CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

The vision of education for India is contained in article 45 of the constitution : "Free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age 14." Since independence a lot of efforts have been made towards the achievement of this goal. But the goal of universalisation of elementary education (hereafter UEE.) has not yet been achieved. UEE includes universal enrolment, universal retention and universal achievement. Although there has been significant improvement in enrolment and retention at primary level, achievement level of the children is still unsatisfactory.

The National Policy on Education 1986 (hereafter NPE -86), emphasises three aspects:

* universal access and enrolment,

* universal retention of children upto 14 years of age, and

* a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

The NPE-86 has emphasised much on the improvement of achievement level and called for paying attention to laying down minimum levels of learning that all children completing different stages of education should achieve. On the recommendations of NPE-86, a committee was set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1991 which submitted its report entitled, "Minimum Levels of Learning" (hereafter MLL) at primary stage. The main objectives of this committee was, clearing up MLL for primary classes and recommending procedure for comprehensive learner evaluation and assessment. MLL was confined to the curricular areas of Language, Mathematics and Environmental studies in cognitive and non cognitive areas of learning.

Language is an important feature of human life. Anybody and everybody can define language through his or her everyday experience that, "It is the basis of all communication." The intentional or conscious use of any sound, sign or symbol, to transmit a fact, an idea, a feeling or an emotion from one individual to another may be classified as language. It is a means of social control.

English language still occupies a somewhat prominent place in our school curriculum. Research on English as a component of curriculum has therefore ample relevance. A group of studies has focussed attention on different aspects of teaching

and learning of English Language.

The major reason for the stress on English as a library language was because books on all branches of knowledge were available in Engilsh. No doubt, translation can be done, as they are being done but certainly translation of all the journals, newspapers, magazines, research papers, periodicals etc. might not be possible. Hence to cope up with the world in the era of explosion of knowledge, the knowledge of English is a must.

Listening Comprehension

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the basic skills of language arts. From time immemorial, listening has been a major skill practised by pupils in the educational institutions. The major of time is being devoted by them to listening in the school session. Listening differs from hearing which is a physiological process which does not involves interpretation. Listening involves appropriate meaning, selection and organisation of ideas according to their relationship. Listening comprehension is one of the most important language skills. The importance of listening in communication has long been recognized.

In the editorial of one of the issue of the Journal of English Language Teaching (Vol. XXXIII No. 21998) it is written that

Listening is primarily a means of learning, especially language learning. Unfortunately, the importance of teaching this skill in our schools and colleges is yet to be fully realized. This is perhaps owing to our short sightedness in our goal of teaching and learning English.

We seem to think that being able to read and write English will do. We forget that to become an efficient reader, and a writer, one has to listen first. Only good listeners can become good speakers. Reading helps us with what to speak; but the base for developing the skill for reading is being familiar with the sound system of the language. And, these three skills i.e., listening, speaking and reading make one's writing lively and effective. Hence listening is the foremost of the skills of language.

A second reason for listening not being given the attention it deserves may be the cultural imbalance. We are used to talking and telling, not listening and learning. One who makes the most noise often gains more attention than one deserves.

rewarded. So why exert in listening. A change is necessary in our attitude and our values.

Thirdly, listening is difficult because of frequent distraction of our mind and the mind set. Conscious effort and practice are needed to overcome this.

Listening is important because it is the means of learning. Learners practise more of listening skill than any other skill.

Though the skill of listening is the means of learning, yet it remains a neglected skill in our class room activities. No conscious effort is made by the teacher either to develop or to test the listening ability of the learners.

In the process of listening the learner passes through three stages. First, he perceives some reasons to listening. Then he listens to the text and then he forms the results of listening. These three stages correspond to the stages in listening namely; perception, decoding and recoding.

Listening is not merely hearing. It is skill that requires linking one idea with another. It demands negotiation between the communicator and the communicatee. In a classroom situation, if one wants to impart aural-aural skills, the involvement and the interaction of the learners become imparative.

Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of all readings. It carries the understanding of a word or a phrase beyond recognition to the understanding of the meaning intended by the author.

Comphrension in reading is generally defined as getting meaning from print. The word 'comprehension' means literally holding together. Thus reading comprehsion means that the reader holds together in his mind the elements of meaning coded by a writer into print. Comprehension is but one of several necessary skills that make up the process of reading. It involves determining the meaning of words in author's language setting and at the same time linking the meaning into larger language patterns and fusing them to a chain of related ideas usually those that author has in mind. Whether one is reading for knowledge or for meaning is central. The degree of understanding depends on many
factors such as the nature of the reading task the clarity of

purpose, interest and his background and past experience. Comprehension takes place on three level :-

(i) Literal meaning

(ii) Interpretation of meaning

(iii) Evaluation of meaning.

(i) Literal meaning

Reproduction of author's words and translation of his thoughts into one's own words. He understands the main idea in a passage and follows the sequence of idea expressed in it.

(ii) Interpretation of meaning

Reading critically to recognise author's motives intention and purpose, interpret his thoughts, passes judgement on his statement, assesses the relevance of hte material read, summarizes the passage. He establishes a purpose for reading, draw and supports conclusion and makes interferences or prediction. This is also known as critical reading.

(iii) Evaluation of meaning

Evaluation involves critical reactions to the material read, which may include many intellectual processes such as discriminating, imagining, analysing, judging and problem solving. It also involves deriving implications speculating about consequences and drawing generalisation not stated by the author i.e. "reading beyond the limit."

Reading is a complex activity. Reading has been defined as an activity which involves the comprehension and interpretation of ideas symbolized or written or printed page.

Reading is a complex process of comprehension and evaluation involving cognitive operations like problem-solving and decision-making. Hence, all aspects of reading skill need to be taught to our students with utmost care.

Miscue Analysis

Goodman (1972) recommends a qualitative analysis of a student's oral reading miscues. These miscues have been classified according to type, and symbols have been developed to represent each type.

Miscue Analysis enables the test user to make judgements on a more delicate linguistic level than the main test procedures. It is now generally accepted as a way of looking at reading behaviour.

This approach to assessment is based on the 'top-down' approach to reading and has been developed from some early work of Goodman (1972).

Word and Language Experience

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Prediction of Phrases, Words

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Word Recognitoin

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Letter Recognition

Goodman (1972) "Top-Down"

It follows the rationale that :

(a) the reader must first make predictions as to what the text is most likely to mean.

This is done by reader drawing on :

(i) graphic information

(ii) syntactic information

(iii) semantic information.

(b) Hypothesis Testing

Reading thus engages in hypothesis-testing to either confirm or disprove the prediction i.e., "psycholinguistic guessing game."

(c) Goodman's evidence comes from a strategy he developed known as 'miscue analysis.'

The Cues

    (i)   Grapho-phonic

    (Letters and sound)

    (ii)   Syntatic

    (Sentence structure)

    (iii)   Semantic

    (meaning)

Goodman names five categories of miscue :

1. Insertions (or additions)

2. Omissions

3. Substitutions

4. Reversals

5. Regression (repetitions of part of the text)

Purpose of Miscue Analysis

The purposes of miscue analysis are :

1. To observe whether a reader is using all the cueing systems available and to see what extent he or she is approaching text as a 'mature' or fluent reader.

2. Point out developmental stages in reading acquisition.

3. To gain a measure of the extent to which a reader is reading for meaning in addition to, or as an alternative to, giving comprehension questions.

4. As a window on listening to children read, which helps the teacher approach it with informed attitudes, making the exercise more fruitful.

Miscues or Errors

A deviation in oral reading from the printed text, substitutions, insertions, omissions, reversals and refusals counts as errors or miscues, unless subsequently voluntarily corrected by the reader. Hesitation and repitions of words do not count as miscues.

Types of Miscues

1. Substitution (The using of one word for another)

By the age of 7-8 years words shift from the visual form to meaning substitutions. Failure to correct may indicate teaching which has not emphasized the need for reading to make sense.

2. Insertions or Addition (Word which is added to any other word either before or after)

These may represent an attempt to elaborate or smook out the text in older pupils or in pupils of all ages may reflect superficial reading with correspondence context clues.

3. Omission (When subject fails for bearence to insert or include the word)

These may reflect the tendency to use the speed of reading orally. It may be seen in the omission of ending/inflections. Omissions may increase as oral speed increases. So, these may not be a great decline in their number as the child progress.

4. Reversal (The act of reversing/annuling a degree)

Reflects the lack of left right orientation, characteristics of beginning, regardless of age. They tend to disappear as reading skill matures, but if retained may indicate a lack of attention to meaning. This should be self corrected.

5. Self Corrections

These tends to occur as children become more aware of meaning and less dependent on simple word recognition or analysis. When meaning is not seriously disturbed, self corrections or are much less in evidence.

6. Refusals

Where the reader knowingly does not attempt to read a word.

7. Repetition (Saying over again, the use of repeated words)

Goodman thinks that these are made in effort to correct a miscue. They may reflect poor directional attack, however organising time before a difficult words spotted some way ahead.

8. Hesitation

In this the student hesitates while reading. This occurs mostly in earlier age.

Miscue Analysis

It is possible to assess oral reading in even greater detail by 'miscue analysis.' It has been considerable value as a source of insight into the nature of the reading process and some reading specialists recomment it as a diagnostic techniques.

According to Goodman (1972), error analysis must be qualitative rather than quantitative. If a child's error are tallied merely to obtain a reading level on a passage and a placement in reading materials, the opportunity to diagnose the strategies the child uses when reading orally is lost. The teacher should carefully evaluate such errors as regressions, omisions, substitutions, reversals and insertions. Manuals of oral reading suggest that the more errors a child makes, the less able she is to comprehend a particular passage. However, a teacher should realize that a child may, in reality comprehend those paragraphs on which she makes the most errors most readily. In some cases, if the child does not comprehend what she or he is reading, she or he may not attempt to make meaningful substitutions or insertions

Positive and Negative Miscues

Miscues are not necessarily counted as bad and in need of remediation. They are actually necessary for qualitative analysis. They are looked on as symptoms of possible mental processes which can be good (positive) or bad (negative).

A mature reader uses three main curing systems, which interact with each other. They are

1. **Grapho-phonic :** matching the look of a letter with its sound.

2. **Syntactic :** using knowledge of grammatical structure, word order etc.

3. **Semantic :** using the content of the passage to make sense.

Balance of Miscue

In miscue analysis judgements are based on the assumption that all oral readers may make mistakes from time to time. Those mistakes which do not change the sense of the passage are 'good'. Indeed, they may indicate that text is being mentally assimilated and reproduced orally in a slightly different form. Accuracy is not therefore the absolute criterion of success in reading aloud. Miscue analysis allows the teacher to assess the balance between positive, negative and intermediate deviations from the written text.

Recording Reading Behaviours

First classify Reading Behaviour as Substitutions, Insertions, Omissions, Reversals, Refusals, Hesitations, Repetitions and Self-corrections.

1. Evaluation and grading of substitutions

Ask the following three questions about each substitution :

It is graphophonic similar ?

The miscue will be graphophonically similar if the reader has obviously been influenced by the visual display (one or more individual letters sounded correctly) or the general configuration, that is, the reader shows some awareness of phonic cues.

It is syntactically similar ?

> The miscue will be syntactically similar if it is grammatically acceptable within the sentence.

Does it make sense ?

> Semantic curing is used and the miscue is compatible with meaning within the sentence or passage.

Convert to Positive, Intermediate or Negative Grades

Positive

(a) substitutions which are all three curing systems (that is, the answer is 'yes' to all the questions above) or

(b) substitutions which use two of the systems without destroying the general sense.

Intermediate

(a) Substitutions which use all two of the three systems but the general sense is impaired, or

(b) Substitutions which use only one of the three systems.

Negative

No use made of any of the system, the substitution is non-sense or completely inappropriate (The answer is 'no' to all three questions above)

2. Evaluation and grading of Insertions, omissions, reversals and refusals- mark each miscue as follows :-

Positive

> The meaning of the sentence is preserved without distortion (that is, it syntactically and semantically).

Intermediate

The miscue is appropriate either syntactically or semantically or there is only limited distortion of meaning.

Negative

The miscue is completely inappropriate or changes the meaning radically.

3. Evaluation and Grading Self-Corrections

Mark each self-correction as follows :-

Positive

The self-correction was necessary and valid.

Intermediate

The self correction refers to a miscue which has been classified as positive. (Remember that each self correction should also have been categorised according to the original category or reading behaviour it represented).

Negative

Regardless of whether the original word was correct or not, a self-correction has provided an incorrect word - 'over-correction.'

By comparing the percentage of positive, negative and intermediate miscue a summative appraisal of a reader's performance can be made.