
UNIT 2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE READING SKILL

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Reading Readiness
- 2.4 The Reading Process: Its Stages
 - 2.4.1 Forming of Auditory Images
 - 2.4.2 Associating Ideas with Auditory Images
 - 2.4.3 Combining Unit Ideas into a Group
 - 2.4.4 Grouping of Words
- 2.5 Kinds of Reading
 - 2.5.1 Loud Reading
 - 2.5.2 Silent Reading
- 2.6 Reading Activities
 - 2.6.1 Map Exercise
 - 2.6.2 Blackboard Exercise
- 2.7 Reading Defects
- 2.8 Kinds of Reading Comprehension
 - 2.8.1 Factual Comprehension
 - 2.8.2 Inferential Comprehension
- 2.9 Intensive and Extensive Reading
- 2.10 Problems in Reading Comprehension
- 2.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.12 Unit-end Exercises

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the main skills in language acquisition. The ability to read is essential because:

- i) it is one of the ways in which a language can be learnt,
- ii) it enables us to gain further knowledge, and
- iii) it helps in the all round development of the learner and helps him to take his place in society.

A famous English writer once said, "Reading maketh a full man", i.e., a human being achieves his full potential through reading.

It is reading that opens the gates of knowledge for us and enriches our experiences. It not only improves our ways of thinking and reasoning but stimulates the development of an inquiring mind. Further, reading helps us have access to and enjoy our literary heritage.

Thus, in any language learning programme, development of reading skills occupies a very important place. As a matter of fact, there is no substitute for reading in achieving many forms of personal development and social progress. Therefore, as a language

teacher you have to see how best you can equip your students with the skills of reading so that they can use these skills effectively at the school level as well as later in their adult life. The present unit highlights the different aspects of the skills of reading and the ways and means by which you can develop these skills in their various aspects.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the various aspects of reading skills such as correct pronunciation, proper accent, stress, intonation and modulation;
- describe the importance of the punctuation marks while reading;
- explain the importance of speed and appropriate pitch according to the nature of the text; and
- become familiar with various reading activities.

2.3 READING READINESS

“Readiness is a stage when children are mature enough to be ready to learn something without intellectual or emotional stress and when they can feel the satisfaction of having achieved that learning”.

In terms of language learning, readiness means that a child is ready to learn the skills of reading and writing because, unlike the skills of listening and speaking, the skills of reading and writing require a formal teaching-learning situation. Therefore, before we teach learners to read and write, it is desirable to develop in them certain specific competencies which will prepare them to learn the skills of reading and writing. In this unit, we are discussing ‘reading readiness’; readiness for writing will be discussed in the unit on “Development of Writing Skills” (Unit 3).

To be able to read, a child must be able to identify the script/alphabet, i.e., to differentiate between shapes and formations and also to distinguish between the different sounds of alphabets. Apart from these, the child must also be able to relate each sound with the appropriate alphabet. Further, a child must have a fair vocabulary in the standard language to help his reading. He must also be familiar with the use of books and have an interest in developing the skills of reading.

In the light of the above, reading readiness would imply developing in the learner the ability to:

- i) differentiate between shapes and figures and discriminate between formations of curves and shapes in the letter of the alphabet. For example, the curve of ‘d’ lies to the left and that of ‘b’ to the right. ‘M’ opens downwards and ‘W’ opens upwards (visual discrimination),
- ii) distinguish between different sounds of the language, for example, sell and shell, cheap and jeep. (sound/auditory discrimination),
- iii) relate sounds with pictures/objects/shapes (auditory-visual association),
- iv) get the habit of working from left to right (directionality),
- v) have an appropriate vocabulary in the standard language (vocabulary development), and
- vi) be familiar with and be interested in the use and handling of books (book handling).

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) What competencies does a learner need to acquire before s/he starts reading?

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2.4 THE READING PROCESS: ITS STAGES

Once your students have acquired the expected competence mentioned under Reading Readiness, your next task is to guide them to the actual process of reading. This means that now they should proceed to the recognition of words and groups of words in a phrase and then in a sentence. Our ultimate aim would be to enable the learner to read with speed and comprehension.

You must be aware that simply mechanical reading is not of much use. In the words of Ballard, it is just "barking at print". Reading must go hand in hand with understanding. But to reach that level a learner has to pass through certain stages. If you analyse the process of reading you will find that basically a learner goes through four stages of the process of reading.

The following are the four stages of the reading process.

2.4.1 Forming of Auditory Images

In the simplest form, reading consists of seeing words and interpreting them in actual sounds or auditory images. When you see a word a certain image is formed in the mind and when this image is translated into sound it is called reading.

2.4.2 Associating Ideas with Auditory Images

After the formation of auditory images comes the process of associating ideas with these images. For example, when you read a word, say "book", an image is formed in the mind of a book. This is then translated into sound, i.e., we speak the word. With this sound "book" we associate the idea of a book.

2.4.3 Combining Unit Ideas into a Group

The third stage consists of combining individual ideas into a group. Let us try to understand this through an example. "Mohan drinks milk." You can see this sentence consists of three words. As you read each of these words, visual images are formed in the mind which are then translated into sounds. Three units of ideas are formed from these three words. These units are "Mohan", "drinks" and "milk". They are then combined together and a whole conception of the sentence is formed.

This is called synthesis. The learner must be led to combine the unitary ideas into a meaningful whole.

2.4.4 Grouping of Words

An experienced reader's eyes moves not from word to word but from one group of words to another. He never reads individual words; rather he reads groups of words. This provides fluency to his reading. Such a reading is called rhythmical reading.

From the above discussion, you might have observed that a learner has to assimilate each step in the reading process before s/he comes to the ultimate stage of reading with fluency, rhythm and comprehension. For you as a teacher at the primary stage, this implies that in helping your students to develop the reading skills the teaching-learning process should be so planned that the learner moves from one stage to another gradually and systematically.

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

2. What are the four stages in the process of reading?

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2.5 KINDS OF READING

You must have observed that two kinds of reading are involved in the process of reading— (i) reading aloud and (ii) reading silently. In the initial stages reading has to be loud and towards the end of the third stage the learner is introduced to silent reading. But it does not mean that loud reading loses its importance once the learner enters the world of silent reading. Both loud reading and silent reading are important in developing reading skills.

2.5.1 Loud Reading

Reading aloud is a very effective means of teaching and improving the subskills of pronunciation, enunciation, intonation and reading with expression.

As a teacher you would like to enable your learners to pronounce correctly all the words they find in their books as they go from class to class. You can do it only through reading aloud and also test their attainment by making them read aloud.

Apart from pronunciation, reading aloud also helps the learner in learning the habits of correct enunciation. Many times children mumble words, as they are not certain of themselves. Through reading aloud, such lapses can be detected. You must, therefore, insist on clear and distinct loud reading as this would leave no doubt whether what is said is right or wrong. Although it is good to read fluently, you should not insist on speed, if accuracy of pronunciation or enunciation is going to be satisfied. Reading must be slow, emphatic. The speed must be normal reading speed, i.e. the speed at which a hearer can easily grasp the meaning of what is being read.

Another advantage of reading aloud is that it gives the students proper intonation and emphasis in training in reading. Intonation indicates the musical element in the language. Each language has a musical quality of its own: it is spoken in a definite rhythm. Pronunciation deals with the sound of a vowel, syllable or consonant; intonation on the other hand expresses meaning, feeling and emotion. It is the rise and fall of the sound of a whole sentence that signifies intonation. It is this rise and fall that makes

an utterance a command or request or an ordinary statement. Here are some examples of intonation:

- The door was shut - an ordinary statement
Please shut the door - a polite statement
Shut the door - a command

In the above mentioned three sentences the signs/ or over the statement indicates respectively strong stress and weak stress. Thus, one can see that in reading aloud or in speech, intonation by itself tells whether a request or command is meant or whether the utterance is just an ordinary statement. It is intonation that gives emotional value. Therefore, as a teacher you should ensure that your students do read aloud but not just mechanically.

Along with intonation you should also pay attention to **emphasis**. A good way of teaching this is to take a sentence and show how emphasis on different words in the sentence changes the meaning of the sentence. This can be a very interesting exercise to train and test the students in reading aloud properly and with understanding. Intelligent loud reading implies reading with understanding. If the student reads well, i.e., with proper intonation and emphasis, it can be safely presumed that s/he has also understood it. Reading aloud means bringing out the feeling behind the written word and we cannot do it unless we understand the meaning. It is the lack of understanding of the passage or words that makes poor readers.

The above discussion about loud reading must have made clear to you its importance in the development of reading skills, rather in the development of the linguistic ability among your students. You should therefore take care and pay particular attention to the reading aloud skills of your learners. But in order to emphasize reading aloud with correct pronunciation and proper enunciation, intonation and emphasis, it is very important for you as a teacher to speak clearly and correctly with regard to all the above mentioned aspects. By your own example you should be able to show that reading aloud is not just a mechanical process, it is an art. No amount of instruction can develop this art in students. They would learn it from listening to you.

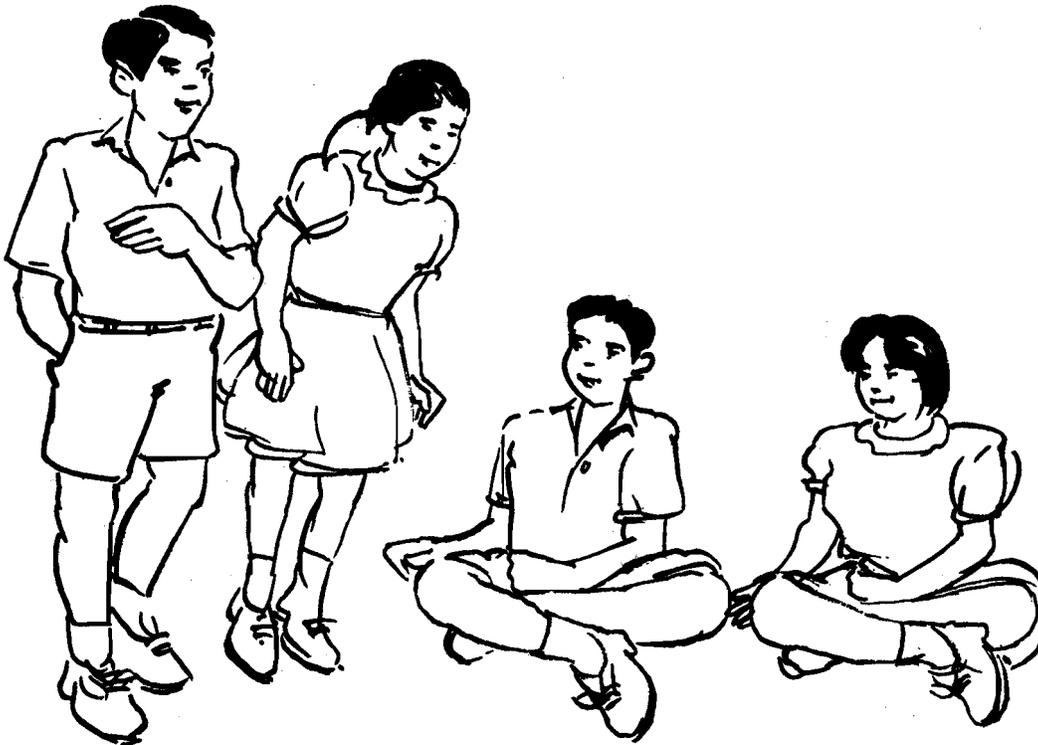


Fig 2.1: The postures in both ways—sitting and standing

The posture of the body is another important aspect that demands your attention. Students should sit straight and hold the book neither too high nor too far (keeping the book at a distance of 25-30 cms from the eyes in all sight). If they are standing while reading aloud, they should stand with their heads high up. They should not move the head while reading, only the eyes should follow the printed line.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit

3. What are the advantages of loud reading?

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4. What is meant by intonation?

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2.5.2 Silent Reading

As we have discussed, two types of reading are involved in the process of reading — loud reading and silent reading. Silent reading is the final stage of learning reading skills. This is the skill that we need not only for language learning but for other subjects also. Students will never be able to use their time in such subjects to the best advantage until they have learned the art of silent reading. As a matter of fact this is the skill which one needs throughout his/her life. Training of silent reading should occupy a very important place in developing skills of reading among learners.

The chief aim of silent reading is the absorption of the idea in the passage. It is a method of concentrating on the significant idea or ideas of the passage. When reading aloud the reader is giving attention to pronunciation, intonation, phrasing, rhythm of delivery, etc., whereas in silent reading his/her whole attention is concentrated on comprehending the meaning and so there is no division of attention. It therefore enables the reader to give his entire attention to meaning, resulting in a better assimilation of the information and/or ideas contained in the passage.

Considering the advantages of silent reading, you should, as a teacher, initiate your pupils into silent reading as soon as possible. By the end of class III, it can be easily introduced.

In developing the skill of silent reading, you must keep in mind that silent reading is not just reading aloud in a whisper. You will have to explain to your students what silent reading is. You will also have to give them practice in it in class, carefully checking any tendency to whisper or murmur the words.

Further, as explained earlier the eyes should be trained to move from one group of words to another, gradually increasing the number of words in each group. Lip movement should be completely eliminated.

One of the aims of silent reading is to develop the ability to read with speed. One of the ways to achieve this aim is to give the class a definite time in which to read a paragraph or a couple of paragraphs. For this purpose you should ascertain how much time would be required for reading a particular paragraph silently. In the beginning, you may give a fairly liberal amount of time, gradually reducing it. When the time is up for silent reading of a particular paragraph, you must test through questioning what the students have learnt. The questions should be such that they cannot be answered in the words of the book. There should be no scope for answering by verbal memory. If limited time is given for silent reading, then there would not be much scope for using verbal memory. Silent reading can also be tested by asking the pupils to give the substance or central idea of the paragraph they have read.

Another way of developing and testing silent reading is to give one or two guiding questions (oral or written on the blackboard) to the students before they are asked to read. This will provide the students with a reason to read, will give them something to look for as they read the paragraph. However, your guiding questions should be concerned with the general meaning or with the most important points of the paragraph and not focused on minor details. They should also be fairly easy to answer and not too long.

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

5. Why should students be given training in silent reading?

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6. How can silent reading be tested?

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2.6 READING ACTIVITIES

Here are certain games/activities that promote the ability to read quickly.

2.6.1 Map Exercise

You can use a map exercise to develop in your students the habit of quick identification of words. For example, let them observe the map given here and ask questions about places and locations. Let the learners identify and name them. This will also help them to develop their vocabulary.

Questions on the Map

- 1) Where can I find a chemist's shop?
- 2) Where can you buy vegetables?
- 3) Where is the cinema house?
- 4) Where is the library?

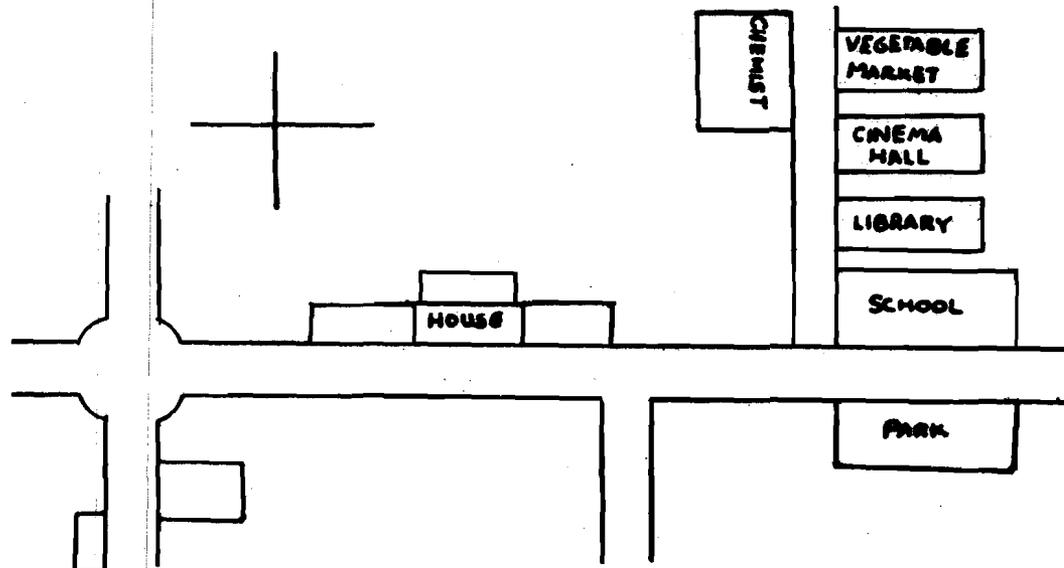


Fig. 2.2 : Map Exercise

2.6.2 Blackboard Exercise

You may write certain words at random on the blackboard. Speak out sentences in which these words have been used. Ask the students to identify those words and encircle them on the blackboard.

Write words at random on the blackboard.

Green	I	does	he
Socks	does	trousers	and
Red	wear	am	Yellow
We	are	you	do
A	jackets	have wearing	blue
Shoes	sweater	black shirt	

Give them sentences like the following and make them encircle the words on the board as they identify them.

“She is wearing green socks”

“He wears a red jacket”

This can also be a team game.

This activity may be carried out by using words and sentences from your own language.

All the above activities will help in enhancing reading comprehension and speed.

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

7. How can a map exercise help in developing the vocabulary?

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2.7 READING DEFECTS

As a teacher, you might have come across some leading problems among your learners. Some of these are:

- i) The habit of pointing at the word with a finger or pencil.
- ii) The habit of moving the head from one side to the other instead of just moving the eyes.
- iii) Mouthing the words (lip movement) while reading silently.
- iv) Looking at only one word at a time instead of looking at a group of words or phrases in a sentence.
- v) Going back repeatedly to the beginning of the sentence.

You should take care to correct these habits: (a) by making the learners aware of these defects, and (b) by giving them plenty of correct reading practice.

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

8. Name some of the reading defects.

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9. How can these defects be corrected?

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2.8 KINDS OF READING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is the most important aspect of reading. All aspects of the reading process ultimately promote reading comprehension. Comprehension implies both factual and inferential:

2.8.1 Factual Comprehension

This means the ability to identify and recall facts without which reading of the passage will not make sense, e.g., if you are reading a story, you must be able to recall:

- the names of the characters, specific events, etc.
- sequence of events,
- descriptive statements which have a bearing on the story,
- the main ideas in the text, where they are clearly stated.

2.8.2 Inferential Comprehension

This means the ability to draw inferences or conclusions from the given matter.

Example: Read the following story

“Once a fox fell into a pit in a jungle. He tried to climb out of the pit but could not. Just then he heard some footsteps. A goat was passing by. She looked into the pit and was surprised to see the fox inside. She asked the fox: “What are you doing in that pit, Mr. Fox?”, “Can’t you see? I’m eating green grass”, said Mr. Fox, “I’ll also eat the green grass”, Ms Goat said and jumped in. Mr. Fox immediately climbed on Ms Goat’s back and jumped out of the pit.

The following questions test factual comprehension.

- i) What happened to Mr. Fox?
- ii) Who passed by?

Can you think of some of the questions which ensure that the reader has understood the facts?

The following are inferential questions:

- i) Was Mr. Fox eating grass?
- ii) Was Ms. Goat intelligent?
- iii) Who was cleverer, Mr. Fox or Ms Goat?

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

10. What do you understand by factual comprehension?

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11. What is meant by inferential comprehension?

(Select a popular story from your own region and frame it both factual comprehension and inferential comprehension).

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2.9 INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE READING

Suppose you have a group of class III learners who have to read a prose passage containing a short story. How would you deal with it?

Here is the prose passage—

... the next sunny morning. Mr. Taagi, Nabum and Yana were going for a walk. Suddenly, Yana stopped. She was frightened.

'What's that?'

She whispered: 'Who is knocking?'

"'Knock-knock' and they looked all around. At first they saw nothing. Then Nabum saw a small, gray and black bird sitting on a tree trunk. It had a red hood with a long beak. 'Knock- knock'. It was the bird. It was pecking hard at the bark of the tree. 'That's a wood pecker', said Mr. Taagi. 'We couldn't see it because it is the same colour as the trunk of the tree.'"

If this piece is to be taught intensively i.e., to be used to teach vocabulary, language skills and comprehension, there is a certain procedure to be followed:

- i) The first step is to identify the difficult words. Here we may deal- with "frightened", "whispered", "around", "hood", "pecking". Those words, whose meaning will emerge from the context, need not be explained.
- ii) The meanings of the words identified as difficult can be explained by (i) demonstration, for example "pecking", "whispering" (ii) by giving another word or showing a picture which will explain them, (iii) by using antonyms or opposites (night and day, for example) (iv) and, finally, when nothing else helps, the word may be explained in the mother tongue of the learner.
- iii) Exercises can be given to reinforce the vocabulary learnt. These can be simple ones, like matching the words with their meanings, filling in of blanks, picking out the correct meaning from among 3 or 4, or using them in sentences.
- iv) This passage can be used to teach some language items also. For instance, this unit can be used for the study of adjectives, like red, small, long, etc. This category of words can be pointed out and drilled.
- v) Since this is a passage for class III, the students can be asked to read the passage silently and then questions may be asked to test their comprehension. The questions should be factual as well as inferential.

You may frame some factual and inferential questions on this passage or on some other passage/short story from your region.

In case you are using this passage or some other passage for extensive reading, there is no language or vocabulary drilling. Because the purpose of extensive reading is reading for pleasure. Only comprehension questions are to be asked.

Check Your Progress

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

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

12. What is the difference in the procedures adopted for intensive and for extensive reading?

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2.10 PROBLEMS IN READING COMPREHENSION

Sometimes students have reading problems because the text/material is very difficult. You, as a teacher, are really their guide and you can assist them to comprehend the text by adopting any of the following means:

- Providing a summary of the passage/short story
- Explaining difficult content words
- Asking them to get the facts from the text, and
- Providing an outline which will enable the students to understand the passage when they read it again.

2.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have talked about the following:

- i) the objectives of learning to read;
- ii) the importance of reading;
- iii) what reading readiness is;
- iv) the stages in the process of reading;
- v) advantages of loud reading and silent reading;
- vi) reading defects;
- vii) kinds of comprehension; and
- viii) methods of teaching texts intensively and extensively.

2.12 UNIT-END EXERCISES

Read this passage:

A mother penguin knows her own chick. Dozens of chicks stay together in groups, while the grown up birds go fishing in the ocean for food. When a mother gets back, she waddles through the whole hungry crowd of babies and refuses to feed any but her own. People who study penguins are not quite sure, but they think the mother and father both recognize their baby's voice and also its particular shape and size.

A baby penguin seems to recognize its parents' voice. When its mother or father calls, it comes running. When a baby chick or duck hatches it usually sees first of all the big dark shape of its mother. From then on, it recognizes that shape and follows it. But if ducklings happen to see a dog's shape first, they will follow the dog around just as if it were their mother.

1. Pick out the difficult words in the passage and explain them.
2. Use this passage to teach the simple present tense.
 - i) Underline the verbs in the present tense.
 - ii) Frame an exercise to drill your students in the present tense.
3. Frame five questions that will bring out the facts contained in the passage.
4. Frame two inferential questions on the passage.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The child should be able to differentiate between the shapes and formations and also between the sounds of alphabets. The child must also be able to relate each sound with the appropriate alphabet and must have a fair vocabulary in the standard language.
2.
 - a) Forming of Auditory Images
 - b) Associating Ideas with the Auditory Images
 - c) Combining the unit ideas into a group
 - d) Grouping of words.
3. Reading aloud is very effective in improving the subskills of pronunciation, enunciation, intonation and reading with expression.
4. Intonation indicates the musical element in the language because each language has a musical quality of its own.
5. In silent reading, the whole attention is concentrated on comprehending the meaning and so there is no division of attention. It enables the reader to give his entire attention to meaning, resulting in a better assimilation of the information.
6. After silent reading of a particular paragraph, you may test what the students have learnt through questioning. But the questions should be such that they cannot be answered in the words of the book.
7. When you give a map to a learner to observe it and ask questions about places and locations, he will identify and name them. This will help them to develop their vocabulary.
8.
 - i) The habit of pointing at the word with a finger or pencil.
 - ii) The habit of moving the head from one side to other.
 - iii) Going back repeatedly to the beginning of the sentence, etc.
9. By making the learners aware of these defects and giving them plenty of correct reading practice.
10. The ability to identify and recall facts without which the reading passage will not make sense.
11. The ability to draw inferences or conclusions from the given matter. You can select any story from your region.
12. In intensive reading, the first step is to identify the difficult words and their meanings: Exercises can be given to reinforce the vocabulary learnt. Also the same passage can be used to teach some language items. After silent reading, questions may be asked to test their comprehension. But in extensive reading, there is no language or vocabulary drilling because the purpose of extensive reading is reading for pleasure.