UNIT 11 THE READING PROCESS

Structure

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is about reading in a foreign or second language, and particularly about reading in English as a second or foreign language. Some of you are already working as teachers and the others are probably planning to become teachers soon. So we shall be dealing mainly with the place of reading in a teaching-learning context and the several ways in which we could, as teachers, develop in our learners the ability to read efficiently.

A lot of research has been done on different aspects of reading, particularly in the last decade or two, but we cannot possibly deal with all of it here. We will discuss some of the current ideas about reading and how they can be used in the second language classroom. Because, in a reading class, it is the teacher's understanding of the reading process that is important - the techniques and methods s/he adopts with his/her learners will depend very much on this understanding. S/he should make sure that the things that happen in the classroom do not interfere with reading but actually promote it.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

With the help of this unit:

- you should be able to have a clearer understanding of the nature of the reading process and, consequently, of the characteristics of reading as a meaningful activity;
- you should be able to realize the implications of such an understanding for developing reading skills in learners.

11.3 REASONS FOR READING

Before we examine the nature of the reading process, we need to ask ourselves why our students need to read in English. The answer often given to this question is that they need to consolidate their spoken language, particularly at the primary and secondary levels.

In many classrooms, therefore, the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation and to practise a new structure - the structure is first presented orally and then the students read a short text which has been specially written to include many examples of this structure.
For early readers, reading aloud is of course important. Beginners have to discover how writing is related to words in speech which they have learnt to use. But the early reading stage does not last long – two or three years at most. What kinds of reading do they do after that and why?

Short texts of the kind referred to above often contain the same kind of language throughout, whereas ‘real’ reading texts typically imply a wide range of structures and vocabulary, registers and styles, formats and patterns of organization. The type of reading activity we engage in with such ‘real’ reading texts is also very different from the traditional classroom approach to a specially written text. ‘Real’ reading texts demand one or more of different reading skills, such as skimming for the main idea, scanning for specific information, and reading for detail.

Now take a piece of paper and, in about five minutes, list all the different kinds of things you have read during the last ten days or so, in any language - time-table, notices, letters, etc. How many of the things on your list were actually in English? Now think about the things you have listed. You must have included even things like telephone directory, labels on medicine bottles, engagement diary and instruction leaflets. Why did you read each one? What did you want to get from it? Were you interested in the pronunciation of what you read? Or were you interested in the grammatical structures used? Most probably, you read them because you wanted to get something from the writing: facts, ideas, information, enjoyment, even fellow feeling. You will thus find that you had a variety of reasons for reading, and if you compared notes with other people, you would find different reasons again. All these are authentic reasons for reading, that is, reasons that are not concerned with language learning as such, but with the uses to which we put reading in our daily lives outside the classroom.

Can we list some of the reasons why we read in our daily life? We normally read because

a) we want information for some purpose, or because we are curious to know about some topic, the answer to a question, or the solution to a problem;

b) we need instructions in order to perform some task in our work or in our daily life (we want to know how an appliance works or how to make a model airplane, we are interested in a new recipe for baking a cake, we have to fill in forms);

c) we want to keep in touch with friends through letters, or understand official correspondence;

d) we want to know when or where something will take place or what is available (we consult timetables, programmes, announcements, notices, and menus, or we read advertisement);

e) we want to know what is happening or has happened (newspapers, magazines, reports);

f) we want to play a new game, do a puzzle, act in a play, or do some other activity which is pleasant, amusing and enjoyable;

g) we seek enjoyment or excitement (short stories, novels, songs, and poems).

The term ‘reading’ thus embraces a wide variety of tasks, activities, skills and mental process.

Reading also occurs at different levels. A child may read easy materials fluently and without help. S/he may also read more difficult materials, calling for concentration and special effort. S/he may read materials which requires outside help such as instruction by the teacher.

English at all after they leave school, they may do it in reading, as they have to study textbooks written in English in their higher studies, or read newspapers, magazines and journals to keep themselves up-to-date in their job areas, current affairs, social issues, entertainment, etc. It therefore seems that we need to give students real practice in reading rather than use reading only to reinforce and consolidate their oral work.
Check Your Progress

Notes: (a) Write your answers in the space given below.
(b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the different kinds of materials we normally read in our daily life?

2. How is ‘reading’ traditionally used in the classroom?

3. Mention at least five purposes for which we read in real life.

4. Why do you think we should teach ‘reading’ as a skill?

11.4 THE READING PROCESS

Let us try to understand what ‘reading’ means. As a first step, it might be useful to find out what you think about reading. Here are some statements about reading. Which of these statements do you think are true? Which of them are false? Can you explain why you think so?

1. Reading involves looking at a text and saying the words to yourself.
2. Reading involves putting the words in print on the page into sentences and making sense of them.
3. To understand a word, you have to read all the letters in it, to understand a sentence you have to read all the words in it.
4. To understand a text, you need to know the meaning of all the words in the text.
5. The teacher can help students to read a text by reading it aloud while they follow the text in their books.
6. When we read for meaning, we do not need to read every letter of every word, not every word in each sentence.
7. There are no major differences between how one reads in one’s mother tongue and how one reads in a second or foreign language.

What is actually involved in the process of reading? It is important to understand this if
we really want to help our students develop reading skills in a second or foreign language (or in any language for that matter). If we know how ‘efficient readers’ read, either in their own mother tongue or another language, perhaps we can use some of the techniques employed by these readers to help our learners acquire the reading skills.

In considering the reading process, first we have to distinguish between two quite separate activities: reading for meaning (or*silent reading*) and reading aloud. Think of your own experience as both a student and a teacher. In many classrooms, the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation and encourage ‘expression speaking’, i.e., speaking with feeling and emotion. For early readers, reading aloud is of course an important aid; beginners have to discover how reading is associated with the spoken words they have already learnt to use, and also is different from them. But the early reading stage does not last long – normally, two or three years at the most. Do children have to read aloud after that? If they do, what are the contexts in which they may be required to do it?

For most of us, once we have passed the early reading stage, reading aloud is not an activity we engage in outside the classroom, unless of course, we are actors/actresses or newsreaders. If you are a teacher, you probably use this technique with students quite a lot, but how much do you use it outside your job? And how many of your students are going to need this skill in their daily life?

The purpose of reading aloud is not just to understand a text but to convey the information to someone else who has no access to it, such as reading out parts of a newspaper article to a friend, or reading a notice to other people who cannot see it clearly, or reading to someone who has lost his/her spectacles.

Obviously, reading aloud involves looking at a text, understanding it, and also saying it. It is a much more difficult activity than reading silently because our attention is divided between reading and speaking. We often stumble and make mistakes when reading aloud in our own language, and reading aloud in another language is even more difficult. Moreover, it slows down the reading process and may even affect comprehension to a certain extent unless you read a text after several rehearsals.

If you think of the percentage of time usually spent on reading aloud compared with the time spent reading silently, you will realize that you should adjust the proportion of class time spent on each accordingly.

Reading for meaning, on the other hand, is the activity we normally engage in when we read books, newspapers, road signs, posters, etc., it is what you are doing as you read this unit. It involves looking at sentences in a text and understanding the message they convey, in other words, ‘making sense of’ a written text. It does not normally involve saying the words we read, not even silently inside our heads.

Now read the first part of the text silently.

The Discovery of Penicillin

Pasteur discovered germs and Lister killed them. These two men together revolutionised the theory and practice of medicine. Germs can be destroyed by heat. They can be poisoned by certain chemicals called antiseptics. Carbolic acid is one such antiseptic used by Lister. The object of antiseptic method was to stop germs from entering the body. But the cure of disease was a more difficult problem, for here the germs had already entered the body. It means that injecting carbolic acid into the body in as much a dose as would kill all the germs, would kill the patient also. It was a bacteriologist named Matchnikoff, a pupil of Pasteur, who revealed the true nature of the problem. He discovered the white cells of the blood, which are called leucocytes. He showed that these cells run out to join battle with the germs, like soldiers answering a bugle-call. He showed to find something that would attack only the germs and not destroy the fighting leucocytes. The man who took up the problem was Alexander Fleming.

Now read the second part aloud, or follow while someone else reads it aloud to you.

As luck would have it, Sir Almroth Wright and Fleming worked together. They had some doubts with regard to the efficacy of injecting antiseptics. They felt that the surgeon’s aim should be not so much to kill the germs with an outside agent as to help the leucocytes to
do their natural germ-killing work. And in 1922, after about 20 years of research, they discovered an antiseptic manufactured by the body. Wright made the discovery by what he modestly called, an accident. He was suffering from Catarrh and began to examine his own nasal secretions, cultivating them on plates spread with agar, a jelly-like substance used as a nutrient in germs culture. In these secretions he discovered the substance that destroyed the microbes in the culture plates. He called it lysozyme. This was the first natural antiseptic that was harmless to the cells of the body; Penicillin was the second.

Another accident helped Fleming discover penicillin. If Fleming had not developed a finer sense of observation and awareness he would missed it. The more a scientist is observant the greater his chances of discovering new things. One morning, as was usual with him, he took out the plates on which had grown colonies of Staphylococcus, a common germ.

Which technique makes it easier to understand the text?

Which technique is more helpful in developing reading ability?

Another important aspect of reading is that when we read for meaning, we do not need to read every letter of every word, nor every word in each sentence. This is because we can guess much of what is said as we read it, provided the text makes sense. For example, if you are given merely a string of words that makes no sense at all like this: [man jumping tiger the on lake help to] then obviously you have to slow down and read every single word, as you can no longer make guesses. But try to read this sentence.

I was walk ---- d--n the s ---- t, c --- r - ing a gr--n----.

Even though more than half the letters are missing, you could probably read the sentence without difficulty, and even guess the last word without the help of any letters. You may also have noticed that as soon as you guessed the second word, it helped you go guess the whole of the first part of the sentence. This example is only an isolated sentence. If you are reading connected sentences in a text, each sentence helps you to guess what the next one will be, and so on through the whole text.

Reading is thus an active process. When we read, we do not merely sit as passive receivers of the text. We also draw on our own knowledge of the world and of the language to help us guess what the text will say next.

Look at this very simple mode of the process of communication.

![Figure 1: The Communication Process](image)

We can use the more general term encoder. The encoder has a message in his/her mind (it may be an idea, a fact, a feeling, etc.) which s/he wants to communicate to someone else. In order to make this communication possible, s/he must first put it into words: that is s/he must encode it. Once it is encoded, in either written or spoken form, it becomes available as a text to any other person who reads or hears it, i.e., the person who decodes, the message it contains. Once it is decoded, is the message enters the mind of the decoder and it is understood; communication has thus been achieved.
Do you think that this model explains the communication process satisfactory? You will realize that the model is obviously too simple.

Things can go wrong at any stage in the process. For instance, we cannot be sure that the decoder has received the message as it was intended by the encoder. The encoder may not have understood the language and style in which the message has been enclosed, or the encoder may not have encoded its/her message properly, in an organised manner. However, one thing is clear from this model, namely it assumes that reading means getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message that the writer put into it.

This is fairly widely held view of reading. According to this view, the text is full of meaning conveyed through words, and the meaning can be absorbed by the reader’s mind like a sponge absorbs water. To put it in another way, the reader’s mind is an empty vessel into which the text pours ideas, facts, etc. to be filled. Or it is like a blank slate on which the text imprints the words, the ideas, etc. The writer has done all that is required for understanding his/her message and the reader need not make any effort, but has only to let his/her mind absorb it passively. The reader’s role is thus seen to be a passive one.

Obviously, we know that it does not happen like this. All the meaning in the text does not actually get into the reader’s mind. We know from our experience of reading that a text which may be easy for one person will be difficult for another.

Problems arise when there is a mismatch between the presuppositions of the writer and those of the reader. The text will, therefore, not be understood by anyone who lacks this knowledge. But is it possible for the writer and the reader to have identical experiences of life? Not necessarily. Look at the figure below.

![Figure 2: Presupposition and Communication](image)

The figure shows how two people can have certain things in common, the shaded area where the two circles overlap. This area includes all the knowledge that they share, including knowledge of language, it also includes attitudes, beliefs, values and assumptions that they share. The unshaded areas represent experiences that are unique to each individual.

It is clear, therefore, that the greater the size of the shaded area, the easier the communication. That is, if the writer and the reader are from closely similar backgrounds with similar attitudes, beliefs and assumptions, the reader can interpret the text with apparently no conscious effort. There is, however, the danger that a careless reader may assume that the extent of the shaded area – that common ground – is longer than it actually is. In that case s/he is likely to misunderstand the text, trying to read into it meanings that are not there. Similarly, a writer may assume that his/her reader is likely to share a great deal of his/her knowledge, beliefs, etc. but the reader may actually struggle to make sense of the text.

It should now be clear that the meaning of the text does not merely lie in it, waiting to be passively absorbed by the reader. On the contrary, the reader has to be actively involved in getting the meaning out of the text.
Good readers interact with the texts that they read. They have personal expectations about what they want to get out of a text, and they bring those expectations to bear on what they read. They actually create meaning by constructing, or generating relationships between what they read and what they already know.

In generating these meanings, they draw on their prior knowledge of and beliefs about the subject—their "World knowledge", so to speak—that relates to the subject. Readers have networks of prior understanding about a topic, what theorists call *schemata*. In reading, they add to those networks, filling in some of the gaps in what they know, or in their existing schemata: The prior knowledge a reader already has about a subject has as much to do with what s/he gets from a text as the actual words in the text.

A Reader's Prior

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<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCES WITH</th>
<th>The MEANINGS</th>
<th>The Vocabulary</th>
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<td>Life, Language, and Literature</td>
<td>a Reader Constructs in Relation to a Text</td>
<td>Ideas, Syntax, and Form of a TEXT</td>
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Figure 3: The Relationships Among Prior Experiences, a Text, and the Meaning a Reader Constructs—Schema Theory in Action.

Figure 3 shows the relationships among prior knowledge, a text and the meanings a reader constructs in relation to the text. It summarizes what is known as *schema theory*. The figure also shows that, in creating meaning, good readers rely also on their prior knowledge of how language works, of how ideas are organised in writing and of how different forms are structured.

Thus schemata are knowledge structures which represent a generalized knowledge about objects or events, or even about a language system, which are activated while processing a text. An important function of schemata is therefore to help readers to match what they know with what the written text tells them, i.e., to monitor their comprehension. If there is some deficiency at the level of analysing print i.e. decoding problems like poor word recognition, the higher-level knowledge of the topic (i.e. schemata) will compensate for the deficiency.

The terms 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' are used in this context to explain the *interactive process* of reading. 'Top-down' processing refers to the use of predictions based on one's prior knowledge, while 'bottom-up' processing refers to the role of the text in providing input through decoding, or letter and word recognition. Reading is thus an interactive process; there is a simultaneous interaction of the reader's prior knowledge and his/her sampling of the text; to put it in more technical language, the meaning of a text is reconstructed through a constant interaction between the information obtained through bottom-up decoding and that obtained through top-down analysis.

Let us see this process at work with a simple example. Here is the beginning of a short text you are required to read:

*Keshav was on his way to school last Wednesday.*

Who, do you think Keshav was? How did you arrive at this conclusion? Was it based on textual information or on your prior knowledge? Now, the next sentence of the text reads like this:

*He was really worried about the English lesson.*

Who was Keshav? Have you now changed your view about Keshav, or not? Why?

The third sentence:

*Last week he had been unable to control the class.*

Are you now sure who Keshav was? Which part of the text has to be matched with what kind of prior knowledge to help in the inference?
The fourth sentence:

It was unfair of the English teacher to leave him in charge of the class.

What further changes in your inference have you made? Why?

The last sentence:

After all, it was not a normal part of a typist’s duty.

Are you now clear in your mind about who Keshav was?

You will have realized from this short exercise what is actually involved in reading a text and making sense of it.
11.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF READING

In the very early stage of reading instruction, teachers are generally concerned, with developing the mechanical reading skills. But as soon as they know that their students have these basic skills, they should move on as quickly as possible to developing in students the cognitive skills associated with different types of reading activity. If this kind of work is begun at the elementary level, students are more likely to become efficient readers early on in their life.

What do we mean by efficient reading? What are the characteristics of reading?

1. **Reading is purposeful.** That is, there is always a reason for reading. In general terms, we read either for information or pleasure. Your purpose in reading a recipe is obviously different from your purpose in going through a legal document, or in reading a poem. But there is nothing like totally purposeless reading – even when you read a novel during travel, you read it to pass your time, and that is the purpose.

2. **Reading is selective.** That is, the type of reading you do or the way you read a text varies according to your purpose in reading. You quickly scan a page in the telephone directory to locate a name, a telephone number, or an address, but you have to pay careful attention to every word in a legal document. To put it crudely, we scan for specific information, noting only what is relevant to our purpose at the given moment and rejecting or ignoring the majority of what appears on the page because it is irrelevant to our purpose. We skim, attempting to extract the gist of a text. Or we read intensively with the aim of decoding the whole of the writer’s message.

3. **Reading speed varies** according to content and purpose. Efficient readers use the minimum number of clues in the text – semantic and syntactic – to extract the information they need. You will agree that you generally read a novel or a short story faster than you read your textbook or study material.

4. **Reading is silent.** Reading aloud is a specialized skill used, for example, by actors and newsreaders, but seldom by the general reader. If it is used, its purpose is to communicate to another person a written message to which that person does not have access. (You will remember that this point has been discussed in the previous section of this unit.)

5. **Reading is text-based.** It seldom involves the mere decoding of individual sentences isolated from context. Look at this set of sentences:

   The mind of a thinker may work in many ways. The experiments proved his theory of ring structure. However, water is only a solvent and not a reagent.

   What is wrong with this? We cannot make sense of these sentences, because they are together without any relationship among them. They do not constitute a text at all and so we cannot ‘read’ this set meaningfully.

6. **Reading involves complex cognitive skills.** Readers do not merely decode the message. They make predictions and inferences – they anticipate based on what they read. They build assumptions about the overall content at the macro-level and predict what is likely to come next in the text at the micro-level. That is why reading is called “a psycholinguistic guessing game”. Readers may also impose their own organization on the information they extract from a text. At a more sophisticated level, they react to what they read, assessing the accuracy of the facts presented, the value of the opinions stated, or the quality and appropriateness of the style.
7. Effective reading also involves **chunking** of information that the well-developed schema makes possible. When we read, our eyes take in whole phrases at a time which are meaningful; they do not move from word to word in a straight line, but move backwards and forwards over the text. You will understand this if you do a simple exercise. Try covering a text with a piece of paper and reading it literally word by word. Move the paper along the text, revealing only one word each time. You will find that it is almost impossible to read and understand a text in this way. You soon lose track of the meaning and you need to keep looking back across the text to take in whole sentences. Your reading slows down so much in this attempt to read only one word at a time, that you lose these sense of what you are reading.

8. Reading is **based on comprehension**. That is, understanding meaning is integral to reading rather than the result of it. The more we comprehend, the more we can, and tend to, read.

What are the implications of these for reading instruction?

a) The meaning of a text does not depend on particular words in it. One can understand the meaning of a text, in the sense of getting the gist of it, even without understanding the meaning of all the words in it. Read this sentence: “The Noanama Indians cut their canoes out of tree trunks by using an adze.”

i) Try to draw an adze using the information given in the sentence.

ii) Try to complete these statements: “An adze is a kind of...... It can be used for........ Therefore, it is similar to................

- Have you not been able to guess what the sentence means without understanding the precise meaning of the world **adze**?

b) Comprehension does not entail identifying or examining all the information contained in a text, but involves sampling it, using the minimum of information required to verify or modify one’s predictions about the content of the text.

c) Reading is very much an active process, involving the reader’s interaction with the text. Meaning does not lie in a text waiting to be absorbed passively; readers bring meaning to the text.

d) There is a distinction between ‘signification’ and ‘value’. The difference between the two corresponds to the difference between a sentence in isolation and the same sentence in context. Until a sentence is used in a certain context, it has only ‘signification’. It acquires ‘value’ when it is used in that context.

**Check Your Progress**

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

   b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

11. How would you say that reading is ‘purposeful’?

12. How is one ‘selective’ in reading?
13. What does the reading speed depend on? How?

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14. In what sense is reading called “a psycholinguistic guessing game”? Explain.

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15. Distinguish between ‘signification’ and ‘value’ with reference to reading, with an example.

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**11.6 READING PROBLEMS**

**Miscues or decoding errors**

Through one-to-one oral reading (or individual oral reading), a teacher can identify and interpret a child’s miscues, or decoding errors. **Miscue analysis**, or the analysis of a reader’s error patterns, provides valuable clues to a reader’s interaction with a text. If you study the error patterns systematically, you will realize that all errors are not equally significant. Take, for example, the reading of the sentence: ‘He sat on the soaf after supper’. A child who reads it as ‘He sat on the bed after supper’, has used context clues to decode sofa incorrectly. However, she/he had not distorted the meaning of the sentence in any serious way. In contrast, the child who reads the same sentence as, ‘He sat on the soup after supper’ has used knowledge of the beginning consonant sounds to come up with another word that distorts meaning significantly.

A teacher should therefore raise these questions in analysing a reader’s miscues:

a) How well does the child use phonic information during reading? If the child says/rid/for ride and/fum/for fume, s/he knows the initial and final consonants and uses them appropriately, but s/he does not use the final construction to interpret the vowel correctly.

b) How well does the child use syntactic information during reading? Supposing the text says, ‘The boy looked sadly to the right’ and the child reads it as, ‘The boy looked slowly to the right’, the miscue is syntactically acceptable because it is syntactically similar to the text (both the words are adverbs). But if the child reads it as ‘The boy looked sound to the right’, not only is the meaning of the sentence changed, but the miscue is syntactically unacceptable.
Reading Comprehension

c) How well does the child use semantic information during reading? If the text reads, 'The day was very warm' and the child reads it as 'The day was quite warm', the miscue has not significantly changed the meaning of the text. On the other hand, if the child reads it as 'The day wasn't very warm', the meaning of the text has been significantly changed.

So, analysis of a child's miscues provides the teacher with information on what to emphasize with that child: phoneme-grapheme relationships, use of context clues, or use of prediction based on what one knows about language. In this respect, miscue analysis is a valuable diagnostic tool.

Vision Loss

Sometimes, problems with vision can have an impact on a child's ability to read and interpret texts. Often it is the elementary school teacher who first recognizes a possible visual problem. For instance, she may observe that a child bends the head down to the desk or holds a book up near the eyes while reading, squints at the board, rubs the eyes, or thrusts the body forward to see. Sometimes, a child may also complain that she cannot see the writing on the board or complain of seeing blurred print while reading. A teacher should refer such children immediately to their parents for an eye examination.

Children with problems, especially a vision loss that cannot be corrected with glasses, can be helped by
a) placing them near the board;
b) giving instruction in small groups, clustered around an easel where words are written clearly in large print;
c) using a reader-mate, who reads the instructions in the exercises given in the book or on the board;
d) preparing special test and exercise materials in large print and dictating test questions;
e) providing large-print versions of written materials.

Neurological problems

Some children have learning problems arising from neurological dysfunctioning rather than from low IQ or poor motivation. The term alexia is used to refer to a reading disability that may be related to the impairment of the central nervous system, such as a lesion in a particular region of the brain. In some cases, a child with alexia cannot grasp a whole word and puts even the simplest words together letter by letter. In some cases, a child with alexia can recognize the meaning of words but cannot read them aloud. The teacher, uncertain about a child who manifests severe problems in reading, should consult a specialist in learning disability, because it is important to distinguish between problems caused by poor motivation and those caused by a disability such as alexia.

Faulty reading habits

Certain faults in reading techniques have been noticed among second or foreign language learners. Many of these might have actually been acquired in L1 reading, for research shows that there is a strong transfer of reading habits from one language to another. Therefore, if bad reading habits had been developed in L1, it may be useful to begin to tackle L1 reading before developing better reading habits in the second or foreign language, at least where a similar writing system is used. Many of these early reading habits, when they continue into the later stages of reading, are known to slow down the reader and the reading process.

a) Subvocalization: Subvocalization refers to forming the sounds of the words you are reading and even murmuring them aloud. With beginning readers, this offers the support of the spoken language when they try to interpret the written form. Beginners in L1 reading (and in L2 as well) are often encouraged to make use of it. But reading aloud or subvocalization is much slower than silent reading - our eyes move faster than our tongue - so efficient readers do not subvocalize. If you subvocalize, you will tend to read word by word instead of in sense groups, which slows you down.

b) Finger pointing: Another faulty habit that slows down the reading process is finger pointing which children use to fix their concentration on the word they are deciphering. Finger pointing is particularly common when the writing system in the second or foreign language is not the same as the one used L1. One way to help such children
to get rid of this habit is to choose texts with large type if possible.

c) **Regressions:** Another reading habit that makes reading slower is the occurrence of regressive eye movements, i.e. the eyes move backwards to check previous words instead of moving steadily forward. Sometimes, even a skilled reader may have to return to earlier parts of a text and reinterpret them in the light of what has followed. In this case, regression may be a sign of an active reader at work. However, children should be trained to eliminate pointless and frequent regression by practising reading and very easy material.

We should make our students aware that efficient readers do not have these faulty habits and explain why. This does not mean that we should punish students who still cling to these habits – they may feel insecure about their command of the language and feel that they still need these props. We should rather attempt other ways of building their confidence so that habits will hopefully disappear in course of time.

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**Check Your Progress**

**Notes**

a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

16. What are the different kinds of miscues or decoding errors in reading?

17. What is alexia and how does it affect one's reading?

18. Are reading habits in different languages similar or different?

19. What is meant by 'subvocalizing'?

20. What is 'regression'? Is it always a sign of faulty reading technique?
11.7 LET US SUM UP

Reading is an important activity in our daily life and it is a skill that has to be developed in students earlier in school. We read different types of materials for different purposes. There are many authentic reasons for reading. Recognising words in print is only the initial stage of reading, but learners must be trained to read whole texts and not merely words and sentences in isolation.

Reading for meaning (or ‘silent reading’) is different from reading aloud. A general reader is seldom required to read aloud. When we read for meaning, we do not need to read every letter of every word, nor every word in each sentence, because very often we guess, anticipate, and predict as we read a text. A writer and his readers share certain assumptions about the world and about the language used for communication. Reading is an interactive process involving both bottom-up decoding of the text and top-down processing. The reader’s schemata interacts with the textual input.

Reading is purposeful, selective, and text-based. The reading speed varies according to one’s purpose in reading and the content of the text. Reading involves complex cognitive skills. It is called ‘a psycholinguistic guessing game’ because it involves making predictions. The teacher who teaches reading should recognize the learner’s reading problems, including faulty reading habits, and should help them to overcome those problems.

11.8 KEY WORDS

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<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>A system of signs, such as sounds, letters of the alphabet, words, figures, etc. to which meanings are assigned based on conventions. Both the writer and the reader must agree upon these conventional meanings assigned to the various units of the language they share.</td>
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<td>Decode</td>
<td>Convert a message from its coded form to its original form; here recognise letters and words in a text and understand their meaning.</td>
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<td>Encode</td>
<td>Put a message in a particular set of signs or symbols (i.e., words) according to the rules of that particular code (i.e., language).</td>
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<td>Message</td>
<td>The information that the writer wants to convey to the reader(s).</td>
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<td>Register</td>
<td>A variety of language or a style of speaking or writing that is used in particular circumstances or social situations. For example, when we say ‘the register of law’ or ‘science’, we refer to the particular variety of language that is used to talk or write about the subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schemata</td>
<td>The networking of information in the mind which incorporates a generalised knowledge about objects and events and which is activated while a reader reads a text. The schemate include the previous knowledge a person has about topic, his/her knowledge of the world, his/her experiences, beliefs and attitudes. The schemata helps readers to match what they know with what the reading text offers them. Reading is thus an interaction between these two kinds of input: textual and knowledge of the world.</td>
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<td>Signification</td>
<td>The dictionary meaning of a word or the meaning of a sentence arrived at by putting together the dictionary meanings of its constituent words. The sentence, for example, The door is open, has the signification of a statement of fact that the door is open, not closed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>A set of sentences put together to convey a message in which the relationships or connections between the sentences is clear. The sentences must relate to the same situation, must be sequenced properly, and must be connected by means of linking words like and, but, however, of course.</td>
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<td>Value</td>
<td>The significance of a word or a sentence in a particular context. The sentence, The door is open, may mean that the speaker wants the listener to close the door, or that she welcomes the listener to enter the room, and so on. A skilled reader grasps not merely the signification of what s/he reads but also its value. This involves understanding the writer’s presuppositions, intention, etc. in making a particular statement.</td>
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1. Time-tables, maps, diary, calender, labels, notices, instruction manuals, newspapers, magazines, books, sign boards, forms, and so on - the range is very wide.

2. Traditionally, reading is used in the classroom to consolidate the oral work done by students earlier, to make them see the relationships between speech sounds and written symbols, and to answer questions in the examination.

3. We normally read to get information about a topic, to perform a task with the help of instructions or directions, to establish friendly relationships through correspondence, to know about programmes, goods and services, etc., and get enjoyment or excitement.

4. Reading is an important activity in which students are likely to engage themselves in during their study or later in their jobs or even in personal life. So it has to be developed in them as a skill to enable them to cope with these demands.

5. ‘Silent reading’ is reading for meaning and it is a more common activity than ‘reading aloud’, which is done in limited contexts. Silent reading is easier and faster than the other.

6. ‘Silent reading’ is to be preferred because it enables one to read faster and comprehend the text more easily.

7. The ability to predict what will come next in a reading text is central to the process of reading. It helps the reader to monitor his/her comprehension of the text. It also helps the reader to process minimum textual input to arrive at the meaning of the text.

8. The more the shared assumptions, the better the communication. Without shared assumptions, comprehension of the writer’s message will be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

9. Schemata are mental structures embodying one’s prior knowledge of the world, his/her experiences, and also his/her knowledge of the language in which the message is enclosed. They help the reader in anticipating and predicting what will follow in a text. Textual input is matched against schemata to make sense of the text.

10. Reading is an interactive process involving a simultaneous interaction of bottom-up decoding of a text with the reader’s schemata to produce meaning. (See the elaborate discussion of this aspect in the unit to check your understanding.)

11. Reading is purposeful because it is the purpose which dictates and directs the way we read a text and process it. It suggests what strategy or technique of reading we need to employ to satisfy our needs.

12. A reader is ‘selective’ in reading in two ways. First s/he selects the kinds of texts s/he would be interested in reading. Secondly, s/he selects the minimum clues in the text to arrive at its meaning for his/her purpose without having to read every word in it.

13. Reading speed depends on content and purpose. Reading light fiction is easier, and hence faster than reading a philosophical or scientific text full of jargon. Similarly, if the reader’s purpose is only to get the gist of a text, s/he needs, just skim through the text fast. But if s/he wants to read for details, s/he has to read it with concentration and effort.

14. Reading involves basically making guesses and predictions about what might follow in a text, matching these against fresh textual input, and modifying them accordingly. It is in the sense that reading is called “a psycholinguistic guessing game” because the predictions are made possible by the schemata available in the reader’s mind.

15. ‘Signification’ refers to the neutral, dictionary meaning of a word or a sentence without reference to the context of its occurrence. It is fixed, ‘Value’, on the other hand, refers to the meaning that the word or the sentence takes on by virtue of the context in which it occurs. It is therefore variable. (Any appropriate example may be taken for illustration).
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<tr>
<th>Reading Comprehension</th>
<th>16. Miscues arising from a misunderstanding of phonic, syntactic or semantic information in the reading text.</th>
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<td>17. Alexia refers to a neurological problem, a damage caused to the central nervous system. It results in a reading disability. A child with alexia cannot grasp a whole word or read words aloud.</td>
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<td>18. There are differences between reading in our own language and reading a second or foreign language. The differences are greater if the other language uses a different writing system. But the characteristics of 'efficient reading' appear to be the same in different languages - for example, reading with purpose, making predictions while reading, etc.</td>
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<td>19. Subvocalization refers to the act of forming the sounds of - 5X the words we are reading and even murmuring them aloud.</td>
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<td>20. Regression refers to the tendency of the eyes to move backwards over print instead of moving forward. No, sometimes, even a skilled reader may do it modify his/her earlier predictions in the light of fresh textual clues.</td>
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