taste, touch and smell and through grunts and groans, but he also can learn to communicate through language or verbal symbolism. He alone has the ability to name his concepts."

Language is not merely the medium of instruction at all levels of education, it is the medium of growth. It provides capacity for preservation and communication of intellectual life. At higher level, language provides the medium of fresh and free thinking and research. In education it is supposed to communicate knowledge, and in general life it is the instrument to pick up information. We need language to learn, to retain and to recall our knowledge. It is the primary need of the child.

The history of the development of language of the race, is the history of the growth of intelligence. Pie has rightly remarked, "Language is considered to be an index of intelligence, culture and personality." The mother-tongue habits are further utilized in learning a second language or a foreign language. It goes without saying that it is essential for all the human co-operative work and an important instrument of the society.

Politically too, language has played a predominant role in uniting people. The rise of Bangladesh on the horizon of new nationhood, is ample proof of the untiring force of language for overthrowing oppression. Hence the question of freedom is closely related to the freedom of language.

Broadly speaking language is a means of expression. We express our feelings and thoughts through it. According to Gray language may be regarded as, "any means of expressing emotional and mental concepts by any living being or beings whatsoever and communicating them to or
receiving them from other living beings.” Since language is a means or medium of expression, it has a character of universality.

In short we can say that language is a form of communication, which involves two elements - the ideas or experiences which we want to communicate and the words that we use to convey these ideas or experiences.

1.2 Position of English Language in India

In countries where only one language is spoken, there is no problem for the child, because he has to develop proficiency only in one language. But, in a country like India where there is multiplicity of languages, there is the problem of intercommunication. This is the reason why in India normally a child knows two or three languages.

Besides the languages of Indian origin, English has attained an important place in Indian life and society. The main reason is that India had a rich past and hence was attracted by different communities who invaded it form time to time. When two cultures come in contact a new culture is born. This has an impact on language also. Hence during the Muslim rule in our country Arabic and Persian, and during the British rule, English was introduced in India.

The seeds of English language were laid in Indian soil in the last decades of the 18th century. Charles Grant was perhaps the first person to plead for English language in India. He felt that the state of Indians was miserable and can only improve “if Indians were first educated and finally converted into Christianity.” Later on, in the early nineteenth century in the regime of Lord William Bentinck English became the medium of instruction by the able advocacy of Macauley and support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Its use got extended to the political and cultural life of India as well as to business and commerce. English language slowly became the language of ‘elite’ class and of social prestige.
Thus during the British rule in India, English enjoyed the most key position in the life of educational set up of our country, but after the independence this position took a set back as it was replaced to some extent by our national language and other regional languages as medium of instruction. English no longer occupied the pride of place in the courses at school level, and was relegated to second or even third place.

1.3 The Place of English in the School-Curriculum

After the attainment of independence, drastic change in our outlook took place with regard to the place of English in the school curriculum. The government of India appointed several commissions, from time to time, to study the whole structure of education and suggest measures for its improvement. The issue of the place of English was also considered in the commission’s reports. The first important commission, after the attainment of freedom was appointed by the government of India in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. This is known as ‘The university Education commission.’ The commission was not in favour of abolishing English altogether from the curriculum. It gave the following weighty reasons in support of its study:

“English, however, must be continued to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature - humanistic and technical. If under sentimental urges, we should give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge.”

The Report clearly said that “Our students who are undergoing training at schools which will admit them either to university or to a vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge.”

In 1952, the Government of India appointed another commission known secondary Education commission for re-organizing the structure of secondary Education, it supported the study of English and expressed:
"It should be recognized that even in regard to many of the diversified courses in instruction as matters stand at present, a knowledge of English will be extremely useful for understanding the subject matter and for further study of the subject."

This commission also recommended that study of English should be given due position in secondary schools and facilities should be made available at the middle school stage for its study on optional basis. It recommended the following languages to be studied at the middle school stage:

1. Mother-tongue or Regional language.
2. Hindi for Non-Hindi regions.
   &
   A modern Indian language for Hindi regions.
3. English (optional)

At the secondary stage, the commission recommended the study of two languages to equalize the language load on pupils of both Hindi and Non-Hindi areas.

1. Mother-tongue or Regional language.
   Or
   A composite course of mother-tongue & classical language.
2. The second language to be chosen from among the following:
   (a) Hindi (for those whose mother-tongue is not Hindi)
   (b) Elementary English (for those who have not studied it in the middle stage).
   (c) Advanced English (who had studied it in middle stage).
   (d) A modern Indian language (other than Hindi).
   (e) A modern foreign language (other than English).
   (f) A classical language.

In this formula, the place of English comes after the mother or the regional language. In other words, pupils of both Hindi and Non-Hindi areas
were free to study English as a second language if they so desired. Only this formula would result in not having Hindi as a compulsory language in Non-Hindi regions thus paving way for making both Hindi and English as permanent official languages of the country. Thus it is clear that the Secondary Education Commission also wanted to give English an importance next after the mother-tongue or regional languages.

In 1956, the Central Advisory Board of Education examined the complex problem of the teaching of languages in relation to the needs of the country. While keeping the importance of English in view, it devised a threelanguage formula which was simplified and approved by the conference of Chief Ministers in 1961. The following two formulae were prepared in which English was proposed to be studied either as a second or a third language.

In formula No.1, English was given a second or third place; and in formula No.2, English was to be studied as a second language. In order to maintain uniformity of standards in both Hindi and Non-Hindi areas, pupils were expected to study English as a second language rather than as third language. So we see that while devising these two three-language formulae, the importance of English was not ignored and it was given next position after the mother tongue or the regional language.

In 1964, another important Education Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari. The Kothari Commission also stressed the need of continuing.
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the study of English as a foreign language in the following word

"As English will, for a long time to came, continue to be needed as a "library language" in the field of higher education, a strong foundation in the language will have to be laid at the school stage."

The commission while proposing its modified three language formula had full consideration of the position of English in the country which is clear from one of the criteria, it laid down for preparing its language formula.
"English continues and will continue to enjoy a high status so long as it occupies the principal place as the medium of instruction in the universities. Even after the regional language replaces English as the media of higher education in universities, a working knowledge of English will be valuable asset for all students and a reasonable proficiency in the language will be necessary for those who proceed to the university."

Keeping this in view, the commission recommended the following three - language formula:

I. Language : The mother-tongue or the Regional language.

II. Language : The official language of the union.

Or

The Associate official language so long as it exits.

III. Language : A modern Indian or foreign language (not covered under I & II and other than the medium of education).

Thus at the lower secondary stage, a pupil was required to study at least three languages according to the commission's report. In this formula we find that the position of English is at number two because in Hindi areas, the first language will be Hindi and hence they will prefer English as their second language. Similarly in Non-Hindi areas, the first language will be the mother-tongue or regional language of the area. They will also prefer to study English as their second language, keeping in view its unending importance and also due to the fact that English continues to exist as an associate official language of the country for an indefinite time. This fact has made it difficult to give Hindi a second place in the school curriculum of Non-Hindi regions. Since English is a foreign language for both Hindi and Non-Hindi speaking people of our country, its study as a
second language in both the regions (Hindi and Non-Hindi) can maintain equality of opportunity for all.

1.4 **Language Skills**

Any one who uses language fairly well has a number of different abilities. He can for example, listen to radio, speak to his neighbours, read a magazine and write letters. Morris (1968) divides the basic language skills into four categories, viz.; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking and writing are skills that involve production on the part of the language user. Listening and reading are receptive skills in the sense that the language user receives information from the written or spoken form of the language. Very often the language user is involved in using a combination of skills. A participant in a conversation for example, has not only to listen but also to speak.

*We can summarize the four language skills in the following way:*

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<th>Written Word</th>
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<td><strong>Receptive</strong></td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Productive</strong></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Writing</td>
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Listening skill is the first language skill which the child develops. The skill of listening is very important for the child. Listening leads to speaking. The child listens and then picks up the words to speak. Through the ages listening has played a great role in the learning process.

Listening leads to speaking. Speaking is the verbal communication, an expression to one's thought. Children learn to speak by imitating.

Listening and speaking are two skills which go together. In a communication activity both these skills play a vital role if the communication is orally done. Communication is a two way process involving a speaker and a listener. Regarding the roles of the speaker and
listener in the process of communication, both of them can either be an initiator or a responder. Hence, if we look at these two skills as two violated skills, speaking is ‘articulating’ and listening is ‘responding and discriminating.’

The third important skill for a language is understanding what is read or comprehension of the written language. It is a communication between the reader and the author. Reading is an active process. Communication from writer to reader occurs only if the reader can take meaning to the printed page. Without the reader, communication via the printed page is impossible.

Studies have shown that normally people are engaged in silent speech while reading. Edfeldt (1960) studying the electromyography records of university students and adults found that all engaged in silent speech while reading. Good readers engaged in less silent speech than poor readers, and the more difficult the material, the more silent speech occurred. This does not mean that reading without silent speech is impossible. The fact is that silent reading begins with almost total dependence upon speech, and with proper training it can be freed from this dependence.

The most difficult of all the skill of language is the skill of writing, and hence is developed last of all. Dean (1973) states, “We normally think of reading and writing as two facets of the same skill, but in fact writing is more intricate than reading. The degree of muscular co-ordination needed for writing demands more from the child than the recognition of words and shapes in reading.”

Writing bears the same relationship to reading as speaking does to listening. It may grow with reading but will naturally be a little behind as it requires the recognition of words, verbal and visual abilities, and muscular and motor co-ordination. However, just as speaking differs from listening in that it necessitates the articulation of sounds, writing demands the
production of orthographic symbols, not just the interpretation of the message. The term ‘writing’ is ambiguous since it is used to refer both to the mechanical act of penmanship and to the very complex process of composition.

We have discussed at length the four language skill separately. This does not mean that the skills are to be taught separately. It is wrong to get the students to concentrate on reading and reading alone one day, speaking and speaking alone the next day and so on. It is almost impossible to teach just one skill to the complete exclusion of the others. It is clear from the above discussion that listening helps in speaking, speaking helps in reading and reading helps in writing. There must be integration of the various skills to the extent possible.

1.5 **Reading in Context of Second Language**

We cannot deny the fact that English language is a rich language. It has proved to be an effective medium for translation of the literary and the technical books of the world. There may come a period in our history when our own national language may become as rich as English, but this will take some time. Hence, now, English should be taught as a library language if not as a language of social communication. Cartledge also feels that the importance of a foreign language is in reading because most of the students will hardly have an opportunity of speaking, listening or writing the foreign language, but all of them however can benefit from it if they comprehend what they read.

Reading habit in English should be developed from the school stage, as ‘only seventy percent become independent readers’ (Smith, 1976). Later on Frisby (1964) feels that by the time the student leaves the school to join the college, independent reading habits should be developed. He writes, “just before our pupils leave our hands to go on to higher education or on to working life, we wish to make sure that they have become
accustomed to use books for enjoyment and information. The person who
does not appreciate books is missing the lasting enjoyment, which can be
found in them. The fact that he has no interest in books points to a possible
lack of early encouragement. We should do all in our power to encourage
wide and varied reading; our pupils should be surrounded by plenty of
books of kinds which will appeal to the tastes of many types of readers."

Dr. Michael west, who had stayed in India for a long time during the
British rule, had thought on these lines even in those days. He propounded
the view that the ability to read English is of greater value to the student
than the ability to speak and write English, and that to develop in the pupil
the ability to read English is a simpler and easier task than to develop in
him the ability to speak and write English. It is clear that there is no need
for a student in present day India to be very fluent in spoken English, or to
be good in pronunciation and accent as an Englishman. But, reading of
English should be encouraged for other advantages for the students.
Rivers (1970) wrote, "In many countries foreign languages are learned by
number of students who will never have the opportunity of conversing with
a native speaker but who will have access to the literature and periodicals,
or scientific and technical journals written in that language. Many will need
these publications to assist them with further studies or in their work; other
will wish to enjoy them in their leisure time. The reading skill, once
developed, is the one which can be most easily maintained at a high level
by the student himself without further help from his teacher."

The use of English as a library language has been accepted even in
advanced countries where English is not the mother tongue. Harasawa
states that in Japan, English teaching has been compulsory since 1868,
and "Some people say this is the very reason why Japan and Japan only
has been able successfully to cope with 'advanced' European countries,
which I admit is true in a sense." In China also where the teaching of two
foreign languages, Russian and English, is very popular, English attracts
more students because of its benefits (Dow, 1975).
What is true for Japan and China, is also true in the case of India. Perhaps this was the reason why Pandit Nehru used to say, ‘English is our major window on the modern world.’

The power of reading modern language is needed because the complexity and international teamwork of modern thought is such that “No country can afford to rely on its domestic stores of knowledge in no branch of knowledge, abstract or concrete, disinterested or applied to the uses of man, can the specialist neglect the work of foreign students.” Under the conditions of modern life almost all men are specialists.

But there is a wider aspect. Many subjects are taught in school, not merely because they are useful to the individual, but because they are desirable for the well-being of mankind. English is such a subject. National literacy facilitates national well being. International literacy promotes international understanding and goodwill. Now, comparatively few of our pupils ever go outside their mother country, and still fewer of them, even if they go aboard, have acquired at school such speaking-power in a modern language that they can converse on the topics which are the stumbling blocks to international goodwill – or on any topic other than the common places of travels and hotels. To understand a nation we must appreciate its ideals, and these are best expressed by the nation’s greatest men; these great men, living and dead, are met at their best in the nation’s literature. International good understanding can best be promoted by teaching the children of the world to read each other’s languages.

1.6 **What is Reading?**

The answer depends on how and when we are using this skill and in what context. Everyone seems to have his own definition of reading. To a child of two years, reading means turning the pages of a book or magazine and pointing to the pictures as members of his family. Even student of slightly mature age defines reading in terms of their own personal
experiences and obviously quite different from the term used by the reading authorities. Like students, reading authorities define reading according to their own individual orientations. To Bloomfield and Barnhart, "Reading involves nothing more than the correlation of a sound image with its corresponding visual image." Artley looks at reading 'as the part of reconstructing from the printed page, the writer's ideas, feelings, moods, and sensory impressions'.

Stauffer reviewed numerous descriptions of the reading process and reported universal agreement among authorities on one point only: that comprehension is an invariant condition of reading. However, Reed disagreed that reading necessarily involved understanding and repudiated the whole word, or meaning, approach to beginning reading. According to him, "Reading is the identification of linguistic forms from strings of written configurations that represent them, as evidenced by producing the conventional signs for the same linguistic forms in some other system of representation." By this definition it is possible to translate language symbols from one form to another without the meaning being known by the reader. On the contrary Carroll expresses the view of most experts on reading when he identifies the "essential skill in reading as getting meaning from a printed or written message."

To Hafner and Jolly, reading is a mental explosion. William S. Gray in his book, History and Philosophy of reading Instruction has defined reading thus:

"Reading is the process of recognizing printed or written symbols, involving such habits as accuracy in recognizing the words that make up a message, span of recognition, rate at which words and phrases are recognized, rhythmical progress of perception along the lines and accurate return sweep of the eye from the end of one line to the beginning of the next."
Reading involves the recognition of the important elements of meaning and their relationship that contributes to accuracy and thoroughness in comprehension. It is more than seeing words or pronouncing them or recognizing their meaning in isolation. It requires one to think, feel and imagine. It is an activity that involves the interpretation of ideas symbolised by written or printed language.

Harris and Sipay (1975) define reading as "the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal symbols," and believe that adequate mental ability and reasoning is needed for both listening and reading comprehension. But reading requires some additional qualities that are not needed when one listens. One such quality is that the words must be recognized if their meaning is to be appreciated. Another difference is that, in reading, one must organize the material into meaningful phrases and thought units, while in listening this is to a large extent done for the listener by the phrasing and expression, the intonation and stress patterns, of the speaker. A third point of difference is that in listening, the rate of presentation is set by the speaker, while in reading one has to learn to govern one's rate of reading so as to go fast enough to catch the flow of ideas, but not so fast as to miss too many of the details. Reading is similar to listening in many ways but involves the need for additional skills.

Dale (1976) argues that reading, listening and observing are alike in a sense that all these have two aspects – a producing and a consuming aspect. He says "Reading should be seen as language development which can be classified basically as the producing and consuming of message. We produce messages by writing, speaking and visualizing. We consume messages by reading, listening and observing. Hence, we have the basic pairs: reading and writing, speaking and listening, visualizing and observing." Reading can be of two types - reading aloud and silent reading.
1.7 Reading Aloud Vs. Silent Reading

Even though the major emphasis in reading today is on silent reading, children need to become good oral readers. Pupils benefit educationally by reading aloud prose, poetry or drama. There is much benefit in choral reading – oral reading by a group. It leads to better appreciation of literature and to improve pronunciation, phrasing, interpretation, rhythm, and flexibility.

Oral reading also has social values. It provides enjoyment in a social group, helps the child to substantiate answers challenged by others in a group, and lets him share content to which all do not have access, and is useful in making reports and announcements, and presenting other information to a group.

Finally, oral reading has diagnostic values. It is helpful in testing for fluency and accuracy in reading. Since reading requires the association of a printed form with an oral equivalent, it would seem only logical that oral reading would be used to emphasize this relationship.

Oral reading requires all the sensory and perceptual skills required in silent reading, such as visual discrimination, rhythmic progression along a line of print, and the ability to take to the word those experiences that the writer, by his peculiar choice and arrangement of words, hoped to call to the reader’s attention. Oral reading also requires skills beyond those needed in silent reading.

Habits of oral reading usually are quite different from those in silent reading. The child who exercises great care in his oral reading may pass over the difficult words in silent reading. In oral reading there are generally more fixations, more regression, and longer pauses. Oral reading generally is slower than silent reading. In oral reading, reading rate is limited by pronunciation; in silent reading, it is limited only by the ability to grasp meaning. Oral reading calls for interpreting to others; silent reading only to
oneself. Oral reading demands skills in voice, tempo and gesture and in sensing the mood and feeling intended by the author. And, there are some differences in neural pathways in oral and silent reading.

In the late 1900s, silent reading was of prime interest to many psychologists. They were interested in finding out the difference between silent reading and loud reading. It was believed that silent reading also involved lip movements as in speech and in fact silent reading was even called silent speech. Experiments by psychologists indicate that in many there are lip movements while they read silently. Pugh (1980) has worked in the area of silent reading and he confirms that during the transformation from oral to silent reading, the reader goes through an intermediate stage where he or she uses sub vocalizations of "inner language."

Tinker and McCullough (1975) are of the opinion that reading aloud and silent reading are interrelated. They write, "Effective oral reading requires the use of most of the techniques and skills employed in good silent reading. Word recognition, understanding of vocabulary and concepts, reading by thought units (phrasing), and comprehension. In a way, silent reading precedes oral reading. Words, phrases, and sentences cannot be read aloud with proper emphasis unless they are first recognized and understood."

Elkind(1976) has accepted three prerequisites for silent reading. First is the visual independence. Rapid silent reading and comprehension requires at the very outset, that the visual verbal system becomes independent of the sensory motor system. Rapid reading involves fewer motor fixations and wider visual segments of scanning and this in turn means less motor involvement and more conceptual inferential activity. In effect, in rapid silent reading the brain does more work and the eyes do less.

A second prerequisite to advance silent reading is facility in meaning construction. From a cognitive development point of view, reading comprehension is not a passive process of decoding written symbols. On
Figure 1.

Pathways in Oral and Silent Reading

17 Vision
18 Recognition
19 Visual Memories

44 Speech

Eye

Silent Reading

Muscles of Speech

Oral Reading

Reading

39
the contrary, it must be regarded as a constructive activity analogous to creative writing. The point is that meaning is not given or inherent in written or spoken words but reading has to be given meaning by the reader or listener who interprets them within his own storehouse or knowledge. The silent reader gives meaning to the words he reads by relating these to the conceptual system he has constructed in the course of his development. The richness of meaning that he derives from his reading will depend both upon the quality of the material he is reading and upon the breadth and depth of his conceptual understanding.

A third prerequisite to effective silent reading is a receptive attitude, a willingness to respond to the representations of others by the reader. Good readers, like good listeners, have to be simultaneously passive and active. Many people are poor readers for the same reason that they are poor listeners, they are more interested in representing their own thoughts and ideas and less interested in interpreting the thoughts and ideas of others. They lack what might be called 'receptive discipline'.

1.8 **Reading Comprehension**

Comprehension entered the reading vocabulary in the early 1920's when teaching children how to get meanings from their reading first came to the forefront and it still continues to be an area of major concern in the teaching of reading.

What is reading comprehension? An easy question and a difficult question. Easy in the sense that everybody claims to know the answer to this question and difficult in the sense that nobody seems to be perfectly correct or clear.

Fry (1963) remarks, "It is very difficult to define reading comprehension. Reduced to its simplest elements, we might say that comprehension is a part of communication process of getting the thoughts that were in the author's mind into the reader's mind."
Macmillan's (1965) definition is more precise and helpful. He defines comprehension as:

Understanding what is written within, between and beyond the lines in other words, intelligent interpretation and it includes:

(a) reading to get the main idea;
(b) reading to get important details;
(c) reading to answer specific questions;
(d) reading to follow the logical sequence and development of the idea,
(e) reading to apply what is read;
(f) reading for deductions and implications; and
(g) reading to evaluate.

Sanford (1971) writes that the word 'comprehension' means literally 'holding together.' Thus 'reading comprehension' means that the reader holds together in his mind the meaning coded a writer into print.

Hafner and Jolly (1972) suggest: The word 'comprehension', in its broadest sense, refers to one's ability to comprise, to understand, to grasp with the intellect. Much of the literature in reading subdivides comprehension into three categories: literal comprehension, interpretation, and critical reaction, referring respectively to the act of perceiving the literal, denotative meaning of a selection, to the act of perceiving implied meanings, and to the ability to make judgments about the accuracy, intent, or merit of a selection. Despite the abstractness of these terms, they are useful to distinguish, generally, certain types of meaning problems that confront pupils.

According to Catterson, "A person can be said to have comprehended something heard or read when he/she can produce a 'correct' or reasonable response to a question based on the literal content of the message." A more elaborate definition is by Yoakam to him, "Comprehending reading matter involves the correct association of
meanings with word symbols, the evaluation of meanings which are suggested in context, the selection of the correct meaning, the organization of ideas as they are read, the retention of these ideas, and their use in some present or future activity." This definition indicates that comprehension requires not only an immediate understanding of the content read, but also retention of the meanings gained.

Tinker and McCullough describe the various aspects of comprehension. One aspect of comprehension is the size of unit to be comprehended, which means that the unit should be within the limits of the child's abilities. Another aspect which is emphasized is the degree of comprehension which means that "the efficient reader is not one who comprehends the most details, but one who comprehends just what is required by whatever purpose he has in reading at all, and one whose capacity to understand is equal to the difficulty of the material." The third aspect is the depth of comprehension, which involves more than the degree of comprehension. It includes interpretation, the thinking side of reading. The fourth aspect is the speed of reading and comprehension, which means the rate with which material is read and comprehended.

Though a number of researches have been done in the area of English comprehension, still Chester feels that comprehension is the most controversial areas of reading assessment. He quotes Thorndike to justify his own statement, "Understanding a paragraph is like solving a problem in mathematics. It consists of selecting the right elements of the situation and putting them together in the right relations and also with the right amount of weight or influence or force for each. The mind is assailed as it was by every word in the paragraph. It must select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate and organize, all under the influence of the right mental set on purpose or demand." All these statements indicate that there are various skills involved in comprehension.

A large number of researches have been carried out to investigate the skills called into question in comprehension. Berry, Dewey, Richards,
Touton, and Berry carried out some of the important early efforts in this field. Most of them were correlational studies, and the list of sub-skills produced was extensive, quite probably leading to some of the confusion in terminology, which still exists today.

In the late thirties and early forties procedures of factor analysis began to be applied to the problems of isolating the various sub-skills of comprehension. Feder obtained data indicating that reading for information and reading for inference was relatively independent skills. Probably the best known of the early factor analytic studies of comprehension was that of Davis (1941), who came up with a list of nine testable skills –

1. Knowledge of word meanings;
2. Ability to select the appropriate meaning for a word or phrase in the light of its particular contextual setting;
3. Ability to follow the organization of a passage and to identify antecedents and references in it;
4. Ability to select the main thought of a passage;
5. Ability to answer questions that are specifically answered in a passage;
6. Ability to answer questions that are answered in a passage but not in the words in which the question is asked;
7. Ability to draw inference from a passage about its contents;
8. Ability to recognize the literary devices used in a passage and to determine its tone and mood;
9. Ability to determine a writer’s purpose, intent, and point of view, viz., to draw inferences about a writer;

Davis computed the intercorrelation among these nine skills and interpreted a factor analysis of the results as indicating the presence of nine factors. Six of the nine factors were subsequently established as being significant at the .05 level; however, of all the factors, word knowledge accounted for the greatest part of the variance. Reasoning in reading ranked second followed by the literal meaning factor. Even though the
factor analysis did identify six components. Davis concluded that only component one and two (word knowledge and reasoning in reading) are measured with sufficient reliability to warrant their use for practical purposes. Vernon (1962) found general comprehension and vocabulary to be separate factors and, on the basis of his data, noted that a distinction could be made between inferential and factual comprehension. Gray (1963) accepts three components of comprehension—grasping literal meaning securing an expanded grasp of the meaning and understanding idea read. According to Dechant (1969) meaningful reading should include not only a literal interpretation of an author's words, but also an interpretation of his mood, tone, feeling and attitude. He also believes, like others that comprehension involves a complex of abilities.

Schonell and Goodacre (1974) have suggested different skills for children of different age groups. For the younger children between the ages seven and ten very simple sentences should be presented for comprehension. The questions should not require lengthy answers but rather should use devices such as underlining appropriate phrases or sentences, selecting the correct answer from a number of answers, giving a one-word answer, or writing short simple sentences in answer to a series of questions. For junior school, pupils between nine to twelve years, they suggest 'search for information', which is tested by questions or directions that are made known before the material is read. They assert that this kind of exercise has value in developing attitudes towards independent study. Ability to understand directions and skimming through a passage has also been recommended for this age group.

For children above twelve years of age, they suggest ability to organize information, which means ability to search relevant information from different sources and assessing the value of the information. Another skill for this age group is the ability to read material and then to make a summary of it. Besides these skills they also recommend the ability to read material involving a sequence of related steps so that the pupil may arrive
at a conclusion, and the ability to predict the outcome of events or to make an inference. Burnett points out three general areas for skills in reading:

(a) mechanical skills which encompass word recognition proficiency as well as fluency and rhythm in both oral and silent reading performance;
(b) cognitive skills which include meaning, vocabulary, literal comprehension, interpretive or inferential reading, critical reading, general work-study skills and applied reading in specific content fields;
(c) affective factors which include the quality and variety of reading done, attitudes towards reading and those derived from it, and the development of enduring, life-long reading habits.

1.8.1 Sentence Comprehension

Knowing the meaning of the words is not enough. The child must acquire the skill to comprehend a sentence, which is not an easy job. Comprehending a sentence also includes various skills. According to Tinker and McCullough sentence comprehension includes, grasping the relations between words and group of words, reading by phrases or through units, properly interpreting punctuation understanding figures of speech and symbolic expressions.

Kamm (1979) also suggests that after the readers have begun to decode individual words and get meaning from them, they must learn to perceive groups of words and understand the ideas represented. He says that the aim of sentence comprehension is "to prove children with opportunities to increase their abilities to note detail, to see sentence organization, attend to word order, and realize there may be variety of ways to convey a single meaning." These views give a clear indication that
sentence comprehension requires the understanding of word order or the structure of the sentence.

### 1.8.2 Paragraph Comprehension

To gain maturity in reading, the child should also learn to comprehend the material in paragraphs. In fact sentence comprehension leads to paragraph comprehension. Comprehension of paragraph is important, because as the child advances with his studies, more extensive reading is required, and only sentence comprehension is not enough. The child should also know that there is a relationship between the sentence in a paragraph.

In the words of Tinker and McCullough (1975) "The comprehension of a paragraph requires comprehension of its sentences as well as an understanding of the relationships between the sentences which are essential for grasping the larger meaning of the paragraph." Karlin (1971) stated that the ability to comprehension is enhanced when the reader sees the relationships among the ideas in a passage and recognizes the structure that ties the sentence together.

### 1.9 Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension ability is influenced by many factors such as attitudes, motives, interests, curiosity, anxiety, classroom atmosphere, child's background, teacher's sensitivity to the group, emotional problems, socio-economic status etc.

**Attitudes:** Attitudes denote bias, preconceptions, feelings, emotions, hopes and fears. They form the emotional screen through which one views the world. Attitudes and emotions are closely related. One's feelings, attitudes as well as intellectual abilities affect one's reading abilities as well as reading comprehension abilities. Attitudes provide with a
Figure 2.

Figure Showing Factors Affecting Reading

Factors Affecting Reading Skill

- Physical Factors
- Psychological Factors
- Social Factors
- Economic Factors
- Reading Skill

personal outlook on the world through one's own feelings, biases, inclinations, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and convictions making each person's view of the world different from everyone else which in turn affect his judgment or evaluation in reading comprehension. Negative attitudes are influential than positive attitudes. Attitudes affect reading at the perception level by helping to determine words as one actually sees, at the understanding level by colouring, twisting and distorting and at the retention level by selecting those things that will be remembered and those that will be forgotten. In reading, readers go beyond the identification of states ideas and facts, and engage interpretive and evaluative thinking as they read. This makes them particularly susceptible to their own emotions, prey to their own attitudes. People differ in reading comprehension performance as much because of variations in attitudes, as because of variations in intelligence. The child's reading comprehension ability is influenced not only by his own attitudes but also by the attitudes of his parents, teachers and the community he lives in.

**Interests**: Interest in reading increases reading skill, promotes reading habit. Pupils enjoy the results of reading when reading is built on their interests and needs. If they are not interested in reading, they will not and cannot utilize their own potentials in evaluating the material they read. Considering students' needs in selecting topics for reading is one way of developing interest in students to read. Using varied kinds of students' and teachers' own experiences and insuring understanding and enjoyment through reading promotes and sustains students' interests. Wherever possible students' efforts to read are encouraged and guidance given with positive attitude towards the problem students face, whenever they feel any difficulty or try to withdraw for any reason.

**Motives**: Where there is little interest, there is little attention; and where there is little attention, there is little learning. We must therefore motivate the learners and create an interest in reading as such. Not only
should we create an interest but also help sustain it so that the learners will get into the habit of reading after they leave school.

Motive is an aroused state of an individual; motivation promotes reading skills. There are three areas of motives that may effect reading achievement. They are (1) the motives the child brings to the school with him from environment e.g., socially disadvantaged child often comes to school poorly prepared to learn to read because there has been little preparation or interest in reading at home, (2) The motives and attitudes that the child forms as he learns to read during the six or seven years while he is being taught complex reading skills. Repeated failures in reading during this period causes failure-threat-anxiety syndrome resulting in negative attitudes towards reading skills, (3) Teachers and school attitude toward the child and his motives towards learning. These are very subtle and sometimes 'subconscious' feelings and expectations about the child that the teacher and the school hold will highly influence the performance of the child. If the teacher has positive attitude towards the child, he/or she makes the child learn by various methods, will not leave the child until he/she learns it. If he/she has negative attitudes the child won't learn, as all his attempts are influenced by his negative attitude and assumption that the child is not capable of reading.

Thus these three motives are much more important than the reading methods and materials used with the child. Given good motivation in all of the areas, that is, environment, personal and teacher related attitudes, almost any reading material can be used successfully.

Curiosity : Curiosity is conductive to good progress in reading. Curiosity of children is curbed when the child's questions are ignored, curbed or laughed at for its ignorance or wrong conception. If the questions, which are central tool of critical reading, are curbed, the child is devoid of opportunities to develop his/her thinking abilities. Informal, round group structure in the classroom facilitates and reinforces curiosity.
The Child's Background Experience: The child's knowledge of the topic, his chances of making sound judgments, his concepts, clarity of thinking will influence the child's reading ability. The lesser the child knows, experiences, the narrower will be his thinking capacity and biased will be his reading ability.

Teacher's Sensitivity to Group Needs: A teacher must perceive the needs of the group in order to judge the number and variety of experiences for the development of meaningful concepts. Thus a person's background experience, his biases, prejudices, hopes and predispositions determine his interpretation of any kind of communication. Therefore, the teacher must be sensitive enough to focus on children's biases, and prejudices for fair thinking reading ability.

Emotional problems: Children develop emotional problems for various reasons such as physical defects like stuttering or stammering or parental conflict at home, lack of attention from the parents, teachers and rejection by the peer group etc. When these are faced by children they develop anxiety, fear, withdrawal, aggressiveness and such other emotional problems resulting in lack of attention, disinterest, lack of curiosity which are essential for reading.

Anxiety: The concept of anxiety enjoys central position in the theories of human behaviour and is regarded as a basic condition of human existence by many thinkers. However, despite the prevailing consensus as to its significance, agreement about the nature of the phenomenon is still lacking. The definitions of the concept are based on observations or introspective reports by subjects normal or pathological. Some definitions have only a conceptual basis while others are rooted in the physiological or behavioural changes observed in an experimental situation. Anxiety as defined by English and English in their Dictionary of Psychology is "an unpleasant emotional state in which a present and continuing desire or drive seems
likely to miss its goal; a fusion of fear with the anticipation of future evil, marked and continuous fear of low intensity; a feeling of threat, especially of a fearsome threat without the person's being able to say what he thinks threatens ............"

In his Dictionary of Psychology, James Drever has defined anxiety as "a chronic complex emotional state with apprehension or dread as its most prominent component, characteristic of various nervous and mental disorders."

In the words of May, anxiety is "The apprehension cued of by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality."

Freud regarded anxiety as an affective state which was characterized by, "all that is covered by the word 'nervousness', apprehension or anxious expectations, and efferent discharge phenomena." The efferent discharge phenomena included heart palpitation, disturbances of respiration, sweating, tremor, and shuddering, vertigo and a number of other physiological and behavioural manifestations.

Freud attributed the origin of neurotic disturbance to the existence of an external state called anxiety. Anxiety effects an individual's performance and behaviour in a variety of situations. Anxiety has been studied in relation to such social behaviours and phenomena as conformity, dependence, social responsiveness, sociometric status, hostility and aggression, social adaptiveness, peer rejection and acceptance, social influence processes, the effectiveness of social reinforces and sexual attractions (Meunier 1967; Sarason et al 1960; Sarason 1966; Philips et al 1972; Fischer 1979; McCandles 1956; Hill 1963, Kissell 1967, Walters & Karal 1960, Walters & Ray 1960). It has been found that, in a primary sense, anxiety is a determinant of a number of behaviours in social situation. These behaviours often lead to social isolation and rejection which in turn determine the amount of anxiety. Several studies have investigated the relationship between anxiety and memory (Borkowski & Mann 1968; Sinha
These researchers have generally demonstrated the detrimental effect of anxiety. Anxiety has been also studied in relation to perceptual processes and performance (Sinha & Sinha 1967; Magaro 1969) and has often been found to be a casual factor. That academic achievement is correlated to anxiety level has been demonstrated in some investigator (Mukherjee 1979; Sinha 1972) while others have failed to obtain any relation (Singh 1971; Singal 1974). Kopper (1970) found that anxiety was related negatively to reading comprehension.

Anxiety reduces curiosity and also affects academic achievement. The way in which a teacher or parents answer children's questions may be more important in the development of children's personality than the actual answer itself (Sarason, Davidson 1962). Anxiety may result from lack of achievement, overdemanding parents, rejection from the peer group, overprotective parents, and so on. Curiosity is the basic factor that develops attention, keen observation, thinking and questioning abilities, which are essential to reading. This curiosity is reduced if anxiety-ridden situations are created to the children for various reasons and thus affect their thinking and reading ability.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Chaplin presumes socio-economic status to be 'the position that an individual or family occupies with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions, and participation in group activity of the community.' Since then the variable-socio-economic status has been conceived in a less similar manner. It is a kind of global and complex variable, for instance Dechant and Smith presume socio-economic status to be "An individual's position in a given society as determined by wealth, occupation, and social class. Social class, in turn, is a grouping or division of a society made up of persons having certain common social characteristics and usually formed on a combination of criteria; similarities in education, vocation, value system, custom, family, and wealth. It is an aggregate of individuals who occupy broadly similar positions on the scale of prestige." Presuming a child's reading capability has been influenced by
environmental factors outside the school situation, and observing poor readers coming from lower socio-cultural homes as compared to good readers, a few studies have been conducted to investigate these aspects.

Srinivasa Rao (1982) found that reading skill of children were, mostly dependent on the socio cultural background of their families. Students from highly developed and culturally advantaged families performed better on the reading tests when compared to those children who hailed from background and culturally disadvantaged families. Dass (1984) showed that the mean difference of reading comprehension score was in favour of students with high socio-economic status.

School Environment: The school is the most important experience in process of child development when the child enters the school arena, he or she is presented with new opportunities in terms of socialization and cognitive development. These opportunities are provided in different measures in different schools and may have a direct impact on the cognitive and effective behaviours of students. Two environments - home and school - share an influential space in child's life and there exists a unique juxtaposition between the two (Tucker & Bernstein, 1979). According to Sagar and Kaplan (1972), by its very nature, the family is the socio-biological unit that exerts the greatest influence on the development and perpetuation of the individual's behaviour.

Openness of mind and free expression of the children are hindered when there is an emphasis on only right answers, punishing attitude towards mistakes committed by the students in a classroom situation and this results in silence in most cases which obstructs and stagnates children's thinking abilities. Free and open atmosphere without the fear of punishment and mockery facilitates reading skills. Srinivasa Rao and Subrahmanyan (1981) found that the performance of the children who resided in rural areas and slum areas of town and those who studied in
rural disadvantaged schools was significantly less than that of those children who lived in urban areas and studied in big schools.

Alavandar (1992) found that (i) English-medium pupils secured a higher English Reading Competency than Tamil medium pupils. (ii) Urban pupils secured a significantly higher mean English Reading Competency score than rural pupils. (iii) Pupils of private schools secured a higher mean English Reading Competency score than those from government schools.

Thus when students are well motivated through favourable attitudes, given topic of interest and of need, stimulate their curiosity in a favourable classroom atmosphere with teacher's sensitivity to children's background experience and biases, the chances of their developing reading skills are greater than when they are prone to anxiety, disinterest, indifferences, the chances of developing their reading ability are rare and difficult in such emotionally obstructive circumstances.

1.10 **Rationale of the Present Study**

The place of English is Indian Secondary Education ever since its introduction has remained controversial and more especially in the post-freedom era. Unfortunately, the problem of English is always clouded with political issues and therefore, the pedagogical aspect and needs of the nation are often neglected. It is the feeling of all that English will, for a long time to come, continue to be needed as library language in the field of higher education. Therefore, a strong foundation in language will have to be laid at the high school stage. But in the circumstances, the objective of teaching English could not be the attainment of literary English, but to enable the students to have working knowledge of English. Therefore, the main objective of teaching English in secondary schools is to enable the pupils to understand simple spoken and written English and to carry on conversation, reading and understanding so as to develop self-access to comprehension of English necessary at school level.
Sanford (1971) made the observation that factors necessary for comprehension fall into two categories – those related to the characteristics of the person doing the reading and those related to the nature of material being read. The present study is delimited to the characteristics of the person doing the reading. Thus apart from sex, urban – rural areas, school environment, and anxiety, socially determined character like socio-economic status are important features which have bearing on students achievement in general, and reading achievement in particular. The present study is to investigate how these factors are related to English reading comprehension in eleventh class students. Hence the topic of the investigation is worded as:

1.11 **The Problem**

"An Interactional Study of the Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status and School Environment on Reading Comprehension in English at Higher Secondary School Level."

1.12 **Operational Definitions of Key Items**

As regards the definition of the terms used in the study, they are explained as given below:

**Interactional:**
Act or have an effect on each other. Hence the interaction amongst:
Anxiety and Reading Comprehension;
Socio-Economic Status and Reading Comprehension;
School Environment and Reading Comprehension.
Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status and Reading Comprehension;
Socio-Economic Status, School Environment and Reading Comprehension;
School Environment, Anxiety and Reading Comprehension;
Anxiety, Socio – Economic Status, School Environment and Reading Comprehension.
Anxiety: Anxiety is defined as a series of symptoms, which arise from faulty adoptions to the stresses, and strains of life. It is caused by over-action in an attempt to meet these difficulties.

For the present study, Anxiety has operationally been designed as "the scores obtained on the Anxiety test designed by A K P Sinha & L N K Sinha."

Socio-Economic status: SES refers to 'place' that members occupy in a society according to their social status which directly depends on their economic condition and sources of income. Socio-economic status variables include caste, occupation, education, income, possessions and social participation.

For the present study, SES has operationally been designed as "the scores obtained on the SES scale designed by Dr. Beena Shah (1986)."

School Environment: SE refers to the quality and quantity of the cognitive, emotional and social support that have been available to the students during their school life in terms of teacher-pupil interactions.

For the present study, SE has operationally been taken as "the scores obtained on SE inventory design by Dr. Karuna Shankar Mishra(1984)."

Reading Comprehension: The term reading comprehension is the assessment of the student's ability to read a given a passage and comprehend it, keeping into consideration the essentiality of the fact that the vocabulary of the passage is within the coverage of the context of reading. It includes structures and environment that is not beyond general comprehension of the students and ensures silent reading and self access to the text provided.
For the present study RC has been operationally defined as "the scores obtained on the silent reading comprehension test designed by Dr. B.V. Patel (1974)."

1.13 Objectives of the Study
The study was planned with the following objectives:
1. To study the level of Reading Comprehension in English of higher secondary school students of Hindi-medium schools.
2. To compare the level of Reading Comprehension in English of boys & girls.
3. To compare the level of Reading Comprehension in English in students of urban and rural areas.
4. To study the relationship of Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status and School Environment with Reading Comprehension in English.
5. To study the effect of Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status and School Environment on the Reading Comprehension in English of students.

1.14 Formulation of Hypotheses
Hypotheses formulated for testing the assumptions on Reading Comprehension in English have been classified under three heads of studies. These are:

Correlational Studies
CH\(_1\): There is an inverse correlation between Anxiety and Reading Comprehension in English in students.
CH\(_2\): There is positive correlation between Socio-Economic Status and Reading Comprehension in English in students.
CH\(_3\): There is positive correlation between School Environment and Reading Comprehension in English.
CH4: There is significant combined effect of Anxiety, Socio-
Economic Status and School Environment on Reading
Comprehension in English.

Differential Studies

DH5: There is no significant difference in Reading Comprehension
in English in boys & girls.

DH6: There is no significant difference in Reading Comprehension
in English in students of urban & rural areas.

Interactional Studies

IH7 (a) Relatively, School Environment would show the maximum
main effect and Anxiety would show the minimum main effect
upon Reading Comprehension in English where as Socio-
Economic Status would fall in between these two main
effects.

(b) The interactional effects of Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status
and School Environment would also show the significant
effect on reading comprehension.

1.15 Delimitations of the Study

1. Out of seven districts of Bilaspur education division only two
districts, Bilaspur and Janjgir-Champa have been taken for the
study.

2. The study has been limited to the higher secondary schools of
Bilaspur & Janjgir-Champa education districts.

3. Only Hindi-medium schools have been taken for the study.

4. The study has been limited to class-XI only.

5. Presuming that the reading ability is primarily concerned with silent
reading comprehension of prose, the tools selected were limited to
such tools which involved only silent reading, that is oral reading activity was not planned to be taken into account. Although attitude towards language motivation and interest are other factors, which may have influence on the Reading Comprehension, they have not been considered in the present study.

6. To study the relation of Reading Comprehension with Socio-Economic Status and School Environment, students belonging to different Socio-Economic Status and School Environment have been involved. Hence schools have been selected that include students coming from different Socio-Economic Status. For this purpose all types of schools available in the urban & rural area have been taken up in the present study.

7. Reading Comprehension in English has been taken as a dependent variable and Anxiety, Socio-Economic Status and School Environment has been taken as independent variables in the present study.

8. The school achievement of the students has been taken as a controlled variable. No variables other than mentioned above have been included in the present study.