
UNIT 9 THE NATURE OF READING

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Viewing Reading as a Skill
- 9.3 Reading as a Process
- 9.4 Viewing Reading as Comprehension
- 9.5 Viewing Reading as Development
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Suggested Reading

9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we discuss the nature of reading in terms of:

Reading as a **skill** that is consciously learned; as a **process**; as **comprehension**; as **development**.

We have also indicated the advantages and disadvantages of all these views.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

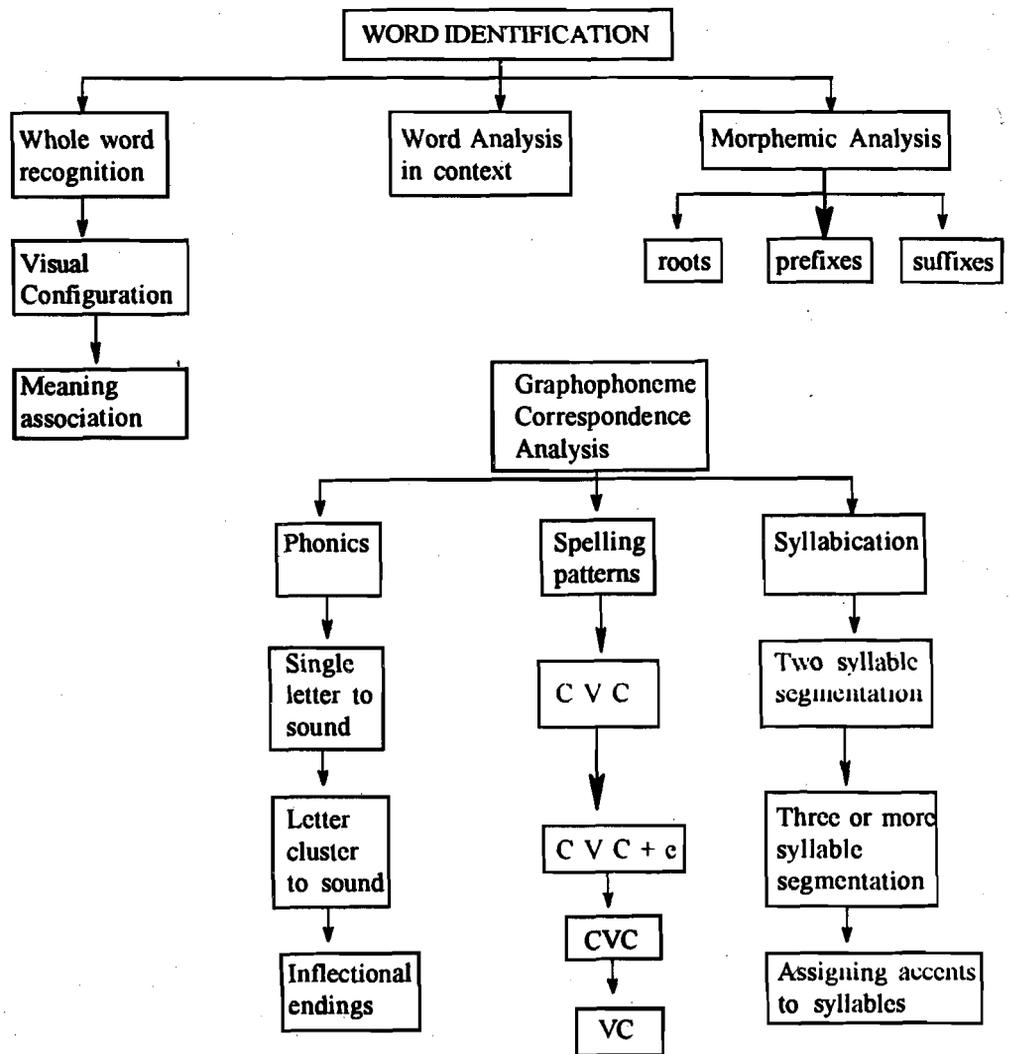
There are four major ways in which reading is considered: as a **skill**, as a **process**; as **comprehension** and as **development**. Each view has its own chief characteristics which promoted a particular methodology. Being aware of what is involved in reading helps the teacher to teach reading effectively by providing the base for assessing and interpreting children's reading performances.

9.2 VIEWING READING AS A SKILL

In this view of reading, it is considered as a **skill that is consciously learned**. Not all human beings read or learn to read and those who do learn vary considerably in their reading ability. So reading is not a natural language process which can be acquired without instruction. While the reader's knowledge of language is recognized as an integral part of reading printed material, reading is viewed as a complex unitary skill which is learned, like other psychomotor skills such as riding a bicycle.

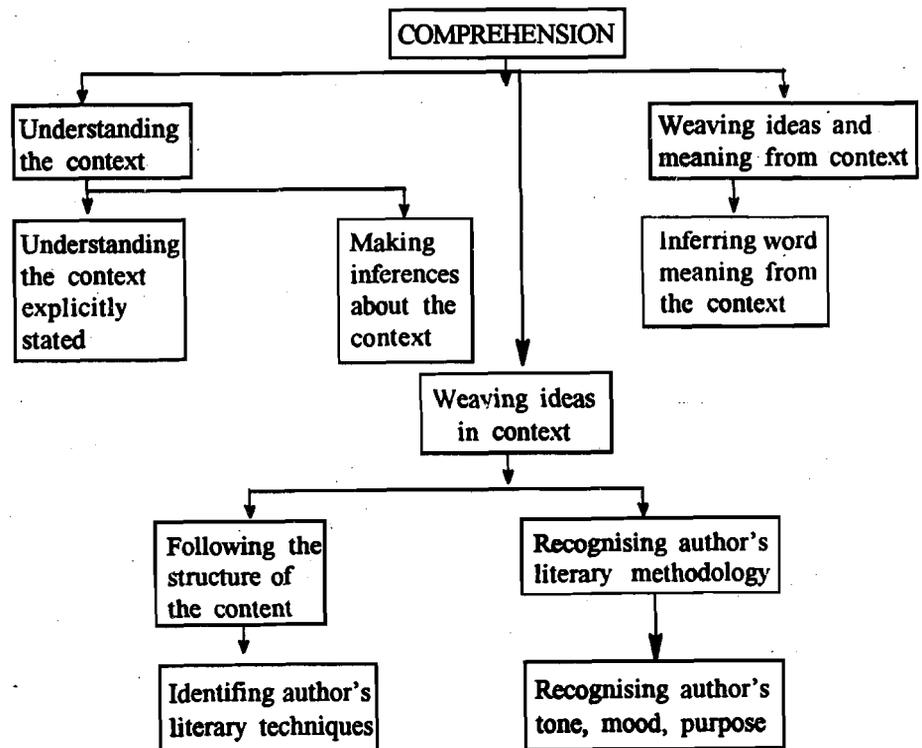
As an observable unitary skill, reading is defined as a level of proficiency in reading a text or components of a text, with related identifiable subskills. During reading the subskills function simultaneously. These subskills must be learned through direct instruction and then interrelated. Normally reading subskills are considered to be learned best and then interrelated through sequencing, which begins with the simpler subskills and works towards the larger, more complex skills.

The most global skills of reading are word identification and comprehension skills. Each can be broken into component subskills which must be interrelated throughout the course of acquiring the skills of reading. The components of word identification are organised as shown in the following diagram:



Word identification subskills are primarily determined by a logical analysis of what a reader must know about the components of a text to be able to transform printed symbols to sounds and meanings.

The comprehension subskills are organised as shown in the following diagrams:



Comprehension subskills are determined by logical analysis of text/reading tasks which are considered to represent levels of proficiency in understanding a text. For example, being able to weave together the sentences in a text means much more than just remembering each sentence. It involves the capacity to draw inferences from the literal meanings of the sentences in order to connect them together. There has been a considerable debate about which subskills are most essential to global comprehension. There is a strong tendency to consider reading comprehension primarily as knowledge of vocabulary and reasoning, rather than as a series of component subskills.

The teaching programme in this view would consist of specifying the order in which word identification and comprehension subskills are learned and integrated. The ideal would be to select and sequentially teach those subskills that successively lead to acquiring the global skills. Further, within each global skill, it is necessary to decide on the level of proficiency needed in performing lower order subskills in order to learn a higher level component skill. For example, what level of proficiency in identifying the sound symbol correspondence for single consonants such as b, l, f, g is necessary to learn bl, fl, gl? This type of question can be asked about the learning or teaching sequence of any series of subskills within the global skills of word identification and comprehension.

The outcome in this programme is meaning. All the subskills learned should have a definite content and the responses should be accurate and automatic. The subskills content must be easy to learn. The student's responses must be observable. Simple level subskills must be integrated if complex global skills are to be learned.

The advantages of this programme subskills are:

1. It offers an analytic, manageable and testable basis for designing reading programmes.
2. Since what is taught can be directly tested, teachers can assess the success of their teaching and can describe or monitor individual pupil progress throughout the course.
3. Teaching can be quite orderly, as teachers can directly teach small linguistic units which can be practised and then applied during the reading of a text.
4. A particular sequence can be followed in teaching subskills, so that difficult texts can be read after learning successively more complex subskills.
5. The level of mastery of discrete subskills can be estimated by comparing knowledge of subskills to proficiency in oral and silent reading performance.

However, this programme which views reading only as a skill does not have the answer to the question of how to help students transfer the skills they learn to the reading of a text. Also, there is no clear indication of how to teach students to integrate subskills during reading. Finally, it is not clear which subskills are truly valid and should therefore be given priority in developing fluent reading and greater comprehension. Further, teachers must not assume that the content associated with a subskill must be mastered before introducing other subskills or before applying those that are learned to reading a text. For example, a child need not be expected to master the sound symbol correspondence for all single consonants before being introduced to consonant clusters. Teachers must be flexible in following whatever sequence seems natural for subskill instruction. They should offer children materials to read that take into account their knowledge of subskills and enable them to practise the subskills they have already learned.

Now answer these questions to recapitulate what we have discussed so far:

Check your Progress 1

1. What are the reasons for considering reading as a skill that has to be learned consciously?

Before considering reading as a processing activity, it would be useful for us to look briefly at how human beings process information and see its application to the processing of printed information.

The human information processing system requires a sender and a receiver of information. Information refers to something that is meaningful to the receiver and which may be represented as sound or print. The receiver has to interpret the input into sound patterns and the patterns into units of information. Separate units of information linked together will constitute a meaningful message. Each unit, as it is received, reduces the receiver's uncertainty about the meaning of the total message. Anything that makes the building up of information unclear or which conveys no information is called **noise**.

Information may be partially ambiguous and the meaning tentative, thus creating uncertainty. In some cases, **noise** may interfere and disrupt the certainty of relationships among information units already received or create uncertainty about the relationship between new information and information already received. This uncertainty gives rise to the number of alternatives the receiver has to choose from to make decisions about the meaningful relationships among incoming information units. When the information already received or new information is ambiguous, the receiver will have to make still more decisions. Therefore, the most crucial aspect of language processing is the reduction of uncertainty.

There are two major ways in which uncertainty during processing can be reduced. One is the meaning content of the message itself. The probabilities are worked out on the basis of the received information as well as the vocabulary appropriate to the context and the syntactic and discourse structure permissible in a particular language. The other, comes from the receiver's prior knowledge of the meaning content of the message. In both the cases, meaning is available from more than one source of information. This is known as **redundancy**. It is based on the probability of the occurrence of any single information unit or sequence of units within the total message. If the units of information which make up the meaning of the message are highly redundant and the receiver is aware of most of the redundancies, then uncertainty is reduced to the minimum.

In summary, information processing theory explains the major principles that underlie the acquisition of meaning during communication between a sender and a receiver of information. The receiver must be actively involved to construct a meaningful message from incoming information by using the cognitive and language resources which the receiver brings to the situation. Redundancy, noise and the resolution of uncertainty are the major issues in the human information processing system. These issues are relevant whether the information is represented in sound, print or any other form.

When we apply the principles underlying any form of human information processing to reading, we have to consider the major sources of redundancy in print, the sources of noise and the importance of the rates of processing by individuals. There are many levels of redundancy in print. Most of them are equivalent to the redundancies in spoken language. But the format and the organisation of language in printed form is more formal and distant from the receiver. Punctuation is quite explicit in print, but print cannot indicate mood, juncture, intonation and body and facial expressions implicit in speech. The reader must learn to get to meaning through using the sources of print redundancy that are equivalent to those already used in speech.

The major sources of redundancy in print are:

1. The graphic correspondences for sounds and words;
2. The correspondence between speech and print; signals for word order, tense, number, gender emphasis and reference;
3. The correspondence between semantic information already possessed by the reader and the semantic information provided in print, such as word meanings.

1 Graphophonic information

This deals with the relationships between the sounds of the reader's spoken language and the written form of the language. English sound symbol correspondences are actually more regular than irregular. But initially, the young reader will have to learn a great deal about the regular and irregular sound symbol correspondence. Once the system is mastered, then the reader will realise the many sources of redundancy for pronouncing unfamiliar words and for practising familiar words while reading phrases and sentences without having to use all the graphic information in a word.

2 Syntactic information

Young readers produce and receive grammatical language with ease. But they must learn how to use this knowledge to find out the syntactic sources of redundancy while reading a text. The syntactic cues in a sentence help the reader to organise words into groups or to predict what word will come next.

3 Semantic information

All the relationships established within a language to convey meaning may be considered semantic information. For semantic sources of redundancy to be useful, these meanings must already exist in the reader's memory. Readers must use their knowledge of the world and their store of word meanings to organise word groups into sentences, to connect consecutive sentences, to interrelate all the sentences in a text and to construct meaning when meaning gaps occur among word groups or sentences. The reader should be able to differentiate between a collection of sentences and a set of sentences tied together as a unified whole.

In many ways the reader has to be more active than the writer. The reader has to get at the meaning of the complex system and unfamiliar words used by the writer. The reader has to make use of all the redundancy offered by the words already known and prior knowledge of events to draw out meaning from the text.

Reading Fluency and Noise

Reading fluency is determined by the extent to which meaning is easily and quickly constructed with the least interruptions. If there are a lot of interruptions, then it will be difficult to remember the relationship between what was read, what is being read and what will be read next. To reduce the uncertainty about meaning units, the reader should use simultaneously as many possible sources of redundancy as there are in the text, to predict and integrate meaning.

Any part of the text information which the reader does not store in memory or fails to recover from memory cannot be used to construct meaning from received information. Such lost information can be considered as noise. When too many interruptions occur or a good many of these interruptions lead to a distortion of the writer's intended meaning, then noise becomes critical. Other forms of 'noise' are: (1) when the legibility or format of the print leads to misreading; (2) the syntax is very different from that of the reader's; (3) the metaphors and word concepts are beyond the reader's prior knowledge; (4) the rate at which the reader processes syntactic information is too slow for the reader to organise or store information and (5) there are too many words the readers cannot pronounce.

The Combined Use of Graphophonic, Syntactic and Semantic Sources of Redundancy

Proficient readers make use of different sources of redundancy while processing texts. Consider this example:

Read this incomplete sentence and see if you can complete the message:

1. Then the driver drove the am

Now see if you can complete the preceding sentence faster and with greater certainty, when it is preceded by another sentence:

2. He turned the ignition, raced the engine, and switched on the siren. Then the driver drove the am

The word **ambulance** is easily predicted in the second sentence. It may have been slower and less certain in the first sentence. So in the more meaningful and redundant text, noise and uncertainty are reduced. Given the opportunity to process sentences in a text, readers will find out alternative sources of redundancy in order to predict incoming information or to fill in information gaps. Even a single sentence can provide sources of redundancy for the reader to predict unfamiliar, partially familiar or partially processed words such as **am**.....

Let us consider in detail the sources of redundancy to predict the word **ambulance** in the example given above.

1. The association between the reader's knowledge of the world and the information preceding the unknown word, which predicts a sensible choice: Drivers are trained professionals — they drive vehicles — ambulance is a vehicle.
2. The knowledge of the grammatical class form of the word due to the syntactic pattern of the sentence: **am** must be a noun because it is preceded by *the*, follows a verb, and is in a subject - verb - object sentence pattern.
3. The reader's knowledge of spelling or sound symbol knowledge to predict that there will be more than one syllable in the word, as it already has one syllable: **am** is a syllable in many words.
4. The knowledge of letter order: **am** will not be followed by c, d, g, j, k, l, q, s, v, w and z in the English language.
5. The combination of any two or more of the preceding sources of knowledge may be used to eliminate the available words in one's memory which might fit or complete the meaning of a sentence: It is a noun — it starts with **am** has more than one syllable — something which drivers of cars drive. This knowledge suggests that the words **ambit**, **ambush**, **American**, **amplify** are to be eliminated.

The reader who is able to process without interruption large units of information is likely to predict with ease the units that come next. The reader who gives a lot of attention to units of information that carry the least amount of meaning, will be forced to use less of the available redundancy in the text. This is the reason why young readers find difficulty in reading fluently and in making sense out of a text.

Summary

The processing that occurs during reading is related to the general principles that underlie any form of human information processing. Viewing reading as a process emphasizes the way the reader uses syntactic redundancy to organise words into phrase groups and to predict incoming words. In addition it uses the feedback of meaning from the reader's memory. This feedback helps the reader to predict what is likely to occur next as well as to integrate known information with the new incoming information.

The view of reading as a skill does not specifically deal with how readers go about applying their word identification and comprehension skills during reading. But the process view of reading offers some indication of what happens during sentence by sentence construction of a printed message. This insight, shows how readers may apply, supplement or integrate their skills knowledge through the development of strategies for predicting, confirming prediction and integrating already known information with new information.

Implications of the Process View of Reading for Teaching Reading

It is clear that reading involves the processing of information as well as certain skills. Therefore, most children have to be taught more than sound symbol correspondence and word meaning in order to read fluently and construct meaning from printed material. Instruction in reading should help students develop their strategies for processing sentences and passages.

To recapitulate what we have discussed so far, try and answer the following questions:

Check Your Progress 2

1. Can viewing reading only as skills learning, help you to explain the following? If not, give reasons.
 - a. Some readers are able to read words in meaningful sentences, but are unable to read words when presented as isolated units.
 - b. Readers are able to go beyond word by word reading in phrases.
 - c. Readers use syntactic clues to reconstruct an author's intended meaning.
 - d. Readers are able to predict, while reading a text, what word, groups will occur next.
 - e. Readers are able to relate and integrate the meanings within sentences and between sentences as they read a text.

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2. What is 'noise' and how does it interfere with meaning?

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3. What are the different ways in which a reader can use 'redundancy'?

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4. What is the essential difference between viewing reading as a skill and reading as a process?
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9.4 VIEWING READING AS COMPREHENSION

Human beings possess a complex system for perceiving, storing and restructuring knowledge. They also have the capacity to make inferences which enables them to relate information, think of new concepts and restructure old concepts. All human beings store in memory a large amount of information about the world. They draw on this store to help them in acquiring new meaningful information, drawing inferences and constructing meaning out of bits of information. These cognitive resources play an important part in the way readers understand and remember whatever is read. All readers must be able to bridge the gap between information presented in the text and the knowledge in their heads, to be able to understand and remember what is read.

Reading comprehension is the activity of relating the knowledge the reader already possesses to the meaning in the text, assimilating it and then accommodating it with the existing knowledge. It is the activity of constructing and reconstructing meaning as the reader interacts with the information in the text, before, during and after reading. Let us see how this actually happens through an example. Try to read the following passage:

A newspaper is better than a magazine. A seashore is a better place than a street. At first it is better to walk than to run. It requires some skill, but it is easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it.

Even if you can read all the words correctly, you may feel that you do not understand it. This means that reading is much more than merely saying the words on the page. The reader must bridge the gap between the information on the page and what he or she already knows to achieve comprehension. I shall now give you the heading for this paragraph - *Flying Kites*. Now reread the paragraph. You will find that whatever seemed mysterious in the first reading now makes sense. This is because you are now applying what you already know about flying kites to what is printed on the page. It now becomes easier for you to draw inferences between sentences which appeared vague previously. If the reader has no prior knowledge to relate to the text, then no amount of rereading will increase comprehension.

The skills view of reading shows what the reader understands by responding to a particular task or a series of tasks. For example, answering questions about what is read indicates what is understood but does not explain how the reader arrived at the correct response. The Process view of reading is primarily concerned with the acquisition of information during line-by-line reading. It does not go on to explain how readers are able to understand or remember an entire text, such as a story. The view of reading as comprehension tries to show how the reader's knowledge of the world, knowledge of

the structure of texts and the capacity to infer enable a reader to understand and remember information presented in a text.

The relationship between world knowledge and reading comprehension is the match between the reader's general knowledge of the world and the information content presented in a text. Such a statement, you will realise, raises several questions. Is narrative material easier to be understood than exposition? What kind of prior knowledge will be more relevant in understanding narrative than exposition? Do readers have to bring more prior knowledge to understand narrative than to exposition?

One source of prior knowledge of particular importance to the understanding of narration is **script knowledge**. This knowledge consists of ordinary every day information stored in memory. It is derived from repeated experiences and associations with places, events and situations in day to day living. Examples of script knowledge are knowledge of what happens, at post offices, banks, railway stations, football matches and so on. Each of these situations shares a whole series of common associations of people's roles, basic contexts, typical relationships and basic events. People who share a common culture tend to acquire a good number of common scripts. Consider the example:

Raghu went into National Cafe. He ordered 4 chappathies and a tea. The waiter served him and gave him the bill. Raghu left some tip for the waiter and walked out.

Questions such as (1) Did Raghu eat the Chappathies? (2) Were the chappathies served on a plate? (3) Did Raghu pay the bill at the counter or to the waiter? and many more can be raised and these can be answered on the basis of the shared knowledge of a cultural group.

Script knowledge is a powerful resource for understanding a text. It is especially useful in understanding narrative material. Most stories contain dialogue, descriptions and events whose meanings need not be explicitly stated by the writer because readers already have the script knowledge to fill in the details in the narrative. Script knowledge enables the readers to predict, infer as well as to selectively sample the information in the narrative material. This explains how, sometimes young readers are able to answer questions to texts even without reading the passage.

Besides using script knowledge, readers often engage in **script elaboration**. This involves the generation of associated ideas or embellishment of ideas which are consistent with the script knowledge a reader has but are not necessarily true. Readers engage in script elaboration when reading the title of the story, names of characters/ places, specific scenes, specific dialogues descriptions of characters and so on. Such an activity permits the reader to get more involved in relating to the text and to make conjectures beyond what can be normally derived from the information explicitly stated in the text. Script elaboration also facilitates memory and understanding by helping the reader to draw together information while a story is being read. It also helps the reader to indulge in a richer range of information already stored in memory which may not be activated without engaging in the process of elaboration. Allowing script elaboration on the topic, major event, or main theme, even before reading the text, may increase comprehension during reading, because it helps the reader to create a meaningful context for linking together and remembering the information in the story.

Reading comprehension is intricately related to the knowledge of the structure to the text. *Text structure* refers to aspects of the text that signal how the context is related. It deals with cohesion and coherence. You have already come across these terms in Course 2 Block 2. Cohesion is necessary in any kind of written message. Cohesion exists when the interpretation of some element in the text is dependent on the interpretation of another. It is signalled by nouns, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions and sentences linkers. Children must learn to use these signals and other structures in order to follow and weave together the meaning of the text.

For example, the purpose of an expository text is to explicitly explain or teach and so relies upon the general text structures of superordinate and subordinate topics, major and minor ideas and patterns of argument or inference. On the other hand, a narrative involves the readers in a series of images, events dialogue or their combination to entertain the readers and stimulate them to imagine. Therefore, narration relies on story grammars and patterns of metaphor to organise and relate meaning. Children acquire increasingly complex knowledge of story structure with age and exposure to stories. Studies have revealed that there is a considerable growth in story structures among children between 4 and 9 years of age.

The categories that are commonly included in a simple story are **Setting** (introducing the main character, the physical, social, temporal context) **Initiating Event** (an event, or natural occurrence which initiates or causes a response in the main character) **Internal Response** (an emotion or goal of the main character), **Attempt** (an overt action by the main character to attain his/her goal), **Consequence** (an event, action, or end which signals the attainment or non-attainment of the protagonist's goal) and **Reaction** (an emotion, action or end state). Studies have revealed that young children (kindergarten and upto third standard) have less knowledge of story structure than older children. Older children are better than younger ones in filling in missing details. Older children are also able to produce more detailed retelling of stories with discrepant structures than younger ones. Both first and fifth standard studies best recall the setting, initiating events and story consequence. Middle episodes are usually forgotten. Younger children also have considerable difficulty in comprehending pictures and stories that do not use a forward-ordered, logical sequence. **Pictures accompanying stories aid all children in the elementary school in remembering stories.**

On the other hand, the knowledge and use of expository text structure to understand and remember a text is acquired rather slowly by the elementary school children and requires considerable help from the teachers.

The knowledge of general text structures plays a significant part in reading comprehension. This knowledge helps the reader in constructing and reconstructing the referential relationships among units of information in a text. It helps the readers to follow the author's intended meaning. When there are various levels of meaning to be manipulated by the reader or the text requires a great deal of prior knowledge about the content, then the text structures help the reader to achieve adequate comprehension of the text.

Reading comprehension depends very much on the reader's capacity to draw inferences. Inference involves perceiving relationships between units of information, based on what the reader already knows, information explicitly stated in the text, information implied in the text or any combination of these sources. Readers will have to use either backward or forward inferences while reading a text. Since sentences are always part of a larger context, the reader will have to make the inferences necessary to connect the sentences for working out the meaning of the text. "Babu ate an orange. It was juicy" is an example of Backward Inference and "They drove too fast. The police did not care about the emergency" is an example of Forward Inference.

When inferences are made, it is the semantic content of the text that determines which sentences are most important to connect in order to understand the information in the text. Connections between all the sentences allow the reader to get the literal meaning. But sentences whose referential relationships are lexically and topically ambiguous cannot be understood so easily. In such cases the readers will have to use their prior knowledge to resolve the ambiguity and thereby infer the relationships among ambiguous statements.

In short, prior knowledge of text structures and inferencing must be used by the reader to bridge the gap between what is already known and the new information given in the text. As soon as a young reader is able to decode a series of words, or a word occurring

in a meaningful context (such as the word *Book Store* on the door of a place to buy books), then these three resources are in operation. The use of these three resources continues throughout one's life.

Implications of the View of Reading as Comprehension for the Teaching of Reading

Viewing reading as comprehension involves the active use of what the reader already knows with the information given in the text to construct the author's meaning. This suggests creating instructional situations that enable students to consciously control how this happens. These situations will

- a. help the reader actively relate prior knowledge to the text information;
- b. help the reader gain a conscious control over major text structures, topics, events and ideas in stories, news articles and expository textbook material; and
- c. guide the reader to generate inferences between prior knowledge and text information.

The teacher must provide plenty of opportunities for children to regularly and independently engage in comprehending texts. The teacher must allow children to select their own materials and read a broad variety of texts, as well as encourage them to write texts of a variety of types to different audiences and for a variety of purposes. The teacher can use advantageously the following methods to facilitate growth in reading comprehension:

- 1. selecting and using questions in such a way that it leads the child to use prior knowledge to predict, elaborate and reconstruct text information;
- 2. using methods and situations to guide the children to identify and use the major structures in the text to infer, organise, remember and reflect upon the literal information stated explicitly in the text; and
- 3. giving chances to the children to draw inferences during and after reading. For instance, the child should be asked to write questions during reading in order to elicit worthwhile inferences from peers and engage in peer discussion after reading.

Viewing reading as comprehension implies that both teachers and students consider reading as an active, purposeful and meaning-centred activity. This means that children should be shown that personal, social and academic purposes are equally important. It also requires the readers should be able to relate prior knowledge to the content of the text either before or during reading.

We have discussed so far quite a complex notion about the nature of reading. Answering these questions will clarify the major issues involved in this view of reading.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1. How does prior knowledge help one to construct meaning out of a passage?
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- 2. How do viewing reading as skill, reading as process and reading as comprehension differ from each other?

reading performance resulting from the co-ordinated use of skills, processing strategies and cognitive resources to construct meaning from printed material. The reading materials will vary according to their readability and the use of text structures to achieve cohesion and coherence.

The various stages in the development of reading in a child are marked by typical patterns of reading performance. For example, children who have a small repertoire of words that can be accurately and automatically read are unlikely to read rapidly in consistent phrase groups with few mistakes. This seems to be the typical pattern of reading performance in the initial stage of reading development. When children can read consistently in phrase groups with few mistakes, their attention to word units would have declined and they would become aware of the syntactic units which show how words are ordered within sentences. This stage can be considered to be the intermediate stage. A still more advanced stage of reading growth is represented by the child's capacity to comprehend more than one variety of text materials. This stage of reading development is considered to be a fairly mature stage of reading growth. Many readers may continue to refine their performance within this stage throughout their life.

The value of the developmental view of reading is that it provides a framework for relating the skills, process, and comprehension aspects of reading. This framework serves three purposes. First, it helps to indicate clearly the major sources of change in each dimension of reading that leads to new patterns of reading growth. Second, it marks the ability to read and comprehend complex reading material as well as manage a wider range of genres at a particular level of readability. Third, the typical patterns of growth serve as the basis for comparing the changes in the reading performance of individuals regardless of which class they are in school.

Skills Learning

The main sources of changes in skills learning are to be seen in the knowledge of print as a code, sight word and word identification cues. Although the rate of reading and monitoring of the use of skills, strategies, cognitive resources and text knowledge do not seem to be of great importance at the initial stage, it must be recognised that the child is already beginning to activate all these sources of change to some extent even at this stage. Generally, the child, at this stage, is expected to pay attention to skills learning.

Sentence Processing

The primary sources of change in sentence processing may be seen in word grouping and in getting the meaning of each sentence as it is read. As these sources grow and are actively used, it can be seen that the child moves away from paying overt attention to individual words during reading. The importance of decoding words diminishes and the child begins to manipulate groups of words. This is due to the child's good working knowledge of graphophoneme correspondences and a fairly good store of structure and content words.

Text Comprehension

The chief sources of change in text comprehension are the increase in the rate of reading, active monitoring of the use of skills and strategies and an increase in the knowledge of how different genres of text are organised. The ability to manage these resources will mark a fairly mature stage of reading development. The potential to make simultaneous multiple inferences, the possession of a wider range of world knowledge and the increase in vocabulary will facilitate the comprehension of complex texts.

Reading development is perhaps the most critical aspect of reading because it takes into consideration the relative importance and functions of skills learning, sentence processing and comprehension aspects of reading. It gives us a sense of how changes in reading take place. More importantly, without realising how changes in reading are

related to the various patterns of growth in reading, it is possible to give undue importance to one dimension of reading to the exclusion of the others. For teachers and parents, this can lead to many restrictive, unproductive and artificial methods about the instructional strategies needed for individual children in the elementary school.

Now, what are the implications of this view of reading as development for teaching reading? The developmental view of reading attempts to ensure that instructional goals match the child's patterns of reading. The level of instruction cannot be either too below or too far above the stage of reading that a child has reached. If there is a big gap between the child's attainment in reading and the requirements for reading in the classroom, then motivation to read will be reduced and comprehension will be diminished. All children contribute to changes in their reading growth. But the rate of such changes and the manner in which they are integrated into patterns depend very much on the quality of instruction given by the teacher.

During elementary education, the child passes through three stages of reading development. In the initial stage, skills and processing strategies get the maximum attention in the teacher-directed instructional strategies. Also, it is important that the teacher provide time regularly to the children to read, engage them in language and reading related activities as well as allow them to read on their own for pleasure. Otherwise, their natural motivation cannot be kindled and sustained. Thus primary and beginning reading instruction should be based on carefully selected skills and strategies to be directly taught by the teacher. In addition, a well designed classroom environment will give the children good opportunities to listen to reading and explore the use of books through their own reading.

In the interim stage of reading development, most of the teacher-directed instruction should be on processing strategies for constructing meaning. This would help improve the child's use of word identification skills, predicting, confirming and sampling strategies. It also establishes consistent reading of sentences in phrase groups. Finally it permits children to use their prior knowledge of the world actively to relate cohesive structures in the text. Again, if the maximum advantage is to be derived from viewing reading as development, teachers should provide opportunities for children to read by themselves and other language activities such as writing, and discussion.

Answer the following questions:

- 1 In what ways can the concepts of "accommodation" and "assimilation" be considered essential to the notion of development in general and to reading in particular?

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- 2 What are the various stages in the development of reading?

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3. How is the view of reading as development more comprehensive than the other views?

4. Having read the four different views about reading, what is really involved in reading and what should be the teacher's role in helping children to learn how to read?

9.7 SUGGESTED READING:

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