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THE IMPORTANCE OF READING AS A MAJOR SKILL IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

M.A. THESIS

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**Arhun Ersoy'a ait "The Importance of Reading as a Major Skill in ELT" adlı
çalışma jürimiz tarafından İngilizce Öğretmenliği Anabilim Dalında
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ÖZET

Bu çalışmadaki amaç, okumanın ana beceri olarak önemini ortaya koymak ve Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi Hazırlık Okulun'da orta seviyede okuma becerisine yeterli önemin verilmesinin öğretim-öğrenim sürecini daha etkili ve yararlı kılacağına dikkate alınması gerektiğini göstermektir.

Okuma parçalarının İngilizce öğretiminde kullanılmasında, okuma ve okuma parçası çalışması ile ilgili kelime hazinesine olan yabancılık, alıştırma ve güven eksikliği, okuma alışkanlığı eksikliği ve parça seviyesindeki alıştırma eksikliği gibi bazı problemleri çözebiliriz. Şu da var ki, okuma, öğrencilerin dil bilgisi yeteneklerini, genel bilgilerini ve kültürler arası algılamalarını takviye eder.

İlk bölüm, bu tez konusuna kısa bir girişı, tezin amacını ve problemini içermektedir. İkinci bölüm, literatüre kısa bir bakışı, lisan öğretme metodlarını ve okumanın öğretilmesini kapsamaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, elde edilen bilginin analiz yöntemini, metodunu ve elde edilme yöntemini içermektedir. Dördüncü bölümde anket sonuçlarının analizi ve sonuçları tartışılmıştır. Beşinci bölüm, elde edilen sonuçlar, özet ve önerileri içermektedir.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of reading as a major skill and take into consideration that enough emphasis on reading would make the teaching learning process more effective and beneficial at intermediate level at Near East University Preparatory School.

In using reading passages to teach English, we can clarify some problems related to reading and studying a reading passage such as unfamiliarity with the vocabulary, lack of practice and confidence, lack of reading habit, practice at a level of text. Moreover, reading helps for building up learners' linguistic competence, general knowledge and cross-cultural understanding.

The first chapter gives a brief introduction to the background, problem and aim and the scope of this study. In chapter II, language teaching methods and teaching reading are presented. Chapter III includes the method and data collection, and procedures of data analysis. In chapter IV, the analysis and evaluation of the questionnaire results are discussed. In chapter V, the conclusions, summary and suggestions are discussed.

PREFACE

This study presents the importance of 'Reading as a Major Skill' in language learning.

In this study, I have endeavoured to point out that teachers can easily see what is being acquired by using reading and reading passages effectively in language learning. They can also see that answers to problems such as:

- 1- Not enough reading practices
- 2- Size of unfamiliar words
- 3- Lack of motivation
- 4- Lack of confidence
- 5- Reading passages do not meet the students' needs
- 6- Lack of supplementary reading passages
- 7- Lack of reading habit
- 8- Lack of comprehension practice
- 9- Negligence of reading as one of the most important skills
- 10- Lack of practice of all the other language skills through reading will be found if reading is done effectively.

In this study, I am hoping, of course, that my colleagues would see how the students improve their reading skills and become efficient readers in the language they have acquired up to the moment and by regarding reading as a major skill, and practicing reading skills will make students speak using correct grammar since reading skills enable the students to practice listening comprehension, speaking skills and grammatical structures.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is a well-known fact that the number of people who want to learn English, which has been accepted as an international language all over the world, is on an incredible increase. The private schools (colleges), the State secondary and high schools and the preparatory schools of the universities in North Cyprus are trying to provide students with the skills required for communication in the foreign language. Therefore, large amounts of money, time and effort are being consumed for the achievement of this goal.

The coursebooks and methods used in all these schools are different. In this study, only the second term (intermediate level) language program at Near East University preparatory school has been taken into consideration.

The objective of Near East University preparatory school is *to teach students enough English to be admitted to the freshman classes and English for communicative purposes*. The coursebooks used at Near East University preparatory school are **Cutting Edge coursebooks** (a series of three books; elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate) written by Sarah Cunningham and

Peter Moor. According to the syllabus, for the second term of the year, the intermediate level coursebook is supposed to be completed.

These books have been designed in such a way as to build on what the learners have learnt and are supposed to lead students to a certain progress by following the units (modules). At the intermediate level a teacher's book and a workbook accompany the students' coursebook. As stated in the teacher's book, the students' book is divided into twelve modules, each consisting of approximately 8-10 hours' worth of classroom material. According to the information entitled "The thinking behind Cutting Edge Intermediate" in the teacher's book:

Cutting Edge Intermediate Students' Book has a multi-layered syllabus, which includes a comprehensive grammar and vocabulary syllabus, incorporating systematic work on listening, speaking, reading and writing. It takes an integrated approach to pronunciation, and includes learner-training and revision (Cunningham and Moor, 1999: 4).

In the same book, "Reading" is determined as follows:

There is a wide range of reading material in the Students' Book, including newspaper articles, factual/scientific texts, stories, quizzes, forms, notes and letters. These texts are integrated in a number of different ways:

- 1- Extended texts specifically to develop reading skills.
- 2- Texts which lead into grammar work and language analysis.

3-Texts which provide a model or stimulus for tasks and models for writing activities (2000:6)

As for Cutting Edge Intermediate, there is a wide range of reading material in the Students' book; although the texts are integrated in a number of ways, they are not long enough to develop reading skills, for the academic purposes; that is, the coursebook does not have reading materials desired for the students' future studies; therefore supplementary reading texts should carefully be selected from different coursebooks for the purposes indicated.

I believe, regarding reading as a practice of reading at a certain speed or showing the structure through reading is not enough to complete the task of a reading lesson. In fact, the main task of reading for the intermediate level in Foreign Language Teaching is to get information and improve skills of reading in order to get the message of the writer. Getting information or a message is not achieved by only reading a passage; it can be achieved in terms of the skills such as *predicting, generalizing, scanning and skimming* which are to be improved by teaching reading. Moreover, it should be done through enough number of interesting short and long texts suitable to the cultural background of the students.

1.1 PROBLEM

At Near East University preparatory school, the objective, as stated before, is to teach English for communicative purposes. Communication in a foreign language as well as in the native language requires the use of some definite language skills:

Listening, reading, speaking and writing. Students need to make equal use of these four main skills within the limits of the linguistic knowledge they have acquired within that time. For the achievement of this objective, students have to be engaged in various activities. The fact is that, today in schools, full weight is given on listening and speaking and reading is treated less efficiently.

In the light of the problem mentioned above, we can clarify some other problems related to reading.

In my opinion, there are not enough reading practices in elementary and pre-intermediate coursebooks of Cutting Edge that are used in the first term at Near East University preparatory school. Because of this, the second term intermediate students take it as a hard task to study with the reading passages consisting of unfamiliar words since the size of vocabulary of these students has not been improved by the reading passages read in the first term. This problem demotivates students and results in lack of confidence. Another problem is that the contents of the reading passages do not meet the student needs (cultural background). Another important considerable problem is the reading in one's native language (if the students have the habit of reading in their native language, Turkish). If the students do not have the habit of reading in their native language, they will negatively be affected in practicing reading in the target language since having the habit of reading in Turkish enables them to improve skills of reading. When we are about to indicate how to develop vocabulary, there comes another crucial problem; the size of the unfamiliar vocabulary in the intermediate level coursebook (which facilitates practicing and understanding reading passages). If the students are not

given the right size and level of unfamiliar words in enough number of reading passages, the reading skills will not serve them as a multi-purpose tool and support the development of their command of the foreign language. Lastly, the coursebook is rarely focused on comprehension. That is, there is almost very limited number of comprehension questions and for this reason it would be very difficult for the students to grab the meaning of reading passages and would be a hard task for them to learn unfamiliar words.

1.2 AIM AND THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Reading, which is one of the most important skills in English Language Teaching, facilitates learning English and it is the most important skill for students' future lives. Apart from the other skills, reading is more convenient to build up learners' linguistic competence, general knowledge and cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, reading skill can easily be said that it might be the only skill learners will use permanently for their future careers as most professional literature is now published in English and the ability to be able to read at a considerable speed with comprehension is essential.

According to the informal interviews obtained from the class teachers, the coursebook was found inadequate in supplying reading passages. For this reason, supplementary passages were used. Extra reading materials, since we cannot change the materials which do not meet students' needs in the coursebook, can be easily chosen according to the needs of the students or even the students can be requested to choose the materials in the light of their needs. In this approach, the

students will be more interested in reading the passage and be motivated. If we are about to consider the students who do not have the habit of reading in their native language, they might easily be given extensive reading so as to make them have the habit of reading both in the native and target languages. The problem related to the size of the unfamiliar vocabulary, the teacher, apart from the limited vocabulary practices in the coursebook, could give extra vocabulary practice in connection to the reading passages such as; filling in the blanks, matching words and definitions and different kind of vocabulary practices. As the coursebook is rarely focused on comprehension, the teacher should prepare some comprehension questions related to the reading passages in the coursebook or some extra reading passages with appropriate comprehension questions can be given to make the students study on reading passages and comprehend them in detail. This also supports the students' acquisition of newly learned words.

It is hoped that with the help of the aimed course work and the encouragement of individualized reading, students will learn to **read unfamiliar authentic texts, read silently and with adequate comprehension, read flexibly according to purpose, predict and anticipate, make inferences and connections as the native reader does all the time, assess and evaluate what is being done as one progresses and eventually be able to summarize and paraphrase paragraphs and texts.**

Apart from the coursebook, if we as teachers give extra materials such as extra vocabulary tests, extensive reading passages etc. in connection with the aims stated above, we will be able to make the students benefit from the study of

reading skills, moreover, this benefit will help them understand and use other language skills (listening, speaking, writing) and grammar. Through reading they will have the chance to see the written form of grammatical structures, see the written form of everyday spoken English (social English) through dialogues and practice speaking them while discussing the dialogue with the teacher and other students, and lastly they will have the chance to write all these structures by doing reading comprehension exercises.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1- What is the significance of reading?
- 2- Do Reading passages enable students to understand grammatical structures?
- 3- Are students given extra long texts of three to five pages apart from the reading passages in their coursebook?
- 4-- Do reading passages help students practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing and grammar?

1.4 LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by the resources which the writer of this thesis is able to reach in North Cyprus, by the data obtained from the teachers of English who serve at Near East University preparatory school and by the preparatory school students of Near East University;

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is apparent that this thesis will focus on teaching English at intermediate level at Near East University Preparatory School. The significance of “The Importance of Reading as a Major Skill in ELT” has not been taken into consideration and this study is one of the unique studies on language teaching field in North Cyprus. In this study, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that considering reading as a major skill can contribute to a great extend in language teaching.

CHAPTER II

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Language teaching has a long history. Naturally, some aspects of language teaching have changed to a certain extent. Various influences have affected language teaching. Reasons for learning a language have been different in different periods. In some eras, languages were mainly taught for the purpose of reading. In others, it was taught mainly to people who needed to use it orally. These differences influenced how language was taught in various periods. Also, theories about the nature of language and the nature of learning have changed. However, many of the current issues in language teaching have been considered off and on throughout history. There was once agreement on the right way to teach foreign languages but many teachers now share the belief that a single right way does not exist. It is certainly true that no comparative study has consistently demonstrated the superiority of one method over another for all teachers, all students and all settings.

Presented here is a summary of well-known language-teaching methods. Here, I will describe these methods in brief. How a method is manifested in the classroom will depend heavily on the individual teacher's interpretation of its principles and how reading is emphasized and taught.



Here I will try to focus on how each method handled the teaching of reading. Some teachers prefer to practice one of the methods to the exclusion of the others. Other teachers prefer to pick and choose a principled way among the methodological options that exist, creating their own unique blend.

2.1 METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND READING SKILLS

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.2.1 Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on developing students' appreciation of the target language's literature as well as teaching the language. Students are presented with target language reading passages and answer questions that follow. Other activities include translating literary passages from one language into the other, memorizing grammar rules, and memorizing native-language equivalents of target language vocabulary. Class work is highly structured, with the teacher controlling all activities. Literary language is seen as superior to spoken language. Vocabulary and grammar are emphasized. *Reading* and writing are primary skills.

2.2.2 Direct Method

The Direct Method allows students to perceive meaning directly through the target language because no translation is allowed. Visual aids and pantomime are

used to clarify the meaning of vocabulary items and concepts. Students speak a great deal in the target language and communicate as if in real situations. *Reading* and writing are taught from the beginning and based on oral practice, though speaking and writing skills are emphasized. Grammar is learned inductively.

2.2.3 Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method is based on the behaviorist belief that language learning is the acquisition of a set of correct language habits. The learner repeats patterns until being able to produce them spontaneously. Once a given pattern—for example, subject-verb-prepositional phrase—is learned, the speaker can substitute words to make novel sentences. The teacher directs and controls students' behavior, provides a model and reinforces correct responses. Cultural information is contextualized in the dialogs or presented by the teacher. *Reading* and writing tasks are based on oral work.

2.2.4 The Silent Way

The theoretical basis of Gattegno's Silent Way is the idea that teaching must be subordinated to learning and thus students must develop their own inner criteria for their correctness. All four skills—*reading*, writing, speaking and listening—are taught from the beginning. The teacher is silent much of the time, but very active setting up situations, listening to situations, speaking only to give clues, not to model speech. *Reading* and writing exercises reinforce oral learning. Student-student interaction is encouraged.

2.2.5 Desuggestopedia

Loazanov's method seeks to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning. Students learn in a relaxing environment with low lighting and soft music in the background. Students choose a name and character in the target language and culture and imagine being that person. Dialogs are presented to the accompaniment of music. Then students gain facility with the new material through the activities such as dramatizations, games, songs and question-and-answer sessions. Students focused on communicative use rather than form. *Reading* and writing also have place. The teacher reads dialogs during two musical concerts. The first time, the teacher matches his/her voice to the rhythm and pitch of the music while students follow along. The second time, the teacher reads normally and students relax and listen. At night and on waking, the students read it over. Then students gain facility with the new material through activities such as dramatizations, games, songs and question and answer sessions.

2.2.6 Community Language Learning

In Curran's method, teachers consider students as "whole persons," with their intellect, feelings, instinct, physical responses and desire to learn. Teachers also recognize that learning can be threatening, by understanding and accepting students' fears, and then help them harness positive energy for learning. The syllabus used is learner-generated, in that students choose what they want to learn to say in the target language. Language is for communication thus, a medium of interpersonal sharing and belonging, and creative thinking have vital importance.

Culture is integrated with language. Understanding and speaking are emphasized, though reading and writing have a place.

2.2.7 Total Physical Response Method

Asher's approach begins by placing primary importance on listening comprehension, emulating the early stages of mother tongue acquisition and then moving to speaking, reading and writing. Students demonstrate their comprehension by acting out commands issued by the teacher; teacher provides novel and often humorous variations of commands. Activities are designed to be fun and to allow students to assume active learning roles. Oral modality is primary. Culture is the lifestyle of native speakers of the target language. Grammatical structures and vocabulary are emphasized. Understanding precedes production; spoken language precedes the written word.

2.2.8 The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach stresses the need to teach communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence thus, functions are emphasized over forms. Students usually work with authentic materials in small groups on communicative activities, during which they receive practice in negotiating meaning. Functions are emphasized over forms, with simple forms learned for each function at first, then more complex forms. Students work at discourse level. They work on speaking, listening, reading and writing from the beginning. There is consistent focus on negotiated meaning.

To conclude, as can be seen in the teaching methods and approach briefly presented above, we can say that the best method is one which language teachers can derive through his/her very careful process of formulation, in order to reach reading skills as well as the others; thus **eclectic approach** can easily come into play.

2.3 TEACHING LANGUAGES IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS

Knowing foreign languages are useful in many situations in our life. Knowledge of foreign language gives a chance to find a good and well-paid job. Of course, if you know the language very well you can work as a translator. You can watch TV without reading subtitles, and read books in the original version. You can use the internet - there are many important and necessary information of course mostly not in your native language. Therefore, if you know English, you can deepen your knowledge, and meet many interesting people. Foreign languages are also necessary in common life's situations, for example: many instructions of use (of very different things) are written in English or German so you must know one of them if you don't know what you should do with your new thing (TV, video, computer or something like this).

The study of a foreign language is concerned first of all with the acquisition of language skills in order that they may best serve their function in accordance with the need and the purpose of the learner. For example, a waiter learning a foreign language needs to acquire the skill of speaking most for his occupational purposes, whereas one learning English for academic purposes may be interested in a

different skill. A medical student might want to learn the language only to read, so as to follow articles and text books about medicine.

In secondary education, students have to study a foreign language because it is part of the school curriculum. The main subjects of the school curriculum are regarded as the tools by which the student grows into a more secure, more contributory, more total member of the society in which he is living. The educated person today is expected to know at least one foreign language. Therefore, the inclusion of language teaching program in school curriculum has become inevitable parallel to the growing interest and need in learning a foreign language. Language learning, then, at its best, becomes an investment that at once yields a profit, and if the language is rightly learned, not only do the profits increase in rate, but the investment itself becomes more valuable in the personal and social life of the individual.

I would like to comment briefly on a fundamental question-from the teacher's point of view, at least-of *why* people prefer, or don't prefer, to read. For any approach to teaching to succeed, no matter how true to the latest "scientific principles," it must take into account the real needs and desires of learners - that rather loosely defined cluster of goals, inclinations, and biases which we call "motivation" - and we must therefore give some thought to what motivates people to read, or not to read, anything.

In the real world - as opposed to the academic world - people who read, read for intellectual profit or pleasure. That is, they believe that the content of whatever they have chosen to read will be useful to them, or will help them to understand

the world better, or will give them the special kind of pleasure that comes from the experience of reading literature. For students, of course, there are constraints, called "assignments," on this freedom of choice, but even a secondary, academic goal like "passing the course" provides something like a real-world motivation for reading. Very few students read just to practice their reading, or to build up their general knowledge of a language - both objectives worth pursuing but an unlikely basis for a good reading course. Like other language teachers, reading teachers tend to find their subject fascinating in and for itself, but students in the main do not share this fascination.

What will interest students, if they can be interested, is the *content* of the reading. For most students, no text is primarily interesting as a classic example of a discourse type, or as a context for the use of grammatical devices (although such things can be dealt with in passing), but as a body of useful or stimulating information. In practice, students, like everybody else, read for meaning. For them, the language of a text is just a means to an end. The end is comprehension. Thus, the first concern of any reading teacher is to find, or create, a body of material that his particular students might find interesting to read, and then to do everything in his power to relate that material to their real concerns and, most important of all, to make it as comprehensible to them as he can (Cf. Krashen and Terrell, 1983:131-142).

The interest people have shown to language learning, has always been great but the interpretation of the teaching process has never been the same. In our day, what is meant by learning a foreign language, is the ability to be able to

communicate in that language. It is no longer considered as a process of learning the grammatical rules and paradigms of another language for translation purposes only, or as a means to study literature of other nations and be acquainted with the works of the famous writers. The objectives of foreign language work in the preparatory school of Near East University where I teach English can be stated as in the following:

1. To give students as good a working knowledge of the major skills in foreign language as it is possible within the set time and conditions.
2. To put to immediate use the language skills the students acquire by introducing them in various ways to the realistic situation.
3. To teach students enough English in one year to be admitted to the freshman class.

The application of these points depends largely on answering two questions:

1. What language skills are required most to achieve the stated objectives?
2. How can one best apply these skills during the preparatory school period?

A glance on the skills of language will certainly clarify these points.

2.4 FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS AND READING

Native speakers possess certain language skills. In the most general way, the skills in which language users are involved may be identified as listening,

speaking, reading and writing. Harmer (16) summarizes these skills in the following way as:

MEDIUM SKILLS	SPEECH	WRITTEN WORD
RECEPTIVE	LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING	READING AND UNDERSTANDING
PRODUCTIVE	SPEAKING	WRITING

The modern language is spoken, listened to and understood, read and written. These four factors therefore must be considered in determining the immediate objectives. It is essential to treat these four major skills equally if the aim in courses is to teach language for general purposes. However when we consider class-room conditions, size of classes, hours per week, and so on, we realize that the range of debt of oral practice is rather limited in spite of the general emphasis on it. A course primarily devoted to teaching students to speak, would probably involve teaching them to read to some extent. The amount of time and effort demanded for oral work, however would preclude developing much ability in reading. The reading stage would come late in the course and many students would never reach it.

An observation of the present situation in classrooms shows that students who were expected to gain and develop their abilities in reading as a by-product of vocabulary and structural drills have failed to do so. Their success in these drills

does not seem to guarantee the same result in their reading skills. In fact, such a result is not very surprising. Knowing every single part of a car in detail learning all the traffic rules, besides the knowledge about driving a car is necessary but not enough for the learner to sit behind the steering wheel. To become a driver, one must practice driving, must be personally involved in the skill of driving in addition to his knowledge about usage. It is the same with the reading skill and the reader. Learning vocabulary items and structural patterns of a language, practicing listening speaking, and writing skills is not enough to make students efficient readers unless they receive training and practice in the skill of reading itself. Just like the other three major skills of language, if reading is to take its appropriate place in the modern language course, great care should be exercised in selecting material and teaching it. For many years, the content and methods of reading instruction were determined largely by three aims, namely:

- To master the mechanics of reading.
- To develop habits of efficient oral reading.
- To stimulate interest in reading good literature.

Important as these aims are, they were emphasized to such an extent in many classrooms that little or no attention was given to the solution of other reading problems. The aims of teaching have changed radically since then. Reading is now considered as a means of extending the cognitive experiences of students, of stimulating good thinking and of arousing interest in a wide variety of reading activities. In this connection, they attach far greater importance to intelligent silent reading than was formerly given to it. They emphasize a clear understanding of

what is read without neglecting other useful reading attitudes and skills.

2.5 NATURE OF READING

Reading is a dynamic and forward-looking activity, in which the reader attempts to match his interpretation of the text with the writer's original message and intention. Furthermore, in William's words: "The reader is not simply a passive object, fed with letters, words and sentences, but is actively working on the text and is able to arrive at understanding without looking at every letter and word" (5).

Researchers in first language acquisition have contributed much to the understanding of how reading processes develop. First language researchers have found that readers' purposes and approaches to texts differ not only by text, but also by the individual reader. Second language researchers have drawn upon this information and have found similarities between the reading strategies of first and second language readers. Furthermore, second language researchers have learned how expectations defined by a reader's culture influence what the reader understands when reading.

Most foreign language reading specialists view reading as an interactive process. The reader interacts with the text to create meaning as the reader's mental processes work together at different levels (Bernhardt, 1986; Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988; Rumelhart, 1975).

The level of reader comprehension of the text is determined by how well the reader variables (interest level in the text, purpose for reading the text, knowledge of the topic, foreign language abilities, awareness of the reading process, and level of willingness to take risks) interact with the text variables (text type, structure, syntax, and vocabulary) (Hosenfeld, 1979).

One important part of interactive process theory emphasizes "schemata," the reader's preexisting concepts about the world and about the text to be read. Into this framework, the reader fits what he or she finds in any passage. If new textual information does not fit into a reader's schemata, the reader misunderstands the new material, ignores the new material, or revises the schemata to match the facts within the passage.

Content schemata are background knowledge about the cultural orientation or content of a passage. For example, readers might know that Mark Twain wrote stories about life on the Mississippi River during the nineteenth century. Such content schemata help the reader to understand and recall more than do readers less familiar with text content (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988).

Formal schemata define reader expectations about how pieces of textual information will relate to each other and in what order details will appear (Carrell, 1987). For example, in a detective story, a reader could expect the following chain of events: A crime occurs, possible suspects are identified, evidence is uncovered, and the perpetrator is apprehended.

When teachers of second language reading recognize that each reader brings to the reading process a unique set of past experiences, emotional and mental

processes, level of cognitive development, and interest level in the topic, they also recognize that not all teaching strategies will be effective for all students. When isolating the most effective teaching strategies to use with a group of students, the second language teacher must also consider those reader strategies that are not necessarily related to content schemata.

When teachers of second language reading recognize that each reader brings to the reading process a unique set of past experiences, emotional and mental processes, level of cognitive development, and interest level in the topic, they also recognize that not all teaching strategies will be effective for all students. When isolating the most effective teaching strategies to use with a group of students, the second language teacher must also consider those reader strategies that are not necessarily related to content schemata. Such reader strategies include the following:

- using titles and illustrations to understand a passage,
- skimming,
- scanning,
- summarizing,
- guessing word meanings,
- becoming aware of the reading process, and
- taking risks.

Another step in effectively teaching students how to read materials written in a second language is helping the individual reader to identify effective reading strategies based on text variables. One important part of this step is alerting the readers to significant aspects of text variables that will affect second language

reading. For example, pointing out the differences between a fairy tale and a newspaper article helps the reader to recognize the different text types and to prepare for the uncomplicated sentence structure, high-frequency vocabulary, and, in most cases, happy ending that typically characterize a fairy tale. On the other hand, the same reader would need to prepare very differently to read a newspaper article about the technicalities involved in negotiating a disarmament treaty. In this case, the vocabulary would be very specialized and the sentence structure more complicated.

During the process of reading, part of the ability to utilize semantic and syntactic cues may depend on the learner's ability to make increasing use of his prior knowledge of probabilities and of structural rules which govern language. If patterns of language structure are not familiar to the learner, he will be unable to predict correctly. Therefore, primary concern of teaching reading should be to develop learner's effective experience of language. Developing learner's cognitive abilities in addition to his effective experience of language will be complementary to the development of his reading ability.

2.6 PURPOSE IN READING

In Moyle's words "The manner in which reading takes place will vary according to the type of material being read and the purpose for which it is being read"(1968:25). The material and the purpose, therefore suggest certain approaches to the individual reading task which will be more economical and efficient than others.

In describing reading proficiency, the relative difficulty or ease that an individual reader experiences in reading a particular text, researchers have recognized the importance of both text- and reader-based factors. Having a purpose means having a reason to read and approaching a text with a particular goal in mind, whether that goal involves learning or entertainment. In both real-world and classroom situations, purpose affects the reader's motivation, interest, and manner of reading.

Reading in the real world is defined here as reading outside the classroom, for their academic or nonacademic purposes. Real-world reading is performed for any number of reasons, and the nature of reading varies according to the reader's purpose and situation. These factors inevitably determine the reader's approach to the text, the amount of attention paid, the time spent, as well as what features or parts of the text are focused on.

Perhaps the broadest distinction commonly made in defining real-world reading purpose is reading for pleasure versus reading for information. Pleasure reading is most frequently associated with narrative, and in particular, popular fiction. It is commonly perceived to be the antithesis of academic or serious reading. By contrast, reading to learn is pursued to gain insight or information. Reading for information may range from the scanning of documents and the reading of letters to in-depth reading of articles or books. Whether we are reading for pleasure or information, the nature of the reading depends on what we want from the text, as well as situational factors such as time available or constraints relative to place of reading. No matter what our agenda, *why* and *where* we read inevitably determine

how we read.

What will interest students, if they can be interested, is the *content* of the reading. For most students, no text is primarily interesting as a classic example of a discourse type, or as a context for the use of grammatical devices (although such things can be dealt with in passing), but as a body of useful or stimulating information. In practice, students, like everybody else, read for meaning. For them, the language of a text is just a means to an end. The end is comprehension. Thus, the first concern of any reading teacher is to find, or create, a body of material that his particular students might find interesting to read, and then to do everything in his power to relate that material to their real concerns and, most important of all, to make it as comprehensible to them as he can (Cf. Krashen and Terrell, 1983:131-142).

The necessity of equipping learners with a purpose is obvious. This can be achieved in classroom situations only by involving students in various styles of reading by setting tasks on appropriate texts. Such tasks not only provide learners with a purpose but also train them to adapt their reading strategies to suit the materials and their own intentions. Any method used to introduce reading material must be chosen in this light if the learners are to develop the skill of reading.

2.7 TYPES OF READING

In terms of purpose and in terms of process there are two different interpretations of reading; one, reading aloud and the other, silent reading.

2.7.1 Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is, unfortunately what many teachers mean by reading. It is the most commonly practiced type in reading courses. By 'reading aloud', I mean the learners' activity and not the reading out of texts by the teacher. The reason why it is so frequently used is most probably due to the fact that it is easy to plan, mount and control. It is a pity that what is easy for the teacher is not necessarily so easy for the learner. Reading aloud is probably the single technique in ELT which is not explicitly associated with any of the modern teaching methods.

Reading aloud is widely used in first-language teaching at the initial stages of reading programmes in order to help children match sounds with the symbols of written language; either by combining the sounds of single letters or letter clusters, or decoding the whole word (e.g. Eysenck, 1990: 297-299; Eysenck & Keane, 1990: 329-330; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). I want to concentrate on EFL learners of elementary level upwards, who have mastered the skill of assigning sounds to letter-combinations in English. Reading aloud has a place among modern teaching techniques, provided it is used in a principled way. What I mean is that teachers need to have both the teaching aims and the limitations of the technique clearly in mind. Reading aloud can be used to raise awareness of, and provide practice in the following:

- Certain phonological aspects of English.
- Certain strategies used to facilitate the production of spontaneous speech and communication.

Teachers who use reading aloud perceive it as providing practice in the following areas: (a) reading for comprehension, (b) speaking, and (c) pronunciation. Now, it

is inevitable to examine:

- Whether reading aloud is a valid technique for these aims.
- Reading aloud as a skill in itself.

2.7.1.1 Reading Aloud As Reading Practice

Learners may read aloud fairly competently in terms of pronunciation of individual words, but fail to understand the meaning of what they are reading. Reading for information or pleasure (e.g. reading a newspaper or novel) is a silent process in real life. We may of course read out an excerpt to a friend if we believe that it can be of interest, but in that case we are *not* reading out for our own comprehension. Reading aloud requires equal attention to *all* the words in a text (as they all need to be read aloud for the benefit of the listener). On the contrary, in sight reading, skilled readers focus mainly on content words (i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs). Actually, they may even gloss over some content words as well, as they use their knowledge of the context and relevant background knowledge to fill in the gaps. This strategy helps them increase their reading speed.

It seems that reading aloud is not an effective technique for improving learners' reading skills. In a way, learners will be implicitly guided to deal with all words in a text as if they were difficult or important. In fact, reading aloud can prove detrimental to the development of reading skills for the following interrelated reasons:

- Reading aloud draws the learners' attention to matters of pronunciation with

negative effects on comprehension.

- Reading aloud is considerably slower than sight-reading. Use of this technique will have a negative effect on reading speed (a skill particularly helpful during exams).

2.7.1.2 Reading Aloud As Speaking Practice

Here, we need to make a clarifying distinction between reading aloud and speaking spontaneously. Reading aloud only requires the speaker to deliver what is written on a page in such a way that the content is (at least) easily understood by the listener. Spontaneous speech is much more demanding. Speakers need to think of what they want to say and, almost simultaneously, of how to formulate it. Moreover, if we consider the more usual case of oral interaction, the speaker has also to take into account (i.e. remember and process) the incoming spoken message. Finally, "speech is not spoken writing" (Bygate, 1987: 10); spontaneous speaking differs from writing in a number of ways, for example in terms of syntax, vocabulary and organisation. Therefore, if we use reading aloud as 'speaking practice' we run the risk that the learners may misunderstand reading aloud as a model for spoken production. The danger is greater when the texts to be read aloud are narrative or expository ones.

The negative results of using reading aloud as the only technique to practice 'speaking' will be disadvantageous for learners:

- Since they will not be receiving practice in 'speaking-while-thinking', their fluency will suffer.

- They will speak in an unnatural, 'bookish' style, as if addressing a large audience in a formal situation.
- They will tend to engage in monologues and will have problems functioning naturally, appropriately and effectively in an interactive situation.

But even if reading aloud is used only to supplement speaking practice, learners will still be negatively affected, as they will be confused as to what constitutes natural, spontaneous speech.

2.7.1.3 Reading Aloud As Pronunciation Practice

As mentioned above, learners might be able to pronounce words correctly while reading aloud. Some teachers might argue then, that reading aloud provides good pronunciation practice. Before addressing this assumption, we need to clarify the term 'pronunciation'. The term is sometimes understood by EFL teachers as referring only to the 'correct' pronunciation of individual sounds and words in isolation. Actually, 'pronunciation' should be used in a more comprehensive way, to include also the following interacting phonological aspects:

- The stress patterns of phrases.
- The interaction of sounds between endings and beginnings of words.
- The resulting pronunciation and rhythm of these phrases.

As defined above, pronunciation is one of the areas that can be improved through classroom procedures involving reading aloud.

2.7.1.4 Reading Aloud As a Skill

Reading aloud is a challenging task to perform. Referring to native speakers Bygate (1987: 10) states that:

It is hard work reading aloud from a book. This may be because it is not something we are used to; or because the sentences can be awkward to read aloud - too long, too complex, or too technical. It can be tricky to get the correct intonation, and you may find you often have to re-read bits to make them sound right. Reading aloud tends to require considerable attention.

This view raises two important (and interrelated) questions:

- What types of texts are to be read aloud by learners?
- How should reading aloud be organised and carried out in the classroom?

In order to answer these questions we need to examine the situations in which a text needs to be read aloud in real life. We can divide these situations into two main categories:

- Reading out excerpts from a text (e.g. an article) to someone you think might be interested in its content, and reading a story to a young child.
- Radio and television reports, readings of literary works on the radio, speeches and lectures.

In both categories there is a clear and realistic purpose for reading aloud, as well as a more or less clearly defined target audience. What is more, in most cases the texts have been specifically written to be read aloud. Finally, in the second category the readers are not only trained professionals, but they have also rehearsed what they are reading aloud.

When we consider reading aloud, as it is typically used in the classroom, lacks all the characteristics of real-life situations. Students read out texts irrespective of their type and purpose. They read out to the teacher with the only aim of 'reading correctly' (in the mere sense of getting the individual words right). In most cases, they are asked to read out texts they have seen for the first time, which means they know nothing about their content.

To conclude, students should read aloud in the upper grades of reading classes only when they have a strong motive for doing so and a real audience situation. This may be to bring some definite parts of a selection to the attention of a group, to give emphasis to a particular interpretation, to share of our a selection of which there is only one copy, to make some announcement or convey interesting items of information, requests for aid, letters from a friend, etc. These are examples of some of the situations where the term, aloud reading, finds its best interpretation and application.

2.7.2 Silent Reading

The purposes of silent reading are to increase students' attention span skills, to

provide a comfortable environment for reluctant readers to practice without the added pressure of their peers, to increase fluency, to increase vocabulary, to increase comprehension, to increase self-confidence in their reading abilities, and to increase students' word attack skills.

Silent reading is the second interpretation of reading which is more suitable for the term. It is of the greatest value in modern life where majority of reading that is done is silent. It is a uniform activity calling upon an invariable set of skills. It is the recognition of the printed marks and the further correlation of these with meaning. In addition to a fixed set of mechanic skills, the essence of this type of reading is a higher order comprehension skills. These skills will be called upon in accordance with various purposes for reading. The way in which silent reading is conducted for these different purposes varies on a number of dimensions. These are; the level of understanding, that is how deeply one understands what he reads, then reader's selection of the reading content, (reading every sentence or skipping some of them) and lastly his evaluation of the content of the reading material. An efficient reader evaluates while reading and according to his purpose for reading if he thinks a sentence is important he rereads it or, if not important just skips it.

Decisions taken on these dimensions will influence the reading 'style' in two principle ways:

a) Speed of Reading

How fast one reads is in a way a product of his purpose. Speed will vary

according to the level of understanding, amount of reading material selected for attention and extent and kind of evaluations. The speed of reading should be taken into consideration so as to train students to read faster for their future lives.

b) Mechanical Procedures

Eye fixations, eye span, regressions are examples of mechanical procedures. Number of these will vary in accordance with the level of concentration required by the reading activity.

Thus silent reading can be thought as a process consisting of three stages- input, reading procedure and output.

I) Input

This consists of more than just only text. It also includes purpose for reading and knowledge reader brings to the task. The input acquired can easily help the learners to comprehend the aesthetic distance. Implying a psychological relationship between the reader and the text being read.

II) Reading Procedure

This can be thought as consisting of:

- A set of strategies for relating purpose for reading/prior knowledge to the

meaning in the text and;

- A reading manner in which these strategies are operated.

III) Output

This will include not only a 'knowledge' of what was said in the text but also the product of the reader's evaluations which took place both while he was reading and afterwards. It can also include 'recalled' information which the text prompted. Output can only be measured in terms of the purpose for reading.

2.7.3 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading deals with the study of features of language, syntactical and lexical, which the reader draws on in order to decode the message. Intensive reading is also concerned with related skills, such as developing strategies of expectation and guessing meaning from context, as well as using dictionaries. The major objective of intensive reading is developing the ability to decode messages by drawing on syntactic and lexical clues, and the emphasis as in all reading is on skills for recognition rather than for production of language features.

It may be helpful to outline the main points which will be relevant to intensive reading. We can express these as a set of objectives.

2.7.3.1 Objectives of Intensive Reading

The objectives can easily be taken into account as indicated in the following:

- a) Use skimming when appropriate to ensure that he reads only what is relevant, and to help subsequent comprehension.
- b) Make use of non-text information (especially diagrams etc.) to supplement the text and increase understanding.
- c) Read in different ways according to his purpose and the type of text.
- d) Not worry if he does not understand every word, except when complete accuracy is important.
- e) Recognize that a good writer chooses his words carefully and would have meant something different if he had chosen A rather than B. (An advanced student will also be able to explain the difference).
- f) Make use of the reference system, discourse markers, etc., to help himself to unravel the meaning of difficult passages.
- g) Be aware that a sentence with the same signification may have a different value in different contexts; and be able to identify the value.
- h) Be able to make use of the rhetorical organization of the text to help him to interpret a complex message.
- i) Be aware that a writer does not express everything he means, and be able to make inferences as required.
- j) Be aware that his own expectations influence his interpretation and recognize those occasions when the writer's assumptions differ from his own.
- k) Be aware, when necessary, that he has not understood the text, and be able to

locate the source of misunderstanding and tackle it.

l) Respond fully to the text in whatever way is appropriate.

These objectives are not the only ones you will want to set, but they will serve to remind us of the many different things that we want to achieve in our reading programme.

2.7.3.2 Help from the Teacher

2.7.3.2.1 Getting Out of the Way of the Text

Broadly speaking, a teacher of reading should put a text in front of his students, assign tasks that will help the students to understand it (and may also enable the teacher to assess how far it has been understood) and then stand out of the way while the students get to grips with the text. This is not so easy to do. The text must be well chosen, the tasks suitable, and the students must have been trained to work on their own.

The most difficult part of all is to restrain yourself from getting in the way of the text. In most reading lessons, the teacher does too much of the work, not realizing that what he is doing devalues the text and undermines the student's role as reader. This may be easier to appreciate if we examine some of the activities that are often found in reading lessons.

2.7.3.2.2 The Student's Role as Reader

The student's role as reader demands that he should make sense of the text for

himself. In his reading lessons, he is supposed to learn how to do this: doing it for him will not teach him this. From the beginning, he must do for himself everything that he is capable of doing. This requires encouragement, especially the encouragement that comes from success; and success in turn comes from texts that are suitable and tasks that are well devised. These are things the teacher can influence, and hence ways in which he can help.

The most basic thing the reader has to do is to associate the printed marks and the page with the spoken language he knows. If the teacher reads the text aloud before starting work on it, then this task is his, not the student's. He has already done one of the student's jobs for him.

The reader has to make sense of the text. So if the teacher begins by explaining or summarizing it, he is defeating the object of the lesson: he is telling the student something a reader ought to find out for himself. If, as the lesson proceeds, the student encounters problems and the teacher at once explains or translates, again this is the wrong kind of help: the student only has to understand his teacher, not the text.

All these activities are valid for some purposes and in some circumstances, but it is clear that they are not useful for training students in the independent skills of silent reading. Exposed to methods of this kind, the student will see the reader's role as a passive one, for he has had most of the work done for him. The teacher's well-meant help has undermined the purpose for which he is teaching.

2.7.3.2.3 The Text and its Effect on Student Performance

Methods of this kind are also harmful because they devalue the text itself. If the teacher reads the text aloud or gives a preliminary summary of it, then the process of getting meaning from the printed text is seen as merely subsidiary. In lessons like these, the printed text becomes almost redundant, since the meaning is obtained largely through the intervention of the teacher. Moreover, translation by the teacher into the L1 (which can be justified in some circumstances) is frequently used not just as an aid but as a substitute for understanding the text itself.

If you yourself regularly use the sort of activities just described, you will probably argue that without help of this kind, your students could not possibly understand the assigned texts. To this argument, there are several responses.

First, you may be wrong. It is easy to underestimate students, and research shows that it commonly happens. Even if they cannot understand everything, they may be able to understand more than you are at present giving them a chance to attempt. You can only find out by trying.

2.7.3.2.4 The Teacher's Responsibilities

We have spent some time considering what not to do in reading lessons because the activities described, and the misconceptions that lead to them, are so widespread. Now we had better start to think more positively. As teachers, we

must take responsibility for our students' progress: what kind of guidance can we give without undermining our whole purpose? How can we help them to become effective independent readers? Our responsibilities include these:

- (a) Finding out what our students can do and what they cannot, and working out a programme aimed at giving them the skills they need.
- (b) Choosing suitable texts to work on.
- (c) Choosing or devising tasks and activities to develop the required skills.
- (d) Preparing the class to undertake the tasks.
- (e) Making sure that everyone in the class works productively and extracting maximum effort and best results by encouraging the students; and by prompting and probing until they produce the answer, instead of telling them what it is.
- (f) Making sure that everyone in the class improves steadily according to his own capabilities.

2.7.3.3 A Three-Phase Framework for Intensive Reading

In developing reading skills, three different stages should be taken into account: Pre-reading, while-reading, and post reading activities.

2.7.3.3.1 Pre-reading Activities

These usually provide a purpose for reading, pleasure and enjoyment. It is advisable to use different types of pre-reading activity that encourages a variety of approaches to texts - skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading.

Teachers of English to beginner learners can start with short simple pre-reading tasks where the language is already fairly familiar to them, though it is important to organise activities offering a challenge.

Examples to pre-reading activities:

- a) Learners form expectations about the text based on clues from accompanying pictures or photographs, the text type, layout, headings.
- b) Background information is provided or recalled (What do you know about...?, etc).
- c) Brainstorming, e.g. learners are given the theme of the text and try to anticipate some of the main points and offer their own ideas.
- d) Key words are supplied and learners try to guess what the text might be about.
- e) Discussion (a few general questions may be supplied for guidance).
- f) Focus on language, e.g. learners classify words and justify their choice of categories.

2.7.3.3.2 While-reading Activities

A reading lesson will sometimes begin with time being spent in teaching language from the text that the teacher thinks might cause problems for the learners. Although some key words will be essential to a global understanding of the text and may need to be explained beforehand, very often *too much* advance language work is not desirable because it can kill motivation and prevent the development of strategies that might be applied in situations outside the classroom.

For example, if you pre-teach *all* the new vocabulary in a passage, you are depriving your learners of the opportunity to develop their ability to deduce meaning from context.

While reading activities should encourage an appropriate general *approach* to the text. For example, some teachers like to set time limits from time to time so that learners become accustomed to reading quickly for the gist during their initial reading rather than trying to understand every word. You are in the best position to judge whether or not time limits would be appropriate for your learners.

As learners usually have an opportunity to read the text more than once, as suggested earlier, it is often useful to begin with tasks that encourage global understanding and then concentrate on detailed understanding, finally returning to what should be an improved understanding of the whole text at the end.

Examples to while-reading activities:

- a) Deducing meaning from context or from previous knowledge.
- b) Answering true-false, multiple choice and Wh- questions.
- c) Recognizing main idea in each paragraph and distinguish this from supporting detail.
- d) Matching split sentences.
- e) Note-taking the main ideas, arguments for and against.
- f) Completing e.g. finish an incomplete sentence or paragraph.

g) Decision-making e.g. learners read a travel brochure and choose the most suitable holiday for someone with particular interests.

2.7.3.3.3 Post-reading Activities

After the activity, it is important for the teacher to provide feedback to his or her learners. Follow-up evaluation can help to keep learner motivation when difficulties occur during the reading activity. Appropriate post-reading activities can respond to learner needs or interests revealed in the while-reading activities. As for the post-reading activities, certain types of exercises should be carried out as indicated in the following.

Examples to post-reading activities:

- a) Personal expressions. Learners express their views on the subject of the text and relate it to their own experience and that of their classmates.
- b) True-False exercise.
- c) Inferring the main idea of the passage.
- d) Comprehension questions.
- e) Vocabulary studies e.g. fill in the blanks exercises.
- f) Grammar studies.
- g) Integrated activities taken into consideration together with the language skills such as listening, speaking (learners discuss and justify their different

interpretations of the text read), and writing (learners write a summary) in addition to the reading skills.

h) Project work (on the theme of the text) i.e. relatively large-scale activities with authentic information gathered by learners from the outside world.

(see appendix 1 for the Sample Reading Lesson Plan)

2.7.4 Extensive Reading

In everyday life, to read extensively means to read widely and in quantity. In the early part of this century, extensive reading took on a special meaning in the context of teaching modern languages. Pioneers such as Harold Palmer in Britain and Michael West in India worked out the theory and practice of extensive reading as an approach to foreign language teaching in general, and to the teaching of foreign language reading in particular.

Extensive reading is generally associated with reading large amounts with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. Readers are more concerned with the meaning of the text than the meaning of individual words or sentences. Extensive reading as an approach to teaching reading may be thought of in terms of purpose or outcome and is also known as pleasure reading.

2.8 SPEED READING TECHNIQUES

There are different styles of reading for different situations. The technique you choose will depend on the purpose for reading. For example, you might be reading for enjoyment, information, or to complete a task. If you are exploring or reviewing, you might skim a document. If you are searching for information, you might scan for a particular word. You need to adjust your reading speed and technique depending on your purpose.

Many people consider skimming and scanning search techniques rather than reading strategies. However when reading large volumes of information, they may be more practical than reading. For example, you might be searching for specific information, looking for clues, or reviewing information.

Web pages, novels, textbooks, manuals, magazines, newspapers, and mail are just a few of the things that people read every day. Effective and efficient readers learn to use many styles of reading for different purposes. Skimming and scanning are different styles of reading and information processing.

2.8.1 Skimming

Skimming is used to quickly identify the main ideas of a text. When you read the newspaper, you are probably not reading it word-by-word, instead you're scanning the text. Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading. People often skim when they have lots of material to read in a

limited amount of time. Use skimming when you want to see if an article may be of interest in your research.

There are many strategies that can be used when skimming. Some people read the first and last paragraphs using headings, summarizes and other organizers as they move down the page or screen. You might read the title, subtitles, subheading, and illustrations. Consider reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This technique is useful when you are seeking specific information rather than reading for comprehension. Skimming works well to find dates, names, and places. It might be used to review graphs, tables, and charts.

2.8.2 Scanning

Scanning is a technique you often use when looking up a word in the telephone book or dictionary. You search for key words or ideas. In most cases, you know what you're looking for, so you're concentrating on finding a particular answer. Scanning involves moving your eyes quickly down the page seeking specific words and phrases. Scanning is also used when you first find a resource to determine whether it will answer your questions. Once you have scanned the document, you might go back and skim it.

When scanning, look for the author's use of organizers such as numbers, letters, steps, or the words, first, second, or next. Look for words that are bold faced, italics, or in a different font size, style, or color. Sometimes the author will put key ideas in the margin.

Reading off a computer screen has become a growing concern. Research shows that people have more difficulty reading off a computer screen than off paper. Although they can read and comprehend at the same rate as paper, skimming on the computer is much slower than on paper.

2.9 READING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

When reading in a foreign language is discussed, the question that awaits an answer is to what extent is the process different when conducted in a foreign language. Ellis, conveys Goodman's view who suggests that the reading process is essentially the same whether conducted in a first language or a second (1980:5). But in Ellis' view, a foreign language reader who has not developed a full linguistic competence in the foreign language may find it difficult to take part in this psycholinguistic guessing game because of his limited ability to make adequate syntactic predictions. He further adds that it is also possible to hypothesize that the foreign language reader may be more inclined to recode the graphic information in terms of sounding the words before ascertaining their meaning. In Ellis' opinion, such an explanation may partly account for the commonly observed slow reading speeds of foreign language readers. According to Ellis, although all readers whether native language speaker or foreign language learner use similar strategies, learners in foreign language reading tend to draw more extensively on phonic clues and less extensively on syntactic predictions.

The results of research hold by Mac Namara put forward the importance of knowledge of syntax which appears to help readers predict and by means of prediction enable them read more easily and quickly (Barnett 1986:343). The view

of reading as a rule governed linguistic process that is hierarchically structured is shared by quite a number of researchers mentioned in Barnett's study and the conclusion reached seems to give equal emphasis to the syntax, lexicon and semantic factors in foreign language reading. In practice, however, classroom applications seem to stress the importance of lexicon and semantics. These differences between the theory and practice have given way to a specific experimental study. The hypothesis in the experimental study was: the ability of English speaking readers to comprehend a French text depends more on lexical and semantic analysis than on syntactic analysis. This experiment was carried out on intermediate level readers of French at the University of Virginia. Barnett conveyed the results in the following words:

The results with respect to pedagogy support a continued attention to grammar for students in four skills courses. Equally important are traditional vocabulary building exercises and the relatively recent activities designed to increase readers' prediction and inferencing abilities. Readers proficient in these latter skills can better grasp textual semantics (1986:347).

Another interesting study related to the reading strategies of foreign language learners has been made by Bowen, Madsen and Hilfferty. Their observation of the reading strategies of good and bad readers has revealed certain differences which may throw light on the different reading strategies applied by native language speakers and foreign language learners. The knowledge of these differences may offer useful suggestions for foreign language reading courses as in the following:

- 1) Native speakers are faster than foreign language learners at a number of component reading tasks : Interpreting individual words and syntactic structures, anticipating sequences of words and pronouncing individual words.
- 2) Foreign language learners read more slowly, needing longer eye fixations to process information, and thus putting overloads on their short term memories.
- 3) Native speakers rely more heavily on semantic than on syntactic clues and attend to word stress and sentence stress while foreign language learners divide their time more or less equally between function and content words and do not discriminate efficiently between stressed and unstressed words. Many of them read at the word level only, relating word groups no further than the previous or the following sentence. They read surface meanings and seldom form opinions of what they read. Along with these strategic problems foreign language learners have the tendency to make inferences from their native language, and in many cases a background of irrelevant teaching methods and an academic orientation in which reading is not valued (1985:230).

Another valuable help for foreign language reading courses is provided by the very detailed comparison of the reading strategies of good and poor readers made by Allington, Hasenfeld, and Weber (Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty, 1985:230-231). Here, it is reasonable to have a brief look at the list having the characteristics of good and bad readers:

Characteristics of Good Readers

1. Balance grapho-phonetic and semantic-syntactic systems
2. Keep the meaning of the passage in mind while proceeding
3. Read in broad phrases.
4. Skip unimportant words.
5. Have positive self-concepts as readers.
6. Replace unknown words with fillers which do not alter the general meaning

Characteristics of Poor Readers

- Overuse grapho-phonetic cues and underuse semantic-syntactic and context cues.
- Analyze the sound system instead of the meaning
- Translate in short phrases and spend extra time decoding, so lose the meaning of the passages as they read along.
- Read all words as equal in importance.
- Have negative self-images as readers.
- Stop at unknown words and look them up

(Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty, 1985:230-231).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.0. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is firmly school based, and all the fieldwork has been carried out in normal school conditions. To this end, two main ways are employed. One hand of this research comprises the student questionnaire forms which were filled out by the intermediate level preparatory school students of Near East University (see appendix 2), and the books related to the subject were researched to have satisfactory information. On the other hand, teacher questionnaire forms were filled out by the experienced teachers of English in the same preparatory school (see appendix 3).

It is aimed to identify the problems involved in teaching and improving reading skills at intermediate level at Near East University. The method is a survey type research on all of the intermediate participants of English randomly selected from the list of 180 students who were the preparatory school second term students at Near East University in T.R.N.C. The Data has been obtained by the student questionnaire administrated to 60 students. The student questionnaire was administered in the class during the teaching hours. In order to increase the reliability of the questionnaire, the same questions were administered to the same

students two weeks later, and the findings of the questionnaires have shown that the answers were almost the same in both occasions.

The teacher questionnaire forms were administrated to 10 of the language teachers working in the preparatory school at Near East University. All the teachers were familiar with the coursebook adopted.

The entire research depends heavily on the contributions of both the students and experienced teachers. The questionnaires were supported with the survey of related literature and use of my own teaching experience and observations made on student competencies during reading activities. Furthermore, most of the students were interviewed individually on an informal basis and questioned about their personal characteristics, their social and educational backgrounds, their reading interests and difficulties.

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The participants were questioned in 5 main items such as (i) gender (ii) educational background, (iii) level of English, (iv) amount of practice and (v) confidence in reading. 43.3 percent of the participants who completed the questionnaire have not studied English before coming to this university. It is apparent from the results of the student questionnaire that only 30 percent of the students know good English. Since the coursebook does not comprise enough number of long and short reading passages and practices, the students face with the problem of comprehending what they have read. Moreover, it seems that the

students are dissatisfied with the number of extra short and long passages and the amount of practices.

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The questionnaire consists of 32 questions on respondents' gender, lack of practice, confidence in reading, educational background, motivation, knowledge of level, interests, preferences, adequacy of vocabulary, lack of practice, confidence in reading materials, familiarity with the reading materials and long texts and learning ability. Firstly, the participants and then the books related in this project have been taken into consideration so as to obtain the data.

The aim of this questionnaire was to put forward the importance of reading skills and the problems arose from the lack of practicing these skills through reading passages at intermediate level. The students' answers helped me to get a clear view of their present situation and provide a realistic background to my study. I had some valuable information whether they read with incomplete knowledge and develop skimming, scanning skills of reading, read silently and develop speed in silent reading, get the global understanding, ignoring unknown words and phrases that contribute nothing to interpretation, understand the meaning and implications of grammatical structures, and read materials appropriate to their level outside the class for further practice. Furthermore, the answers given by the participants reflected their own point of view on reading texts, and guided me thorough my thesis.

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To measure the reliability, test and retest technique has been used and the administration of the questionnaire has been repeated two weeks later after the first test was given. In the final stage, *percentage agreements* have been done and the correlation was obtained in all of the questions. All the values gained in test-retest correlation have been accumulated and divided into the number of the questions and the result was given as **0,934** (see appendix 4).

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The questionnaires which were administrated to the teachers of English and preparatory school students at Near East University in T.R.N.C were prepared and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Halil Aytekin and Asst. Prof. Dr. Fuat Altunkaya were consulted for this face-validity.

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In the evaluation stage, the responses of the students for each of the items have been analyzed and the results were recorded. These recorded results are displayed in tables. The results are calculated in percentages since the number of the participants in the questionnaire is not small.

Evaluation of the questionnaires is followed by the analysis of the teacher questionnaires. The exact number of the teachers I have established close contact were 10. All teacher questionnaires were administered in the Preparatory School. All the questionnaires were filled out and returned. Having the point of view of the teachers, I myself was able to examine the topic in an appropriate way to compare the students' thoughts, interest and wishes in a neutral way.

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obtained from the students' questionnaire. The analysis of the data obtained from the teachers was correlated with the students' data. The findings from both sides, the students and the teachers, were correlated to draw clear conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

4.0. PRESENTATION

Evaluation of the results of the student's questionnaire showed that there were not important differences among them when we consider the level of English. They were almost at the same age with slight differences. Comparing the answers in the questionnaire with the teachers' questionnaire could clearly show that the desired teaching has not been done. When reading is used as a major skill in language learning, it is apparent that the learning would be promoted and the students would be more involved in the learning situation. Examination of the questionnaire results shows that this may be due to lack of reading as a major skill. This indicates that it is impossible to improve students' learning skills because of the problems stated in chapter 1.

4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING READING

The students' answers to the questionnaire put forward the fact that they would need to use the skill of reading most in their future lives. The reading skill sounds to be the skill that will not only provide them with direct experience of the foreign language but also serve them a lot during their higher education and future career. In our time, command of English is seen as a matter of prestige because it is accepted by the great majority as the language of international communication. So,

students during university level education need to be able to read articles, textbooks and research reports about their subjects in English. It is very common to give reading comprehension tests to people who sit for examinations for various purposes such as to find a job or to get a promotion in their business. Therefore, the necessity of teaching the reading skills to the students is obvious.

What they need to acquire at this level are general reading habits common to most reading situations. These may be summarized in the following list:

- 1- Students need to be made aware of the goals of a reading lesson and the necessity of the related activities. If they know why they are doing what they are doing, they will be more eager and willing towards the task.
- 2- Students need to learn how to;
 - read the foreign language (English) for an authentic purpose. In this way, they will understand that reading activity is not only a linguistic exercise but is involved with the getting of meaning out of a text.
 - use one's own knowledge of the outside world to make predictions about and interpret a text.
 - read with incomplete knowledge and develop skimming, scanning skills of reading.
 - read silently without sub vocalization and develop speed in silent reading.
 - read in word groups without translation. They have to get used to thinking directly in English. They should eliminate the Turkish equivalents of the concepts from their minds while they are reading in English.

- get the global understanding, ignoring unknown words, phrases that contribute nothing to interpretation.
- understand implied information and attitudes and get skillful at drawing inferences.
- read materials appropriate to their level outside the class for further practice.

The following list is related to more specific needs of the students during their reading for comprehension:

1- Students have to be told that getting the global meaning of the passage may require reading it twice or more. So, they do not need to be discouraged when they do not understand much at the first reading.

2- They have to learn that using bilingual dictionaries will give them more harm than help. Because they will waste a lot of time besides losing the overall picture of what they are reading. At the end, the task will become extremely time consuming, boring and difficult.

3- They need to know how to ignore words which are not essential for comprehension and how to develop their ability to guess the meaning of words that may be needed for comprehension by using their knowledge of the world and linguistics.

4- To learn how to focus their attention on the important elements conveying the message which will help students to distinguish the main idea given in the passage

from subsidiary information.

5- What all students need most is to learn how to do without the teacher's help. Teachers have to teach them how to exhaust all their devices before crying out for help. This can be achieved by telling them what the task is and by making them feel that they can do it.

To conclude, reading extends social, cultural and academic horizons and for all readers, the experience of reading provides an opportunity to explore and relate to a wider world than one's own.

4.2 ESSENTIALS OF GOOD TEACHING OF READING

In teaching reading, just as in the other subjects, there are some guiding principles that should be kept in mind;

1) The first principle is that each lesson should contribute interesting and valuable experience and should quicken and deepen interest in reading activities. It is obvious that training which does not fit into any interesting and valuable reading situation may defeat its own purpose.

2) The tasks asked for the materials read should be relatively simple for the group taught. Students cannot grow rapidly in power of comprehension and intelligent interpretation if they encounter numerous difficulties which divert attention to the process of reading.

3) Students should be taught to read to fulfill certain purposes. It is obvious that favorable attitudes toward reading cannot be maintained or developed if reading lessons become monotonous or purposeless. The purposes for which students read in school, should be as genuine and as varied as the purposes for which people read in real life.

4) It is necessary for teachers to adapt their methods to the needs and interests of the particular groups of learners taught and to the kind of reading material available.

5) Finally, it should be remembered that students within a group differ widely in the amount of specific guidance and training which they need. Teachers should therefore study the progress and the needs of their students in each type of reading activity that is provided and should vary the amount of carefully directed practice according to the individual needs.

4.3 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS

Teachers' responsibilities concerned with the teaching of reading as Chastain (1976:313) has stated, include "to provide guidelines for reading in i) general and ii) for each particular lesson."

i) To begin with, we can say that students need to be trained for the reading of units further than the sentence level, like the paragraph or the whole text. Only in this way they can learn not to be dependent on understanding every single word or

sentence in a text when they are reading for different purposes other than analyzing the words of a sentence. In other words, it will be better if teachers will reject the idea of using the 'bottom-up' model in teaching reading at this level. Bottom-up models, sometimes referred to as 'text-based' or 'skills models' are based on linguistic input from the text for information processing and suggest that the reader focus primarily on the text. The reader begins the reading process by analyzing the text in small units. These units are built into progressively larger units until meaning can be extracted. (Kamil cited in Wing, 1986:72-73). Students taught to develop their reading skills according to bottom up model will get used to applying the same reading speed to all the texts they read and will not be willing to infer meaning of sentences or paragraphs from what precedes or follows. (Grellet, 1981:6).

If we wish students get the global meaning of a text as the objective of the reading programme then it will be ideal to adopt the 'top down' model. The top down model is sometimes referred to as 'reader based'. And among the well known of these models are those of Smith and Goodman. (Kamil cited in Wing, 1986:73). According to this model readers should initiate the reading process by making guesses about the meaning of the text. They then proceed to decode only enough of the text to verify or disconfirm their guesses. In Grellet's opinion (1981) this treatment of reading is very important because it helps to build up the students' confidence. When students have to deal with authentic text that often have difficult vocabulary or structures students need to feel confident.

Furthermore, this model helps to develop an awareness of the general structure of a passage that will enable the students to read more efficiently in the future. In the

application of this top down reading process, getting the global meaning of the text starts by considering the lay out of the text, accompanying pictures or diagrams, title, length of the text and so on. The consideration of all these elements helps to develop learners' skills of inference, anticipation and deduction which are essential for getting the overall meaning of the text.

- Variety and flexibility are the main components of any successful lesson. They gain, however, much more value when reading is taken into account. Only with a flexible programme and a variety of reading materials, it is possible to meet the student's needs and include all the different kinds of texts and skills. Therefore teachers should be careful not to ignore these two important components during their teaching.

ii) For each particular lesson teachers should decide what to practise and choose a text that appeals to the students and is at a suitable linguistic level. Teacher's other responsibilities for each reading lesson can be listed as:

- Selecting or preparing tasks and activities to develop the required skills.
- Making sure that everyone in the class works productively and extracting maximum effort and best results by encouraging the students, and by prompting and probing until they produce the answer instead of telling them what it is.
- Preparing the class to undertake the tasks. At this stage of the lesson a good introduction of the text can be helpful as long as the introduction is not too long and

in the form of a monologue by the teacher with no student participation Nuttall (1982) suggests that teachers should be careful not to give too much of the content of the text while introducing it and not talking about irrelevant things which may be often confusing rather than helpful. While preparing the class to undertake the tasks, it is necessary to make students be aware of the objectives of the reading lesson. If they see that the aim of the task they are going to undertake is in accord with the objectives of the lesson they will study eagerly and profit more.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDENTS'

QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section, the data collected have been analyzed and then the evaluation has been carried out depending on the analysis provided.

Table 1: Gender

	N	%
Male	37	61.7
Female	23	37.3
Total	60	100

61.7 percent of students are male, 37.3 percent of them are female.

Table 2:

	1 year %	2 years %	3 years %	More than 3 %	Yes %	No %	Total %
Students studied English before coming university					34 56.7	26 43.3	60 100
How long they studied English	29 48.3	4 6.7	2 3.3	25 41.7			60 100

Before coming to university, 56.7 percent of the students have studied English but 43.3 percent have not.

29 percent of the students studied English for 1 year, 4 percent of the students for 2 years, 2 percent of the students for 2 years and 25 percent of them more than 3 years.

Table 3: The reason for learning English.

	N	%
To be a qualified one	30	50
To find a better job	24	40
To prepare for some tests	3	5
To learn about different culture	3	5
Total	60	100

50 percent of the students learned English to be qualified ones, 40 percent to find a better job, 5 percent to prepare for some tests and 5 percent to learn about different

cultures.

Table 4: Level of English.

	N	%
Fair	28	46.7
Good	30	50
Excellent	2	3.3
Total	60	100

28 percent of the students know fair English, 30 percent of them know good English and only 3 percent of them know excellent English.

Table 5: The importance of skills in learning English.

	N	%
Reading	19	31.7
Speaking-Listening	26	43.3
Writing	6	10
Vocabulary-Grammar	9	15
Total	60	100

31 percent of the students felt that reading is the second most important skill. Naturally 43.3 percent of the students believed that speaking – listening are the most important skills as they want to communicate easily. But during my face to

face interview with the students, most of them agreed that they can learn speaking and listening better through studying reading skills.

Table 6:

	Yes %	No %	Total %
The reading passages read in the students' native language	53 88.3	7 11.7	60 100
The reading passages read in English	55 91.7	5 8.3	60 100
They like reading in English or not	55 91.7	5 8.3	60 100

88.3 percent of the students have read reading passages in their native language. This percentage of reading in their native language is really high as it promotes in reading the target language. Only 11.7 percent of the students haven't read in their native language.

91.7 percent of the students have read reading passages in English. 5 percent of the students haven't read in English. Reading in English has a vital importance in improving the students' vocabulary.

91.7 percent of the students like reading in English, 8.3 percent do not. The percentage of the students who like reading in English is impressive.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

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This thesis is firmly school based, and all the fieldwork has been carried out in normal school conditions. To this end, two main ways are employed. One hand of this research comprises the student questionnaire forms which were filled out by the intermediate level preparatory school students of Near East University (see appendix 2), and the books related to the subject were researched to have satisfactory information. On the other hand, teacher questionnaire forms were filled out by the experienced teachers of English in the same preparatory school (see appendix 3).

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3) Students should be taught to read to fulfill certain purposes. It is obvious that favorable attitudes toward reading cannot be maintained or developed if reading lessons become monotonous or purposeless. The purposes for which students read in school, should be as genuine and as varied as the purposes for which people read in real life.

4) It is necessary for teachers to adapt their methods to the needs and interests of the particular groups of learners taught and to the kind of reading material available.

5) Finally, it should be remembered that students within a group differ widely in the amount of specific guidance and training which they need. Teachers should therefore study the progress and the needs of their students in each type of reading activity that is provided and should vary the amount of carefully directed practice according to the individual needs.

4.3 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS

Teachers' responsibilities concerned with the teaching of reading as Chastain (1976:313) has stated, include "to provide guidelines for reading in i) general and ii) for each particular lesson."

i) To begin with, we can say that students need to be trained for the reading of units further than the sentence level, like the paragraph or the whole text. Only in this way they can learn not to be dependent on understanding every single word or

sentence in a text when they are reading for different purposes other than analyzing the words of a sentence. In other words, it will be better if teachers will reject the idea of using the 'bottom-up' model in teaching reading at this level. Bottom-up models, sometimes referred to as 'text-based' or 'skills models' are based on linguistic input from the text for information processing and suggest that the reader focus primarily on the text. The reader begins the reading process by analyzing the text in small units. These units are built into progressively larger units until meaning can be extracted. (Kamil cited in Wing, 1986:72-73). Students taught to develop their reading skills according to bottom up model will get used to applying the same reading speed to all the texts they read and will not be willing to infer meaning of sentences or paragraphs from what precedes or follows. (Grellet, 1981:6).

If we wish students get the global meaning of a text as the objective of the reading programme then it will be ideal to adopt the 'top down' model. The top down model is sometimes referred to as 'reader based'. And among the well known of these models are those of Smith and Goodman. (Kamil cited in Wing, 1986:73). According to this model readers should initiate the reading process by making guesses about the meaning of the text. They then proceed to decode only enough of the text to verify or disconfirm their guesses. In Grellet's opinion (1981) this treatment of reading is very important because it helps to build up the students' confidence. When students have to deal with authentic text that often have difficult vocabulary or structures students need to feel confident.

Furthermore, this model helps to develop an awareness of the general structure of a passage that will enable the students to read more efficiently in the future. In the

application of this top down reading process, getting the global meaning of the text starts by considering the lay out of the text, accompanying pictures or diagrams, title, length of the text and so on. The consideration of all these elements helps to develop learners' skills of inference, anticipation and deduction which are essential for getting the overall meaning of the text.

- Variety and flexibility are the main components of any successful lesson. They gain, however, much more value when reading is taken into account. Only with a flexible programme and a variety of reading materials, it is possible to meet the student's needs and include all the different kinds of texts and skills. Therefore teachers should be careful not to ignore these two important components during their teaching.

ii) For each particular lesson teachers should decide what to practise and choose a text that appeals to the students and is at a suitable linguistic level. Teacher's other responsibilities for each reading lesson can be listed as:

- Selecting or preparing tasks and activities to develop the required skills.
- Making sure that everyone in the class works productively and extracting maximum effort and best results by encouraging the students, and by prompting and probing until they produce the answer instead of telling them what it is.
- Preparing the class to undertake the tasks. At this stage of the lesson a good introduction of the text can be helpful as long as the introduction is not too long and

in the form of a monologue by the teacher with no student participation Nuttall (1982) suggests that teachers should be careful not to give too much of the content of the text while introducing it and not talking about irrelevant things which may be often confusing rather than helpful. While preparing the class to undertake the tasks, it is necessary to make students be aware of the objectives of the reading lesson. If they see that the aim of the task they are going to undertake is in accord with the objectives of the lesson they will study eagerly and profit more.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDENTS'

QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section, the data collected have been analyzed and then the evaluation has been carried out depending on the analysis provided.

Table 1: Gender

	N	%
Male	37	61.7
Female	23	37.3
Total	60	100

61.7 percent of students are male, 37.3 percent of them are female.

Table 2:

	1 year %	2 years %	3 years %	More than 3 %	Yes %	No %	Total %
Students studied English before coming university					34 56.7	26 43.3	60 100
How long they studied English	29 48.3	4 6.7	2 3.3	25 41.7			60 100

Before coming to university, 56.7 percent of the students have studied English but 43.3 percent have not.

29 percent of the students studied English for 1 year, 4 percent of the students for 2 years, 2 percent of the students for 2 years and 25 percent of them more than 3 years.

Table 3: The reason for learning English.

	N	%
To be a qualified one	30	50
To find a better job	24	40
To prepare for some tests	3	5
To learn about different culture	3	5
Total	60	100

50 percent of the students learned English to be qualified ones, 40 percent to find a better job, 5 percent to prepare for some tests and 5 percent to learn about different

cultures.

Table 4: Level of English.

	N	%
Fair	28	46.7
Good	30	50
Excellent	2	3.3
Total	60	100

28 percent of the students know fair English, 30 percent of them know good English and only 3 percent of them know excellent English.

Table 5: The importance of skills in learning English.

	N	%
Reading	19	31.7
Speaking-Listening	26	43.3
Writing	6	10
Vocabulary-Grammar	9	15
Total	60	100

31 percent of the students felt that reading is the second most important skill. Naturally 43.3 percent of the students believed that speaking – listening are the most important skills as they want to communicate easily. But during my face to

face interview with the students, most of them agreed that they can learn speaking and listening better through studying reading skills.

Table 6:

	Yes %	No %	Total %
The reading passages read in the students' native language	53 88.3	7 11.7	60 100
The reading passages read in English	55 91.7	5 8.3	60 100
They like reading in English or not	55 91.7	5 8.3	60 100

88.3 percent of the students have read reading passages in their native language. This percentage of reading in their native language is really high as it promotes in reading the target language. Only 11.7 percent of the students haven't read in their native language.

91.7 percent of the students have read reading passages in English. 5 percent of the students haven't read in English. Reading in English has a vital importance in improving the students' vocabulary.

91.7 percent of the students like reading in English, 8.3 percent do not. The percentage of the students who like reading in English is impressive.

Table 7: The percentage of reading included as a language skill in the whole language teaching program.

	N	%
20-40%	10	16.7
40-50%	36	60
More than 50%	14	23.3
Total	60	100

16.7 percent of the students believed that 20-40% reading should be included as a language skill in the whole language teaching program, 60 percent said 40-50% and 23.3 percent thought more than 50%. The students agreed that (83.3%) reading should be the major skill in the whole language teaching program

Table 8: How many hours a week they think reading should be studied besides other skills and grammar.

	N	%
One-two hours	3	5
Two-three hours	11	18.3
Three-four hours	29	48.3
More than four	17	28.3
Total	60	100

5 percent of the students indicated that 1-2 hours of reading should be studied besides other skills and grammar, 18.3 percent 2-3 hours, 48.3 percent 3-4 hours and 28.3 percent more than 4 hours. The majority of the students believe that reading should be studied 3-4 or more hours besides other skills.

Table 9: The most difficult skills to the students while studying English.

	N	%
Reading comprehension	10	16.7
Remembering words	23	38.3
Writing skills	5	8.3
Listening comprehension	4	6.7
Speaking using correct grammar	18	30
Total	60	100

Most of the students agreed that reading comprehension, remembering words and speaking using correct grammar are the most difficult skills while studying English. Since their coursebook does not include enough number of long reading passages, they did not have the chance of practicing reading comprehension and remembering words. Speaking using correct grammar would have been less difficult for them if they had studied enough reading skills since reading skills enable the students to practice listening comprehension, speaking skills and grammatical structures.

Table 10:

	Yes %	No %	Total %
Enough reading activities given or not	14 23.3	46 76.7	60 100
Preferring meaning based activities that focus on comprehension	51 85	9 15	60 100
Checking the meaning of unknown words while reading	56 93.3	4 6.7	60 100
Reading passages enable them to learn more words or not	55 91.7	5 8.3	60 100
Reading passages enable them to understand grammatical structures or not	45 75	15 25	60 100
Students who stop reading the passages given in the coursebook when they are inadequate in the number of words	30 50	30 50	60 100
Students who skip over unfamiliar words or expressions in the materials	25 41.7	35 58.3	60 100
Students who are given texts to predict the meaning of words that are unfamiliar	27 45	33 55	60 100

23.3 claimed that enough reading activities were given whereas 76.7 percent claimed that the activities are not enough. Without right size and type of reading activities learning English and understanding what is read is almost impossible.

85 percent of the students preferred meaning based activities that focus on comprehension, 15 percent did not. These kinds of activities help students understand the passage better and if they do so, they will be more willing towards the task.

93.3 percent of the students checked the meaning of unknown words while 6.7 percent of them did not. Checking the meaning of unknown words that contribute a lot to meaning enable them broaden their vocabulary.

91.7 percent of the students stated that the reading passages enable them to learn more words; on the other hand 8.3 percent of the students stated that they did not. The majority of the students are aware of the fact that they can learn more words through reading passages.

75 percent of the students reported that the reading passages enable them to understand the grammatical structures but the rest do not. When reading, students are able to consolidate the grammatical structures that have been learnt. Again it can be clearly seen that reading should be taken into consideration as a major skill.

50 percent of the students do not stop reading when they are inadequate in the number of words. For these students, it is almost impossible to improve their vocabulary without looking up at least for the words that have vital importance in a passage.

41.7 percent of the students skip over the unfamiliar words, 58.3 percent do not. The students who skip over the unfamiliar words will certainly learn less vocabulary.

45 percent of students are given texts to predict the meaning of the words that are unfamiliar; 55 percent are not given. Prediction is a very important reading skill. For an efficient reader, reading is a process of predicting from the beginning till to the end. Providing students with a systematic training in developing this skill will be very beneficial. They will learn how to make use of their orthographic,

grammatical, semantic and world knowledge to make a guessing about the form and content of what is to come next in their reading.

Table 11: The percentage of the students who are required to get the gist of the reading passages through skimming and scanning.

	N	%
Yes	30	50
No	30	50
Total	60	100

50 percent of the students are required to get the gist of the reading passages, 50 of them are not. It is apparent that the students are not used to the idea of reading with incomplete information. Students need to realize that skimming makes the task of reading easier and saves time in many reading situations by training them to learn **what to look for** and **how to look for it**. Scanning practices are one of the most useful techniques in proving the students that they could read for information in English without reading word by word and without any need for translation.

Table 12: The percentage of the students

	Yes %	No %	Total %
Reading materials are given to read loudly in the classroom or not	47 78.3	13 21.7	60 100
Reading materials are given to read silently in the classroom or not	25 41.7	35 58.3	60 100
Students are required to answer comprehension questions after silent and aloud reading or not	49 81.7	11 18.3	60 100

78.3 percent of the students were given reading materials to read loudly, 21.7 percent were not. Reading aloud may be suitable for beginning levels; in later stages of learning, making students read aloud has little or no justification. Because in real life, a few people are required to read aloud and these people have received special training, in addition to their interest and ability in the process, such as radio or TV newscasters and actors.

41.7 percent of the students were given reading materials to read loudly, 58.3 percent were not. Silent reading is more suitable for the students as majority of reading that is done is silent in modern life. Unfortunately, it can be easily seen from the findings that the students did not have the chance of reading silently in the classroom very much.

81.7 percent of the students stated that they are required to answer comprehension questions after silent and aloud reading, 18.3 percent stated they are not. Comprehension questions help students understand the passage that has been read better.

Table 13: The percentage of the students who look over materials to see if they will meet their needs and if they demotivate them.

	N	%
Yes	39	65
No	21	35
Total	60	100

Most of the participants stated that they look over the materials to see if they will meet their needs. The data obtained in this table reveals that the majority of the students are aware of choosing the right material. Choosing materials that are not suitable for their needs may result in failure in terms of learning. For this reason, the students may be easily demotivated.

Table 14:

	Yes %	No %	Total %
Students want to read a text of more than two pages or not	39 65	21 35	60 100
The coursebook provides the students with the ability to comprehend a long text of three to five pages or not	28 46.7	32 53.3	60 100
Students given extra long texts of three to five pages apart from the reading passages in their coursebook or not	28 46.7	32 53.3	60 100
Students are good at reading passages and long texts or not	20 33.3	40 66.7	60 100
Students have confidence in reading materials or not	31 51.7	29 48.3	60 100
Students are given new reading assignments to be studied at home or not	42 70	18 30	60 100

65 percent of the students want to read a text of reading more than two pages. The data obtained in this question reveals that the coursebook in use does not have enough reading passages.

More than half of the students indicated that the coursebook does not provide them with the ability to comprehend a long text of three to five pages. As the coursebook puts more emphasis on speaking and grammar, the students do not have the opportunity to practice long texts (more than 700-800 words). Thus, they miss the chance of practicing what has been learnt through long texts.

46.7 percent of the students indicated that they are given extra long texts of three to five pages apart from the reading passages in their coursebook. 53.3 percent of them indicated that they are not.

As I mentioned before, reading should be considered as a major skill in ELT. One of the most important reasons for this is that students can have the opportunity to practice all the other skills (listening, speaking, writing) and grammar through reading. Many times I gave different kinds of reading passages to some of the students who were willing to read more than they were given apart from the syllabus. After a while, I noticed that these students were at a better level not only in reading but in all other language skills and grammar. During the informal interviews with them, they mentioned that after they had started reading the extra reading materials, they began to write, speak, listen and understand grammatical structures in a better way.

33.3 percent of the students believed that they are good at reading passages and long texts. On the other hand, 66.7 of them believed that they are not. During my informal interviews with the students who did more reading than the others as indicated in table 26 claimed that they felt good at reading passages and long texts. Lack of long texts in the coursebook prevents them from practicing the reading skills and therefore other language skills as well.

The answers given to the fifth question of this table indicate that 51.7 percent of the students have confidence in reading materials but 48.3 percent do not.

70 percent of the students indicated that they are given new reading assignments to be studied at home; however, 30 percent are not.

Table 15: The percentage of the students who think that the reading passages help them practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing and grammar.

	N	%
Yes	48	80
No	12	20
Total	60	100

Vast majority of the students believed that the reading passages help them practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing and grammar. It can be easily seen

from the findings above that the skill of reading has a vital importance in ELL. Therefore, in my point of view, reading should be considered as a major skill in language teaching.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

5.0 PRESENTATION

Analysis of the findings indicated that students who take reading seriously (as a major skill) are far more profitable in learning a foreign language since they have a chance to see the written form of what they speak and listen, understand grammatical structures, develop themselves culturally, become familiar with the words they have learnt when they read. Moreover, to achieve these, it is important to teach reading skills effectively and without making students bored, and this can be done by reading passages as this study asserts. However, it is highly recommended that the reading passages have to be chosen according to the needs of the students to have the utmost benefit of it.

Examination of the questionnaire results shows that the students who read more reading passages than the students who read only what they were given, managed to expand their knowledge of vocabulary and had the chance to simplify their understanding of other language skills and grammar. 80 percent of the participants who participated in this study think that reading passages help them practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing and grammar. Vast amount of the students believe that all the language skills should be dealt with seriously but especially reading should be emphasized more than the others as indicated in the responses to item 9 of the students questionnaire.

91.7 percent of the students stated that the reading passages enable them to learn more words. 66.7 percent of the students believed that they are not good at reading passages and long texts. Lack of long texts in the coursebook prevents them from practicing the reading skills and therefore other language skills as well. This indicates that giving students more and more long texts will make them feel they are good at reading both short and long texts and gain more confidence.

5.1 SUMMARY

Regarding reading as one of the major skills and studying it seriously, we can overcome some difficulties that prevent students from developing the language being learnt. Moreover, apart from the problems that students might have when studying reading such as the size of unfamiliar words, reading in one's native language, and if the contents meet the students' needs or not, students may also have other kinds of problems; reading silently without subvocalization, reading with incomplete information, comprehension, confidence in reading and anticipation (before students begin to read, it is more effective to create the feeling of expectation towards the content of the reading material than just saying 'open your book, page 46, now start reading that paragraph'. To build up anticipation will be both illuminating and motivating). It has a vital importance to make the learners repeat the skills of reading with the help of reading passages (see the findings in chapter IV).

It can be seen from the results of the questionnaire that the majority of the students are aware of the fact that they can learn more words through reading passages.

Regarding reading as the major skill, and practicing reading skills will make them speak using correct grammar since reading skills enable the students to practice listening comprehension, speaking skills and grammatical structures. Briefly speaking, the students believe that without practicing reading skills and without giving reading enough importance it will be impossible for them to learn the target language properly.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

It is apparent that 'Reading' should receive more attention in language teaching.

Generally speaking, students have to get familiar with the most common reading habits. This involves getting familiar with the objective of the reading lesson and the utility of the reading practice. During the interviews, students themselves stated that they regarded their reading skills in English as below adequate and admitted the problem they had in understanding the reading materials. They did not know how to take their reading ability above phrase or sentence level and needed practice in getting the global meaning of the texts. They were heavily dependent on the teacher's help and not used to achieving any reading tasks by themselves. Therefore, they should be encouraged and motivated to build up their confidence and to set themselves to work by making sure that everyone in the class works productively and extracting maximum effort and best results by encouraging the students, and by prompting and probing until they produce the answer instead of telling them what it is..Most of them were not able to read fluently and without

subvocalizing when instructed to read silently.

For the students, dealing with the reading passages meant another linguistic exercise and it was indeed so. They needed to be aware of the authentic purposes of reading with the emphasis on meaning rather than form. They did not know how to connect their previous knowledge of the world, grammar, and lexis with the new information and how to use their old knowledge to understand the new. As a result of concentrating on word meanings, which is all too common among poorly trained students, reaching the overall meaning of a text seemed too difficult for them to be true. They needed to realize that knowing the exact meaning of each word and being able to translate the sentences into Turkish were not essential for comprehending a passage. It was necessary to make them see that they knew far more than they think they do and that understanding every item is not essential. They had to learn how to infer the meanings of unknown words by the help of the text and how to use their deductive powers to extract meaning. This can be done by giving more passages and making them concentrate on the global meaning of passages rather than dealing with specific word meanings that contribute nothing to meaning.

In setting the objectives, it must be realized that the weight should be on the practice of reading comprehension skills. However, this does not imply that a totally skills-oriented approach is suggested to foreign language classes. It would not be reasonable to treat students as native speaker learners and devote all the class hours merely for the practice of reading skills. Certainly, focus on language as well as reading skills is essential, because they are complementary to one

another. However, the primary concern in the study was to exhibit how the teaching of reading is ignored. The aim was to illustrate how it would be for students to improve their reading skills and become efficient readers with the language they had acquired so far.

Consequently, teaching English without contributing enough importance to the skills of reading may result in failure. Vast majority of the students believed that the reading passages help them practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing and grammar, take reading as a habit if they are given supplementary exercises such as the right size and amount of reading passages with the right amount of unknown words and comprehension questions. Such passages suitable for the students' level can be chosen with them together to make the teaching-learning process more enjoyable and profitable.

It can be easily seen that the skill of reading has a vital importance in ELL. Therefore, in my view, reading should be considered as a major skill in language teaching by teaching reading more effectively through reading skills, increasing the amount of teaching hours and giving more short and long reading passages.

To conclude, we can easily say that, the coursebook does not provide the students the chance to develop their reading skills; hence, supplementary reading materials should carefully be selected according to the level of the students; to make up the deficiency of reading passage in the coursebook, a language teacher should be suggested to select enough number of long texts suitable for the level of the students in question.

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE READING LESSON PLAN

Crazy

Children often have far more sense than their elders. This simple truth was demonstrated rather dramatically during a civil defence exercise in a small town in Canada. Most of the inhabitants were asked to take part in the exercise during which they had to pretend that their city had been bombed. Air-raid warnings were sounded and thousands of people went into special air-raid shelters. Doctors and nurses remained above ground while police patrolled the streets in case anyone tried to leave the shelters too soon.

The police did not have much to do because the citizens took the exercise seriously. They stayed underground for twenty minutes and waited for the siren to sound again. On leaving the air-raid shelters, they saw that doctors and nurses were busy. A great many people had volunteered to act as casualties. Theatrical make-up and artificial blood had been used to make the injuries look realistic. A lot of people were lying 'dead' in the streets. The living helped to carry the dead and wounded to special stations. A child of six was brought in by two adults. The child was supposed to be dead. With theatrical make-up on his face, he looked as if he had died of shock. Some people were so moved by the sight that they began to cry. However, the child suddenly sat up and a doctor asked him to comment on his death. The child looked around for a moment and said, 'I think they're all crazy!'

I- Presentation

Motivation: Teacher asks questions relevant to the passage:

Have you ever participated in a civil defence exercise? Have you ever acted?

II- Pre-Reading activities

a. Predicting

The teacher lets the students predict the subject of the passage by having them look at the picture and asks questions such as: What are they doing in the picture? What can you see in the picture? Students answer and tell what they think or understand by the picture. Predicting skill is done such a way in terms of the picture.,

b. Choral repetition

The teacher reads and students repeat while looking at their books.

c. Vocabulary teaching

This is also for pronunciation. The teacher says “We have some new words to learn, let’s see.”

exercise: “Repeat please” (the students will repeat each word). The teacher demonstrates by mimes and gestures, and if possible, shows the pictures illustrating the word “exercise”. Then, the teacher uses the new word in the sentences and writes them on the blackboard. This activity is done for the other new words. The other words are these: inhabitants, pretend, patrolled, volunteered, and artificial.

d. Pre-reading questions

The teacher asks two or three questions about the passage.

1. Why are they lying on the ground?
2. What happened to the man?

III- During-reading activities

a. Silent reading

Having the pre-reading questions in mind, students read the passage silently. They can underline if they meet any other words they do not know and ask the teacher.

b. The students write the answers of the pre-reading questions in their note-books.

IV- Post-reading activities

a. Comprehension questions

These can be asked either (i) directly, (ii) true-false, yes-no or (iii) fill in the gaps, etc.:

(i) 1. Why were doctors and nurses busy during the civil defense exercise?

2. Were there many 'casualties'?

3. Did their injuries look realistic?

(ii) 1. Some people moved by the sight. (T)

2. Three adults brought in a six year old child. (F)

(iii) 1. The police did not have much to do because the citizens _____ the exercise seriously.

b. Optional

(i) Write jumbled lines and ask students to reorder.

(ii) Have the students to retell.

c. Practice

(i) Ask questions which help the students practice the new words:

1. Have you ever seen any artificial flowers, Mehmet?

(ii) Let the students write a similar paragraph.

APPENDIX II

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Student,

This questionnaire is designed to analyze and evaluate the importance of reading in language teaching. Please, answer each question very carefully so that we can have a reliable and valid conclusion.

Thank you for your valuable contribution.

Arhun Ersoy

1. Gender

- (a) Male (b) Female

2. Have you ever studied English before coming to this university?

- (a) Yes (b) No

3. Why do you want to study English?

- (a) To be qualified one
(b) To find a better job
(c) To prepare for some *tests*
(d) To learn about different cultures

4. How long have you studied?

- (a) One year (b) Two years (c) Three years
(d) More than three

5. What level do you know English?

- (a) Fair (b) good (c) excellent

6. Which of the following do you consider the most important in learning English?

(You can mark more than one.)

- (a) Reading (b) Speaking-Listening (c) Writing (d) Vocabulary-Grammar

7. Have you ever read any reading passages in your native language?

- (a) Yes (b) No

8. Have you read any reading passages in English?

- (a) Yes (b) No

9. What percentage of reading should be included as a language skill in the whole language teaching programmes?
(a) 10-20% (b) 20-40 % (c) 40-50% (d) More than 50 %
10. Do you need to check the meaning of the unknown words while you are reading?
(a) Yes (b) No
11. Would you prefer meaning based activities that focus on comprehension?
(a) Yes (b) No
12. How many hours a week do you think reading should be studied besides other skills and grammar?
(a) one-two hours (b) two-three hours (c) three-four hours (d) more than four
13. Do you think you are given enough reading activities?
(a) Yes
(b) No
14. Do the reading passages enable you to learn more words?
(a) Yes
(b) No
15. Do the reading passages enable you to understand the grammatical structures?
(a) Yes
(b) No
16. What do you find the most difficult when studying English?
(a) Reading comprehension.
(b) Remembering words.
(c) Writing skills
(d) Listening comprehension.
(e) Speaking using correct grammar.
17. Do you like reading in English?
(a) Yes (b) No
18. Do you stop reading the reading passages given in a course book if you are inadequate in the number of words?
a) Yes b) No
19. Do you skip over unfamiliar words or expressions in the reading materials?
a) Yes b) No
20. Are you given any texts to predict the meaning of the words that are unfamiliar?
a) Yes b) No

21. Are you required to get the gist of the reading passages through skimming and scanning (speed and rapid reading techniques)?
a) Yes b) No
22. Are you given any reading materials to read aloud in the classroom?
a) Yes b) No
23. Are you given any reading materials to read silently in the classroom?
a) Yes b) No
24. Are you required to answer comprehension questions after silent and aloud reading?
a) Yes b) No
25. Do you want to read a text of reading more than two pages?
a) Yes b) No
26. Do you think that using a course book provides you with the ability to comprehend a long text of three to five pages?
a) Yes b) No
27. Are you given extra long texts of three to five pages apart from the reading passages in your course book?
a) Yes b) No
28. If reading materials are given, do you look over materials to see if they will meet your needs and if not, do they demotivate you?
a) Yes b) No
29. Are you good at reading passages and long texts?
a) Yes b) No
30. Do you have a confidence in reading materials?
a) Yes b) No
31. Do you think that the reading passages help you to practice all the other skills such as speaking, writing, and grammar?
a) Yes b) No
32. Are you given any new reading assignments to be studied at home?
a) Yes b) No

APPENDIX 3

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Colleague,

The aim of this questionnaire is to detect the problems involved in teaching and improving reading skills at intermediate level at Near East University Preparatory School. Your answers will help me to get a clear view of the present situation and provide a realistic background to my study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Arhun Ersoy

(In answering the following questions do not forget that the concern of this questionnaire is the intermediate level students and the reading materials used in their programmes.)

A. Checklist for the Reading Materials

1. Are the content and language of reading materials in textbooks suitable for the age and the level of language ability of the students?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No
2. Is the content of the materials always of interest to the students?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No
3. Do the materials provide background for essential reading strategies at higher levels of instruction?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
4. Are the materials generally consistent with those used in other programmes within the region or nation, in private schools?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
5. Are the students used to working on authentic reading materials?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
6. Are there relevant and effective charts, filmstrips, flashcards, pictures and other instructional materials available to support the basic programme?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
7. Are there workshops, institutes and continuing education programmes in which teachers may receive additional training in the use of the materials?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.

B. Checklist for Reading Comprehension Skills

8. Can the students easily detect the intended meaning in a sentence?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
9. Can the students find the intended meaning in a given paragraph or paragraphs?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
10. Are they able to discover which of the details give additional information about the main idea?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
11. Do the students know that it is not necessary to read every word and line in a written text and that sometimes strategies like scanning or skimming may be used according to the reading purpose?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.
12. Can they find factual information in their reading?
☐ a Yes ☐ b No.

13. Can they use the information given to arrive at conclusions about information not given?
(i.e. can they use inferential reasoning or evaluative judgements).

() a Yes () b No.

14. Does 'reading aloud' give students the needed practice in understanding written English?

() a Yes () b No

15. Does 'silent reading' give students the needed practice in understanding written English?

16. Complete the below statement with one of the given alternatives which reflects your view of 'reading'?

During the reading process the students should be encouraged in the direction of:

() a. Accurate reproduction of what the writer says.

() b. Making predictions, interpretations, generalizations, and in drawing inferences and conclusions.

() c. Efficiency in aloud reading.

() d. Translation of the reading material to one's native language.

() e. Word recognition.

C. Please write your own ideas and suggestions for the following open, ended questions.

17. What are your aims and objectives in teaching 'reading'?

18. Do you often help students by explaining, summarizing or translating the passages when they have difficulty in understanding them?

19. What is your attitude to the encouragement of silent reading and individual study during the class hour?

20. What are your suggestions for the improvement of the materials and the techniques used in reading lessons?

APPENDIX 4

TEST-RETEST CORRELATION	PERCENTAGE AGREEMENTS
Q1	0,896
Q2	0,864
Q3	0,961
Q4	0,992
Q5	0,947
Q6	0,949
Q7	0,886
Q8	0,905
Q9	1,000
Q10	0,886
Q11	0,864
Q12	0,988
Q13	0,986
Q14	0,856
Q15	0,864
Q16	0,886
Q17	0,960
Q18	0,967
Q19	0,886
Q20	0,956
Q21	0,864
Q22	1,000
Q23	0,864
Q24	0,960
Q25	0,947
Q26	0,988
Q27	1,000
Q28	1,000
Q29	0,992
Q30	0,956
Q31	0,967
Q32	0,854

APPENDIX V

LETTER OF PERMISSION

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

20.03.2003.

Sn. Arhun Ersoy
Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi,
Hazırlık Okulu,
Öğretim Üyesi.

İlgili başvurunuzda konu edilen “ The Importance of Reading as a Major Skill in ELT” konulu tez çalışmanızın anket soruları kurulumuz tarafından incelenmiş ve uygulanması uygun görülmüştür.

Ancak anket uygulanmadan önce anketin uygulanacağı bölümlerin öğretim üyeleriyle iştirarede bulunup anketin hangi dersliklerde ve ne zaman uygulanacağı birlikte saptanmalıdır.

Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Şenol Bektaş