

Unit iv-Reading and Understanding

-Compiled by prof.Neha Raina

1. Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension is a test of reading passages. A passage is an extract from some authentic and scholarly work of repute. A passage will consist of one or more paragraphs chosen at random but with a sense of continuity. It will have a theme and it will serve the purpose of providing material for testing comprehension.

The passages are followed by questions which will test the understanding of the passages in question, a group of general language skills and the power of short independent composition based on the themes and issues raised in the passage. The question framed will include those which require recognition, analysis and evaluation, objective/multiple choice and short answers.

Definition

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message.

Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it, and understand its meaning. There are specific traits that determine prior knowledge about the subject, well-developed language, and the ability to reach a conclusion.

Comprehension is a "creative, multifaceted process" dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

A) Phonetics deals with human production of speech sounds. Individual sounds are phonemes, of which there are hundreds, although in English we manage with around forty. The distinctions between the sounds indicate regional differences or subtle nuances of speech.

b) Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language or languages.

c) Syntax is the branch of linguistics that covers the grammatical arrangements of words within sentences, and how we use speech in communication.

d) **Semantics** deals with the study of meaning: how we combine words to create meaningful discourse. It studies the relationship between signs and symbols and what they represent.

e) **Pragmatics (as applied to linguistics)** is about how we actually use speech in communication, and how context aids the transmission of meaning in utterances.

Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual's cognitive development, which is "the construction of thought processes".

Reading comprehension is the ability to process information that we have read and to understand its meaning. This is a complex process where skills are built upon one another like the blocks used to make the tower. There are three levels of understanding in reading comprehension: literal meaning, inferential meaning, and evaluative meaning.

Literal meaning: Literal meaning is simply what the text says. It is what actually happens in the story. This is a very important level of understanding because it provides the foundation for more advanced comprehension. Without understanding the material on this level, one cannot go any farther.

Inferential meaning: Inferential meaning involves determining what the text means. You start with the stated information. This information is then used to determine deeper meaning that is not explicitly stated. Determining inferential meaning requires you to think about the text and draw a conclusion.

Evaluative meaning: Evaluative meaning is what the text is telling us about the world outside the story. Readers must analyze what they have read. They must form an opinion based on the information.

Vocabulary: Reading comprehension and vocabulary are inextricably linked. The ability to decode or identify and pronounce words is self-evidently important, but knowing what any specific passage means. Students with a smaller vocabulary than other students comprehend less of what they read and it has been suggested that the most impactful way to improve vocabulary.

Importance of Reading and Comprehension skill

Comprehension skill enables the reader:

- To read efficiently and quickly.
- To understand the meaning of the text.
- To prepare the summary or precise that represent the accurate picture of the central idea of the text.
- To become more knowledgeable.
- To become more creative by associating different ideas and information.

Techniques of Reading

Reading is a great habit that can change human life significantly. It can entertain us; amuse us and enrich us with knowledge and experiences narrated. There exist some reading techniques, which if mastered at a growing stage can help us be better and far more comprehensive readers.

The four main types of reading techniques are the following:

1. Skimming: Skimming is sometimes referred to as gist reading. Skimming may help in order to know what the text is about at its most basic level. The aim is to get the gist of the story without trying to decode exactly what each word means. Skimming may help in order to know what the text is about at its most basic level.

You might do this with a magazine or newspaper and would help you mentally and quickly shortlist those articles which you might consider for a deeper read. You might typically skim to search for a name in a telephone directory.

You can reach a speed count of even 700 words per minute if you train yourself well in this particular method. Comprehension is of course very low and understanding of overall content very superficial at this juncture.

2. Scanning: Scanning involves getting your eyes to quickly scuttle (move) across a sentence and is used to get just a simple piece of information. It has been observed that reading off a computer screen actually inhibits the pathways to effective scanning and thus, reading of paper is far more conducive to speedy comprehension of texts. The goal of scanning is to extract specific pieces of information.

In "real life" you might scan a train schedule for one kind of information, a travel brochure for different information or a guide book while visiting a historical city. From the literary texts you extract certain basic facts by scanning it.

3. Intensive reading: Intensive reading (IR) occurs when the learner is focused on the language rather than the text. For example, the learner may be answering comprehensive questions, learning new vocabulary, studying the grammar and expression in the text, translating the passage or other tasks that involve the student in looking intensively (inside) the text.

For example, in classroom intensive reading activities include skimming a text for a specific information to answer true or false statements or filling gaps in a summary, scanning a text to match headings to paragraphs, and scanning jumbled paragraphs and then reading them carefully to put them into the correct order.

4. Extensive reading: Extensive reading involves learners reading texts for enjoyment and to develop general reading skills. It can be compared with intensive reading, which means reading in detail with specific learning aims and tasks.

Extensive reading (or free reading, book flood, reading for pleasure), is a way of language learning, including foreign language learning, through large amounts of reading. As well as facilitating acquisition and learning of vocabulary. It is believed to increase motivation through positive affective benefits.

The idea behind extensive reading is that a lot of reading of interesting material that is slightly below, at, or barely above the full comprehension level of the reader will foster improved language

skills. Extensive reading is reading as much as possible, for your own pleasure, at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating to English as you go.

Close Reading

Close reading is thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, meaning, etc. It directs the reader's attention to the text itself.

"Reading closely" means developing a deep understanding and a precise interpretation of a literary passage that is based first and foremost on the words themselves. Close reading embraces larger themes and ideas evoked and/or implied by the passage itself.

Close reading includes:

- Using short passages and experts
- Diving right into the text with limited pre-reading activities
- Focusing on the text itself
- Rereading deliberately.
- Reading with a pencil.
- Noticing things that are confusing.
- Discussing the text with others: Think-Pair share or Turn and talk frequently or small groups and whole class.
- Responding to text-dependent questions.

Close reading is a commitment to a text that offers rich vocabulary, ideas, and information to read, examine and discuss over days without feeling depressed.

Close reading also involves

1. Skimming

2. Scanning

Steps in close reading

There is no specific sequence in close reading. These steps are meant to guide the reader in crafting a lesson:

1. Read key ideas and details

First of all the reader should read the text as independently as possible. The first read should be without building background. The purpose of this step is to focus on the key ideas and details in the text, and to ensure that the main idea or key details are known. This step provides bird's eye view of the text.

2. Read the craft and structure

The next step in close reading is selecting a portion or chunk of the text that is relevant. One should reread the text to understand the complex elements or ideas that should be explored to arrive at a deeper understanding of the text. The reader should focus on author's craft and organizational patterns. This may include vocabulary choices, text structure or text features that the author talks about.

3. Integration of knowledge and ideas

In the third step of close reading, one should synthesise and analyze information from several texts and infer it. Usually texts for close reading are rich in vocabulary, ideas and information. One should understand the unnoticed and unwritten meaning of these words and ideas based on certain logic and patterns. This is called inference that is related to implications. When the writer does not state the idea direct, he or she conveys the idea indirectly. One should be critical enough to capture the underlying essence of the idea.

Analysis and Interpretation

Usually we read the text like article or reports in newspaper that influence our thoughts in subtle way. At that time, we usually suspend our thinking process and accept the information as it is without questioning the authenticity, credibility and the intent of the writer. To overcome this we need critical thinking—the ability to apply reasoning and logic to question the validity of information. Critical thinkers are sceptical and analytical by nature as they approach the problem by questioning its various aspects. They consciously apply tactics to uncover meaning or assure their understanding. This critical thinking requires proper analysis and interpretation of the text.

Therefore we analyse and interpret the text like prose, poem, play etc. to derive meaning of the words beyond the text and to judge the apparent and hidden purpose or intent of the author. By analysis, we mean the process of categorizing the text, making pattern of ideas that underlie different parts of text, and generating themes out of them which will help to produce meaning out of them. Interpretation is the process of understanding and insight we derive from a more holistic and intuitive grasp of the text. It is highly skilled cognitive and intuitive process that requires total immersion in the text.

For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, we should:

- Read and reread the text with specific question in mind.

- Identify the patterns of thoughts in the text and arrange these ideas, events and characters.
- Identify and consider important ideas, characters and events of the text.
- Offer a context for the text without summary.
- Assess the tone of the writer.
- Make character analysis of the characters and their roles.
- Make the plot analysis of the story to verify whether it conveys more than the words.
- Assess how it is said, considering the choice of words, the ordering of ideas, structure of sentences, etc to know the hidden intent of the author.
- Focus on the important words and quotes.
- Imagine the influence of different ideologies and famous scholars who have expressed the same thought to judge the mindset of the author.
- Repeat the process of context, and analysis with additional support of text.

Summary and paraphrasing

Summary: A summary is a condensed version of a larger reading. A summary is not a rewrite of the original piece and does not have to be long nor should it be long. To write a summary, use your own words to express briefly the main idea and relevant details of the piece you have read. Your purpose in writing the summary is to give the basic ideas of the original reading. What was it about and what did the author want to communicate?

While reading the original work, take note of what or who is the focus and ask the usual questions that reporters use; Who? what? when? why? how? Using these questions to examine what you are reading can help you write the summary.

A summary is a condensed version of an original text, usually a full article or book. Summaries are usually around a paragraph long, and may even be a few paragraphs long depending on the length of the work being condensed.

A summary or recap is a shortened version of the original text prepared to simplify the text and highlight the major points of the subject like written text from periodicals, newspapers, books, films or events. The purpose of preparing the summary is to offer as accurately as possible the full sense of the original text in a more condensed form and to help the targeted audience to get the main ideas in a short period of time.

The characteristics of summary are:

- It is a shortened and simplified version of the text like newspapers, books, films or events.
- It restates the author's main point, purpose, intent and supporting details in one's own words.
- It is written in a clearly arranged and structured manner.

- It is written in indirect speech as the original words of the author of the text are transformed in our own words.
- It is written in logical and chronological manner to present the clear and coherent picture of the text.
- It focuses on the main points of the text and leaves the details and analysis aside.
- It tries to capture the essence of the subject in few possible words and tries to depict the message of the author in original form by omitting own interpretations of the writer of the summary.

Objectives of preparing summaries

- To simplify and shorten the text.
- To restate the author's main point, purpose, intent and supporting details in own words.
- To save the time of the time-poor and busy audience.
- To enable the reader to get the main ideas of the subject without going through the whole text.
- To capture the essence of the message of the writer in few possible words.

Paraphrasing

Definition: A statement of a text, passage, or work giving the meaning in another form. It is the use or process of paraphrasing in studying or teaching composition.

Paraphrasing is a restatement of a text or passage giving the meaning in another form, as for clarity; rewording. Often we name it rewriting or rephrasing.

It means to express the meaning of something written or spoken using different words, especially to achieve greater clarity.

In simple words, paraphrasing means to restate a text or passage using different words than what are given in order to simplify and bring clarity to the text.

Dictionary meaning

The verb paraphrase means to sum something up or clarify a statement by rephrasing it. So to paraphrase that explanation, it means to say something in other, simple words.

Need for paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is an aid to learning.

Paraphrasing is a valuable learning strategy for the following reasons:

1.Active engagement with material :The act of turning a statement into your own words and writing them down engages your mind and body with the content.Writing or typing up sentences involves physical as well as mental interaction with the material.Paraphrasing causes you to think about the ideas rather than just dumping them into your brain unexamined.

2.Improved memory:Active engagement improves your memory of the ideas.Even copying the idea down word for word increases retention,whether or not you ever review your notes.But paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.

3.Improved understanding:In order to convert an idea into your own words,you must think about it and understand what the writer or speaker is telling you.

4.Make the idea your own:Using your own writing style,your own vocabulary,and your own thinking adds the idea to your regular mental inventory.

5.It is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage.

Steps in writing a paraphrase

- 1.Read the original text carefully.
- 2.Substitute words and rearrange sentences,asking yourself questions about precise meanings.
- 3.Check the meaning of your paraphrase against the original.
- 4.Identify the source you are paraphrasing.

Paraphrasing can be done with individual sentences or entire paragraphs.

For example:

Original:The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe.If you try it ,you will be lonely often and sometimes frightened.But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

Paraphrase:The person thinking creatively or exploring uncharted landscape has to struggle with the popular thinking of the masses.Sometimes such person may be forced to face isolated or threats.But owning creative idea is priceless as compared to these sacrifices.

Seeking permission ,Giving Advice,Booking a room in a hotel,telephonic interview/conversations

a) Making requests/Asking for permission/Offering help

There are many ways of requesting permission in English. However, knowing when to use the right request formula or structure is a bit tricky. This can be determined by asking yourself these questions;

Does the other person have higher status than you? (e.g. more authority or older)?

Is the other person a stranger, an acquaintance, a colleague, a friend or a relative? (you don't need polite formulas with people you know well - it sounds sarcastic)

Is your request going to cause the other person trouble or extra work?

Asking for permission to do something takes many different forms. Perhaps you need to get permission to do something at work, or perhaps you need to ask a friend for permission to use one of her possessions, or maybe you need to ask the teacher if you can leave the room for a moment or two. Remember to use polite forms when asking for permission to do something or use an object as you are asking a favor of that person.

Requesting Permission Expressions

Could I use your phone?

..... Might I possibly use your phone?

..... Sorry to trouble you, but do you mind if I use your phone?

..... Would you mind if I used your phone?

..... May I use your phone?

..... Can I use your phone?

..... I wonder if I could use your phone.

Giving Permission

If you would like to say "yes" to someone who asks permission, you can give permission using these phrases:

Sure

No problem.

Go right ahead.

Please feel free+infinitive

When giving permission people will sometimes also offer to help in other ways. See the example conversations below for an example

Refusing A Favor

If you want to deny permission, you can use these responses:

I'm afraid I'd prefer if you didn't/don't.

Sorry ,but I'd rather you not do that.

Unfortunately, I need to say no.

I'm afraid that's not possible.

Saying 'no', is never fun, but sometimes it's necessary .It's common to offer a different solution to try to help out even if you can't give permission.

Practice Situations

Find a partner and use these suggestions to practice asking for permission, as well as giving and denying permission as shown in the examples. Make sure to vary the language you use when practicing rather than using the same phrase over and over again.

Asking for and giving permission:

When you ask for permission to use something that belongs to someone else you have to do your best to be polite. It is desirable to use the word "please".

Asking for permission:

Can I go out, please?

May I open the window ,please?

Please, can I have a look at your photo album?

Please, may I taste that hot spicy couscous dish?

Do you mind If I smoke?

Would you mind if I asked you something?

Is it okay if I sit here?

Would it be all right if I borrowed your mobile phone?

Giving Permission:

Yes, please do.

Sure, go ahead.

Sure.

No problem.

Please feel free.

Go right ahead.

Please feel free + infinitive

Refusing to give permission:

No, please don't.

I'm sorry but that's not possible.

I'm afraid, but you can't.

I'm afraid I'd prefer if you didn't/don't.

Sorry, but I'd rather you not do that.

Unfortunately, I need to say no.

I'm afraid that's not possible.

More Formal

Would, could, please + verb are used to request permission.

May I leave early?

Might I leave early?

Would you mind if I left early?

I would like to ask you if I might leave early.

Less Formal

Can and other expressions are used informally in speech to request permission.

Can I leave early?

Is it a problem if I leave early?

We're leaving early, you don't mind, do you?

I need to leave, do you mind?

Is it OK if I leave early?

Asking For And Giving Advice

Expressions

Asking for advice

I've got a bad toothache. what do you suggest?

What do you advise me to do?

What should I do?

What ought I to do?

What 's your advice?

Giving advice

If I were you, I would go to the dentist.

Why don't you go to the dentist?

You ought to/should avoid eating sweets.

Have you thought about seeing a dentist?

Declining to give advice

I don't know what to advise,I'm afraid.

I wish I could suggest something,but I can't.

I wish I could help.

Booking A Room In A Hotel

Here is some useful vocabulary to describe hotel rooms and facilities ,and phrases to book a hotel room.

Types of room

Double room=room with a double bed(for two people)

Twin room=room with two beds

Single room=room with one bed(for one person)

Suite=more than one room(e.g.bedroom and living room)

Cot=a bed for a baby

Availability

Fully booked=no rooms available

Other facilities

Ensuite bathroom=a bathroom attached to the bedroom

A safe=a box with a key where you put valuables(passport,jewellery,money etc.)

A minibar=a small fridge with drinks inside such as coke,water,juice,wine.

Tea and coffee making facilities=a kettle(to boil water),cups,coffee,milk,sugar,and tea sachets

(24-hour)room service=your clothes can be washed for you.

Bar and restaurant=the hotel has a bar and a restaurant for drinks and meals

WI-FI=internet connection

Full English breakfast=big breakfast with toast,eggs,bacon,cereal,etc.

A wake-up call=when the telephone rings to wake you up

Making the Booking

Here are some phrases you can use on the phone to make a booking in English.

I'd like to book a (single/double/twin)room for two nights,please.

I'd like to make a reservation for a (single/double/twin)room for the night of date,please.

(a reservation=a booking)

Do you have any double rooms left for the weekend?

Do you have any double rooms available this weekend?

(Left=available)

How much is.....a single room/a double room/a suite?

What time is check –in?(check in=when you arrive and give your passport information)

What time check-out?(when you leave and pay)what time is breakfast?

Are all your rooms ensuite?(=with bathroom)

Is there Wi- Fi in the room?

Is there a lift?(lift/elevator)

Telephonic Interview And Conversation

Many recruiters use telephone interviews as the first stage of a job interview process.A telephone interview is an effective way for a firm to screen many candidates quickly and with the lowest overall expenditure of any type of interview.This is why companies use this style of interview so frequently.

What is a Telephone Interview?

A telephone interview is a pre-scheduled interview that takes place between a recruiter and a candidate who has applied for a job role that takes place over the telephone.Telephone interviews are usually fairly straightforward and are mainly used to screen poor candidates out of an interview process,rather than to test high-quality ones.Often,all recruiters will be looking for candidates during a telephone interview will be a calm,confident telephone manner and an intelligent set of responses to common interview questions.Graduate level telephone interviews

are usually short-most last less than 30 minutes-and feature a mix of competency based questions and questions about your CV,work experience and education.

Prepare for a Telephone Interview

Although a telephone interview is relatively straightforward,even highly capable candidates can be rejected at this early stage if they are inadequately prepared or not used to speaking in a professional manner over the phone.For many candidates,the whole situation can feel unnatural –without eye contact it can be difficult to build rapport and display a strong personality with your interviewer.

Practice

Practice is useful,especially if you haven't worked in an office or used a telephone to talk to clients in previous jobs.If you can,try getting friends or family members to call you and ask interview questions.Candidates who don't think they'll have any trouble with this style of assessment are often the ones that have difficulties.

Research

It is important to find out as much as you possibly can about a company ,and a job role,before any type of interview;a telephone interview is no exception.You may receive some information from your perspective employer,but make sure you also visit their website,competitor websites,read relevant trade press,and keep aware of current industry-specific commercial awareness issues.Be aware of the size of a company,its structure,its products and services,its markets,competitors and future plans.

Plan

Plan for possible questions you may be asked before your interview.Consider answers you can give,including good experience examples for competency based questions.

Common Telephone Interview Mistakes

Candidates that fail telephonic interviews often do so because of poor preparation or making minor mistakes.Some common mistakes are discussed below-make sure you steer clear of them.

Using Slang

Candidates who would never use colloquialisms in face –to-face interviews often accidentally use slang during a telephonic interview without even realizing it,because they are so used to using the phone to talk to friends.You should never use slang in any kind of interview situation.

Arranging Your Interview

Many candidates arrange their interviews without adequately considering when they will next be free. It is essential to properly plan when and where you will be when organizing your telephone interview.

Answering the phone

Your telephone interview begins from the moment you answer the telephone and ends only when the conversation, questions and your goodbyes have been completed.

Forgetting Your Interview

Candidates who forget a scheduled telephonic interview are destined to fail. If a recruiter calls a candidate who appears to be confused, unprepared and disorganized, they will be unlikely to invite them for a face-to-face interview.

Being Interrupted

Almost as bad as forgetting your interview is organising your interview at a time, or in a place, where you will be interrupted.

Charging Your Telephone

If you will be using a mobile phone, remember to charge it on the day of your interview.

Time limits

In most telephonic interviews time is strictly limited; you may even feel as though you are being rushed when answering questions. Don't be worried to take a little time to consider questions, or your responses to them, before answering. Although time is limited, your interviewer should understand that candidates need to take some time to produce good responses.

Telephonic interview questions

Telephonic interviews are typically conducted by a member of a firm's human resources (HR) team, or outsourced to a specialist organisation (such as a recruitment consultancy or job assessment organization). Questions will usually focus on: your CV, work experience and academic history; your motivations for applying to the firm in question, the particular industry and job role; your knowledge of the firm itself (i.e. competitors, global reach, future plans); and your skills, qualifications and competencies.

Typical Telephonic interview questions

It is less likely that a telephonic interview would include technical questions, brain teaser questions or commercial awareness questions.

Example interview questions

Typical telephone interview questions may include:

Why do you want to work in

Why do you want to be a

What are you most looking forward to in this role?

Tell me about yourself/take me through your CV

Where would you like to be in five years?What do you think you will be doing?

What are your greatest achievements?

Where possible,always use a different example when answering each question.

Interview dos and don'ts

Dos:

Your research:Just like a face –to-face interview,start by finding out as much as you can about the company.Find out about the size and structure of the company,its products and services and the markets it works in.

Write down any questions you want to ask

A phone interview is a really good opportunity to find out more about the role you've applied for,the company culture and opportunities for growth.

Have your CV to hand

In all probability,the recruiter will have a copy of it too,so you may not be asked about it in detail.However,they may open the interview by asking questions about your experience.

Smile

Although your interviewer can't see you,always try and remain smiling throughout the conversation.

Listen

This is the most important element to consider.Take on board all elements of their questions,and make note of anything that seems of particular importance,just in case they refer back to it later.

Don'ts:

Treat it differently from a face-to-face interview.Strange as it sounds,it's a good idea to dress like a professional.

Get distracted. You need to remain focused on the task at hand, something that can prove difficult, since it is a two way conversation.

Eat

There is a time and a place for snacking. A mumbled answer because you have your mouthful is memorable, but for all the wrong reasons.

Interrupt

The easiest way to avoid irritating the interviewer is to let them finish their sentence, so always allow for a gap before you begin answering.

Other telephonic interview don'ts: chew gum, smoke, zone out, talk about yourself in the third person etc.

Phone Conversation : Most commonly used English phrases on the phone

Communicative skills are very important. Communicating properly on the phone is especially important, as the person you are speaking to cannot see your facial movement or your body language.

As well as speaking clearly when talking on the phone, it is vital to use the right level of formality. If you are too formal, people might find it difficult to feel comfortable when talking to you.

Generally speaking, when you are calling in a business context (making calls related to employment, finances, law, health or applications of any sort), you should show politeness by using words like:

Could

Would

Can

May

When making a request. when you ask for something, or receive help or information, you should use:

Please

Thank you

Thank you very much.

If it is more of an informal phone conversation(speaking to a friend, family member ,close work colleague or even a friend of a friend),then a high level of formality is usually not required,but you should still speak with a polite manner,as it is seen as respectful.

It 's fine to use less formal phrases in these conversations,such as

'thanks'

'cheers'

'bye'

'okay'

'no problem'

Another useful thing to remember is,it's better to ask for help or clarification when you're having a telephone conversation when you're having a telephone conversation,than to pretend you understand something that you didn't.It is absolutely fine to use phrases like:

'could you repeat that please?'

'could you speak a little more slowly please?'

'would you mind spelling that for me please?'

Using phrases like these will help you to have a more successful phone call,and may save you from any problems later on.you could always say:

I'm afraid the line is quite bad.

If you can't hear very well.

Some commonly used phrases:

Introduction/Making contact

If answering a business call,start by introducing yourself or if the caller fails to identify themselves,then you could ask them to state who they are by using the following phrases:

Formal

'Hello'

'good afternoon'

'this is.....speaking'

'Could I speak to.....please?'

'I would like to speak to.....'

'I'm trying to contact.....'

Informal

'Hello'

'Hi,it'shere'

'I am trying to get in touch with.....'

