A COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE PERSPECTIVE

ON DIFFICULTIES IN L2 READING

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

A COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (CC) PERSPECTIVE
ON DIFFICULTIES IN L2 READING

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The primary objective of this study was to investigate the reading difficulties (problems) of Freshman EFL students attending the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University. The study attempted to integrate notions of strategic, linguistic, discourse and sociolinguistic competence into the construct of reading: a first approximation at integrating and applying a model of reading ability to a model of communicative language ability. To examine the reading difficulties and factors related to EFL reading, the researcher investigated the sub-competencies of reading comprehension in the following areas of Communicative Competence: linguistic, strategic, socio-linguistic and discourse competence. For this purpose, 6 reading quizzes were administered to 29 EFL readers and the results were

analyzed by three different reading instructors to explore, from a Communicative Competence perspective, where the difficulties in L2 reading were experienced.

The results showed that students' difficulties frequently originated from discourse competence, followed by sociolinguistic, strategic and linguistic competences, respectively.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, communicative competence, reading difficulties

ÖZ

YABANCI DİLDE OKUMA ZORLUKLARINA İLETİŞİMSEL BIR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu çalışmanın esas amacı iletişimsel açıdan, ODTU Y.Diller Eğitimi Bölümü birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yabancı dilde okuma zorluklarını incelemektir. Bu calışma, söylem, toplum-dil, strateji ve dilbilgisi (gramer) yeteneklerinin okuma becerilerine uyarlanması (aktarılması) konusunda ilk adım niteliğindedir. Bu zorlukların ortaya cıkarılması için araştırmacı, okuma becerileriyle ilgili alt yetenekleri incelemiştir.

Bu amaçla 6 adet okuma sınavı yapılmış ve bu sınavların sonucları, bir grup okuma uzmanı tarafından incelenerek, ögrencilerin genel iletişimsel beceri açısından okuduğunu anlamakta zorlandıkları alanlar saptanmıştır.

Araştırmanın bulgularına göre öğrenciler, sırasıyla, söylem analizi, sosyo-kültürel beceriler, stratejik beceriler ve son olarak gramer becerilerinde zorluk yasamışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okuduğunu anlama becerisi, genel iletişimsel beceri, okuma zorlukları

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Presentation

This chapter introduces the topic and explains the rationale and motives behind the research study carried out.

1.1 Introduction

L2 reading research has progressed remarkably in the last two decades and many issues once neglected are now clear to most researchers and teachers. Studies in foreign language reading have so far looked at a variety of issues in relation to L2 reading comprehension and strategies in very specific terms. A close analysis shows that the following have been very commonly researched and occupy a major place in the L2 reading literature:

-Schemata and activation of background knowledge

-Top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading

-Meta-cognitive awareness usually through "think aloud protocols"

-Reading strategies of poor and skilled readers

-Transfer of L1 strategies into L2 reading

-The effect of different test formats and text types or learner related factors on L2 reading performance

-The effect of reading strategy instruction on L2 reading

-How L1 features facilitate or inhibit success in L2 reading

-Text/topic familiarity and interest

-Rhetorical organization

-Native and non-native differences in relation to reading ability

-Vocabulary knowledge and amount of reading comprehension

The list might get even lengthier, but the common feature of these studies is that they usually focus on one particular aspect of the reading process and tend to provide in-depth knowledge in that domain only; the fact that reading is not simply the sum of sub-skills, but a great deal, appear to have been ignored. Many studies have examined, for example, the role of "text structure" and "interest in the topic" and found conflicting results because of other intervening variables. This might mean that extra-learner variables alone cannot explain the differing levels of comprehension by linguistically equal learners. The learners themselves and their communicative competencies should also be put under scrutiny to get a better understanding of reading comprehension. More importantly, it seems as if research in the area of L2 reading has had a primary mission of focusing on and clarifying specific issues that would help L2 readers better understand/comprehend a text. However, almost no study in the literature has related the sources of difficulty of EFL readers to Communicative Competence: What makes L2 reading (or the text itself) difficult for EFL students? What prevents comprehension or causes miscomprehension to occur while reading authentic texts? Which types of question are more challenging for readers? Which components of CC need to be developed in order to enhance reading comprehension

skills? This study will have a student-centered approach and start up with the belief that better instructional practices should derive their power from the students' needs and their areas of difficulty in dealing with authentic texts.

1.2 Background to the Study

Among the most important skills that EFL students at university level should be equipped with are reading comprehension skills since they are required to read large amounts of material. Research has shown that there is a close relationship between reading skills on the one hand and academic achievement and language development on the other. This might explain why reading, a form of human cognition the ultimate goal of which is comprehension, is very often seen as one of the keys to academic and professional success, and an indispensable skill for second language learners in academic contexts. (Carrell, 1989; Grabe, 1991; Stoller, 1994; and Hacquebord, 1984, cited in Ulijn, 1998). Adamson (1993) also suggests that reading is the most important language skill for high academic achievement, followed by listening comprehension and then writing.

Academic reading comprehension presents particular challenges for students working through the medium of a second or foreign language. Many students usually see reading as a difficult and boring task even in their native languages. Hence it can be understood that the burden of ESL/EFL students is, understandably, twice as much as that of their L1 counterparts since they need to carry out all the academic tasks in a foreign language, which, very often, they are still continuing to learn. Foreign language readers must then make a substantial mental effort to understand texts intended for a native readership (Adamson, 1993). Naturally, they have a great number

of problems in comprehending the readings in their courses due to their lack of necessary language knowledge and skills. However, not enough is known about these students' reading comprehension problems. Research in this area may provide reading instructors and researchers, as well as curriculum developers, with valuable information which will enable them to find ways of improving the comprehension abilities of academic readers.

There is a general agreement that reading involves the interaction of a number of processes, knowledge and abilities. These include, according to Hudson (2000), basic decoding processes such as grapheme recognition, lexical access, phonological representation, and linguistic structure processing, as well as higher order cognitive processes such as the application of background knowledge, processing strategies, text structure understanding and some aspects of vocabulary knowledge. Reading also involves interaction processes such as the application of evaluative skills, use of metacognitive knowledge and self-monitoring. (Hudson, 2000.) Thus, it seems that no single concept can explain the entire reading process, which can only be understood with the help of a more general and broader construct specific to language learning and teaching: Communicative Competence. Just as oral language use can be explained through this competence, reading might also be studied under the light of communicative competence (CC) since it comprises all of the competencies needed to carry out communication, whether it be written or verbal. Focusing on only certain skills such as word recognition, structure processing, activating background knowledge, or increasing awareness of grammar rules is insufficient to develop efficient foreign language readers. CC may also be a guide in teaching reading and

writing skills as well as speaking and listening skills. However, in many EFL contexts, including Turkey, this has not been the case: Communicative competence as a whole is not that often given credit in explaining the comprehension problems of EFL students: As observed by the researcher and some other experienced instructors, most attention goes to grammatical or linguistic competence; namely grammar/syntax and vocabulary. A more comprehensive view of reading might include the integration of all four components of communicative competence into reading. The traditional comprehension questions at a factual level might be taken far beyond literal comprehension. To this end, a better understanding of communicative competence and its application in the teaching of reading skills seem compulsory.

1.3 Reading Courses in the FLE Department, METU

In the Department of Foreign Language Education at METU, in the reading courses, the primary focus has usually been on improving linguistic competence, which includes syntax, morphology, lexicon, semantics and punctuation. The possible rationale behind this practice might be the assumption that linguistic competence explains a vast proportion of a student's reading ability in a foreign language. However, it is very common to see that some newly enrolled freshman students are weak in their comprehension abilities despite the fact that their scores on YDS, Foreign Language Examination for University Candidates which constitutes a part of the nation-wide university entrance examination, are usually from among the top 500, out of a population of 40,000 candidates.

Another critical issue is that, at times, the focus in reading courses might easily shift to literature since the specialty area of some teachers is English literature; thus

they might turn the reading skills class into a literature class where they discuss literary features of texts rather than aiming at the improvement of reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, literary works might also constitute a large portion of the texts studied in section taught by such teachers although these are obviously not the only type of texts the students will encounter in the future.

It has been observed that students encounter reading difficulties when teachers of ELT background ask questions which differ in nature from those to which the students have been previously exposed to these students in their classes and examinations based on authentic texts from English-medium press. Some students are used to only the type of questions that aim at factual information and literal comprehension. Some of them cannot go beyond the sentence level comprehension and cannot integrate information from different parts of the same text. After analyzing their reading exam papers, it is clear that some students get significantly low scores and that at times they cannot compensate for the lack of their vocabulary knowledge sufficient to digest an authentic text.

It appears that there are some other areas of communicative competence (related to reading comprehension), which reading instructors can supplement and improve for their students' undergraduate education. The reasons for students' failure in comprehension or somehow getting the wrong message from a text should be researched and the reading instructors should revise their syllabus accordingly to meet the students' needs and decrease the difficulties of these students.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at exploring the major areas of difficulty in EFL reading comprehension in a diagnostic fashion from a CC perspective. After determining the most common obstacles to successful reading comprehension and the problematic components of CC in reading comprehension, some suggestions will be made as to how to refine the reading course syllabus and teaching practices in the reading courses offered for freshman students in the FLE department at METU. This study will clarify what the freshman students lack in order to be better readers: language deficiency, lack of appropriate reading skills, and unfamiliarity with authentic texts, along with some other relevant problems.

1.5 Research Questions

The questions to which this study will attempt to find answers are the following:

1. What are the common problems that result in reading comprehension failure by EFL students from a communicative competence perspective, as indicated by the exam results?

2. Which areas of communicative competence need the most attention for better comprehension to take place?

3. What can be done to reduce these problems and increase the quality of reading comprehension?

1.6 Assumptions

The main assumption in this study, based on a consensus arrived at a meeting of reading instructors who taught reading classes before and analysis of sample exam papers in the previous semester, is the claim that EFL students in the FLE department

are not only constrained due to insufficiency or lack of linguistic competence, but they are also weak in other competencies (mostly discourse and sociolinguistic competence and at other times strategic competence) as well. As expressed by the reading teachers, they are not aware of how they can use their reading and logical thinking skills as well as critical thinking skills during the comprehension process although they may think they know what the necessary strategies are. They are unaware of how they benefit from the micro and macro level discourse markers. They are hasty in their decisions, and can easily jump to wrong conclusions: that is why sophisticated questions requiring deep thinking can easily be misleading for them. They are also inefficient in using their social and cultural knowledge about the target language culture or the text content. They also cannot visualize the information they get from the text, and this makes the comprehension process even harder.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study tries to diagnose the reading comprehension problems of EFL students from a Communicative Competence perspective and aims at categorizing the skills into four main categories. In this aspect, it has a holistic view over reading problems and attempts to integrate notions of strategic, linguistic, discourse and linguistic competence into the construct of reading.

The reading examinations were used for diagnostic and achievement purposes, and the researcher was interested in knowing where a reader's weaknesses lay, for example, in order to devise appropriate remedial instruction and what stage a reader reached in their reading comprehension development, again for subsequent pedagogical intervention, before they became English teachers. Thus, identifying the

most common problems that cause failure in reading comprehension will serve as a basis for reading instructors in designing their reading syllabuses and also revise their actual teaching practices.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of the study is that some of the reading skills might be overlapping and it is not an easy task to categorize the skills exclusively under certain components of Communicative Competence. Depending on how and for what purpose it is used, a skill might be put under different categories.

Frequently, it is difficult to decide specifically what causes a student to fail in a question since many intervening variables are at work while answering a single question. Furthermore, a question might require readers to use more than one skill. This overlapping nature of reading skills makes it harder to study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Presentation

This section provides a general view as to what reading is and what it actually involves on the part of the learners. Then a brief overview of literature follows, discussing the factors that are at work during reading.

2.1 A Brief History of Reading Research

Both reading research and practice have undergone numerous changes in the last 30 years, and especially after the 1980's, first and second language research have resulted in many new insights for reading instruction. It has become a challenging task to make a synthesis of an array of research and instructional literature in ESL/EFL academic reading, foreign language reading, and second language reading in the public school, as in the case of the USA.

Our understanding of reading, both in terms of theory and practice, has changed considerably in the last three decades. These transitions and changes, both in theory and in practice, are best documented in Silberstein (1987). As Silberstein notes, in the 1960s, reading was seen as a tool for the reinforcement of oral language instruction. Under the influence of Audiolingual methodology, most efforts to "teach" reading were based on the use of reading to study grammar and vocabulary, or to practice pronunciation skills (Silberstein, 1987). This view of reading was later challenged by the evolving views of reading theory.

Through the early to mid-1970s, a number of researchers and teacher trainers argued for the greater importance of reading (e.g., Eskey, 1973; Saville-Troike, 1973). By the mid- to late 1970s, many researchers began to argue for a theory of reading based on work by Goodman (1967, 1985) and Smith (1971, 1979, 1982).

The research and persuasive arguments of Goodman and Smith have come to be known as "the psycholinguistic model of reading." Goodman's research led him to claim that reading is not primarily a process of picking up information from the page in a letter-by-letter, word-by-word manner. Rather, he argued that reading is a selective process. Since it did not seem likely that fluent readers had the time to look at all the words on a page and still read at a rapid rate, it made sense that good readers used knowledge they brought to the reading and then read by predicting information, sampling the text, and confirming the prediction (Grabe, 1991). Smith agreed with Goodman's arguments that reading was an imprecise, hypothesis-driven process. He further argued that sampling was effective because of the extensive redundancy built into natural language as well as the abilities of readers to make the necessary inferences from their background knowledge. In fact, for Smith (and others), the reader contributed more than did the visual symbols on the page.

Two attempts to apply this theory into ESL contexts have been extremely influential on ESL reading theory and instruction from the late 1970s to the present. Clarke and Silberstein (1977) outlined implications for instruction which could be drawn from a psycholinguistic model of reading. Reading was characterized as an active process of comprehending and students needed to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e. g., guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about

the text, skimming for general idea and scanning to find specific information, etc.). For teachers, the goal of reading instruction was to provide students with a range of effective techniques to better comprehend texts—including helping students define goals and strategies for reading, to use prereading activities to enhance conceptual readiness, and to provide students with some strategies to deal with difficult syntax, vocabulary, and organizational structure. It should also be noted that many of these instructional implications still remain as important guidelines though no longer motivated by the psycholinguistic model explanation.

Coady (1979) reinterpreted Goodman's psycholinguistic model into a model which is more applicable to second language learners in particular. He argued that a conceptualization of the reading process requires three components: process strategies, background knowledge, and conceptual abilities. Beginning readers focus on process strategies (e. g., word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge, using only as much textual information as needed for confirming and predicting the information in the text. His implications for teaching are similar to those of Clarke and Silberstein (1977). While the 1970s witnessed a transition from one dominant view of reading to another, the 1980s was a decade in which much ESL reading theory and practice extended Goodman and Smith's perspectives on reading (cf. Bernhardt, 1991). At the same time, second language research began to look more closely at other first language reading research for the insights that it could offer.

2.1.1 Reading and the Reading Process

Most of our current views of second language reading are shaped by research on first language learners. This is true in part because first language research has a longer history, first language student populations are much more stable, cognitive psychology has seen comprehension research as a major domain of their field, and considerable cognitive psychology and educational grant funding is available. For these reasons, first language reading research has made impressive progress in learning about the reading process. It makes good sense, then, for second language researchers and teachers to consider what first language research has to say about the nature of the fluent reading process and the development of reading abilities. A primary goal for ESL reading theory and instruction is to understand what fluent L1 readers do, then decide how best to move ESL students in that developmental direction. A reasonable starting point for this discussion is with definitions of reading.

Smith (1973) claims that "reading involves a trade-off between visual and non-visual information." The more that is already known behind the eyeball, the less visual information is required to identify a letter, a word, or a meaning from the text". He believes that there are two important factors in the reading process: visual information and non-visual information. When visual information from reading material and non-visual information from the reader's linguistic competence and background knowldege are balanced, the purpose of reading is realized. But the more the learner has non-visual information, the less he depends on visual information to comprehend the reading material.

Rumelhart (1977) thinks that reading involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the two. Reader's engagement in the reading process is based on their past experiences, both in learning how to read and also in the ways reading fits into their lives. The readers are influenced by their families, educational and societal communities around them, the school environment and other social and cultural influences.

Goodman defines reading as follows:

> Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses (Goodman, 1970, p.260).

He said that reading is a psycolinguistic guessing game and a repeated process of sampling, predicting, testing and confirming.

As to what reading is or what it involves, Goodman (1984) makes the following remarks:

> Reading is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with a meaning that the reader constructs. There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language as thought (p.60).

lt is well known that simple definitions typically misrepresent complex cognitive processes such as reading. Rather, descriptions of basic knowledge and processes required for fluent reading make a more appropriate starting point. A description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing similar to what Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, (1985); Grabe, (1988b); Hall, White, & Guthrie, (1986); Smith, (1982) also claimed.

Research by Grabe (1991) has shown that fluent reading is *rapid;* the reader needs to maintain the flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections and inferences vital to comprehension. Reading is *purposeful;* the reader has a purpose for reading, whether it is for entertainment, information, research, and so on. Reading for a purpose provides motivation—an important aspect of being a good reader. Reading is *interactive;* the reader makes use of information from his/her background knowledge as well as information from the printed page. Reading is also interactive in the sense that many skills work together simultaneously in the process. Reading is *comprehending;* the reader typically expects to understand what s/he is reading. Unlike many ESL students, the fluent reader does not begin to read wondering whether or not s/he will understand the text. Reading is *flexible;* the reader employs a range of strategies to read efficiently. These strategies include adjusting the reading speed, skimming ahead, considering titles, headings, pictures and text structure information, anticipating information to come, and so on. Finally, reading *develops gradually;* the reader does not become fluent suddenly, or immediately following a reading development course. Rather, fluent reading is the product of long-term effort and gradual improvement.

The preceding general description of fluent reading suggests that reading is very complex, that it takes considerable time and resources to develop, and that it cannot simply be taught in one or two courses. This perspective holds equally well for ESL students who are not already fluent readers in English but who need to be for their academic future.

2.1.2 Important Factors in Reading Process

If one were to break down the various skills involved in reading, a seemingly endless list could be created. Because reading is such a complex process, many researchers attempt to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills (e. g., Carpenter & Just, 1986; Carr & Levy, 1990; Haynes & Carr, 1990; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). The effort to subdivide reading into component skills has led researchers to propose a selection of typical taxonomies as summarized below by Urquart and Weir (1998, p. 90) :

1. **Davies (1968):**

- Identifying word meanings

- Drawing inferences

- Identifying the writer's technique and recognising the mood of the passage

- Finding answers to questions

2. **Lunzer et al. (1979):**

- Word meaning

- Words in context

- Literal comprehension

- Drawing inferences from single and multiple strings

- Interpretation of metaphor

- Finding salient or main ideas

- Forming judgements

3. **Munby (1978):**

- Recognizing the script of a language

- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items

- Understanding explicitly or implicitly stated information

- Understanding conceptual meaning

- Understanding the communicative value of sentences and paragraphs

- Understading relations within a sentence

- Understading relations between parts of texts through lexical cohesion
devices

- Interpreting text by going outside it

- Recognising indicators in discourse

- Identifying the main point of information in discourse

- Distinguishing the main idea from detail

- Extracting salient points to summarise the text or a proposition

- Selective extraction of relevant points from a text

- Basic reference skills

- Skimming

- Scanning

- Transcoding information to diagrams and charts

4. **Grabe (1991, p.377):**

- Automatic recognition skills

- Vocabulary and structural knowledge

- Formal discourse structure knowledge

- Content/world background knowledge

- Synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies

- Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring

The last taxonomy seems to provide some insights into current reading since Grabe (1991) did the latest work and he, in some way, summarized the previous research. The components he came up with are now addressed briefly.

The development of *automatic perceptual/identification skills* is only beginning to be recognized as important in second language reading (McLaughlin, 1990), but they are widely recognized by cognitive psychologists and educational psychologists as central processes in fluent reading (e.g., Adams, 1990; Carr & Levy, 1990; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; Rieben & Perfetti, 1991). In fact, many cognitive psychologists and reading researchers now see the development of automaticity in reading, particularly in word identification skills, as critical to fluent reading (Adams, 1990; Beck & McKeown, 1986; Gough & Juel, 1991; Perfetti, 1991; Stanovich, 1986, 1991).

Automaticity may be defined as occurring when the reader is unaware of the process, not consciously controlling the process, and using little processing capacity (Adams, 1990; Just & Carpenter, 1987; Stanovich, 1990). Many researchers now believe that automatic lexical access is a necessary skill for fluent readers, and many less-skilled readers lack automaticity in lower-level processing. In fact, cognitive psychologists now argue that the lexical component of fluent readers becomes 'encapsulated'; that is, the process of lexical access during reading does not make use of contextual resources (Stanovich, 1990).

Obviously, *Vocabulary and syntactic knowledge* are also critical to reading. One needs only to pick up a newspaper in an unknown language to verify that

background knowledge and predicting are severely constrained by the need to know both structure and vocabulary.

On a less obvious level, knowledge of structure has an important facilitative effect on reading (Carnham, 1985; Perfetti, 1989; Rayner, 1990; Tannenhaus, 1988). In second language contexts, the role of language structure in comprehension has also been supported (Barnett, 1986; Berman, 1984; Devine, 1988; Eskey, 1988; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991).

Likewise, vocabulary knowledge has come to be recognized as a critical feature of reading ability (Koda, 1989; McKeown & Curtis, 1987; Nagy, 1988; Nation & Coady, 1988; Stanovich, 1986; Strother & Ulijn, 1987). In first language reading, researchers have estimated recognition vocabularies of fluent readers to range from 10,000 words to 100,000 words (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Chall, 1987; Nagy & Herman, 1987). Vocabulary discussions in second language reading argue for far lower total numbers of words, often positing 2,000-7,000 words (Coady, 1983; Kyongho & Nation, 1989; Nation, 1990; Swaffar, 1988). The need to read fluently, in a manner similar to a good L1 reader, would seem to require a knowledge of vocabulary more in line with the larger estimates for first language readers (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987; Goulden, Nation, & Read, 1990). The consequence of these arguments is that fluent readers need a sound amount of knowledge of language structure and a large amount of passive vocabulary at recognition level.

Readers need a good knowledge of *formal discourse structure* (formal schemata). There is considerable evidence that knowing how a text is organized influences the comprehension of the text. For example, good readers appear to make

better use of text organization than do poor readers, write better recalls by recognizing and using the same organizational structure as the text studied, and, generally, recall information better from certain types of text organization such as comparison-contrast (Nist & Mealey, 1991; Richgels, McGee, Lomax, & Sheard, 1987). Similar research in second language contexts has replicated the major findings while also revealing interesting specific differences. For example, Carrell (1984) has shown that more specific logical patterns of organization, such as cause-effect, compare-contrast, and problem-solution, improve the task of recalling compared to texts organized loosely around a collection of facts.

   Content and background knowledge (content schemata) also have a major influence on reading comprehension. "Every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well' says Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, and Goetz (1977, p.369). A large body of literature has argued that prior knowledge of text-related information strongly affects reading comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Bransford, Stein, & Shelton, 1984; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Wilson& Anderson, 1986). Similarly, cultural knowledge has been shown to influence comprehension (Carrell, 1984b; Pritchard, 1990; Steffenson & Joag-Dev, 1984). Recent efforts to explore the interaction of formal and content knowledge as they influence comprehension have been made by Roller (1990) and Carrell (1987). In both L1 and L2 contexts, formal and content knowledge play important if somewhat different roles in reading comprehension. Fluent readers not only seek to comprehend a text when they read, they also evaluate the information from the text and compare/ synthesize it with other sources of information/knowledge previously acquired. Thus, *synthesis and*

evaluation skills and strategies are critical components of reading abilities (Grabe, 1991 and 2004). It is also in this context that discussions of "predicting from the text" play a crucial role. Given the real-time constraints of the reading process, fluent readers typically do not use prediction to guess the upcoming words in texts or to access words; rather, prediction helps readers anticipate later text development and the author's perspective with respect to the information presented. In this way, predicting information allows us to evaluate the information; take a position with respect to the author's intentions; and decide whether or not the information is useful. Readers also question the truth value of the information presented. Little research actually exists on how readers evaluate texts; that is, how readers might find texts persuasive, interesting, boring, exciting, and so on, and how these evaluations relate to reading comprehension, recall, formal and content schemata, first language background, and readers' prior expectations.

Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring is the final important component of fluent reading skills. Metacognitive knowledge may be defined as knowledge about cognition and the self-regulation of cognition (Baker & Brown, 1984; Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986). Knowledge about cognition, including knowledge about language, involves recognizing patterns of structure and organization, and using appropriate strategies to achieve specific goals (e.g., comprehending texts, remembering information). As related to reading, this would include recognizing the more important information in a text; adjusting reading rate; using context to sort out a misunderstood segment; skimming portions of the text; previewing headings, pictures, and summaries; using search strategies for finding

specific information; formulating questions about the information; using a dictionary using word-formation and affix information to guess word meanings; taking notes; underlining; summarizing information; and so on.

Monitoring of comprehension involves recognizing problems with information presented in texts or an inability to achieve expected goals (e.g., recognizing an illogical summary or awareness of noncomprehension). Self-regulation strategies would include planning ahead, testing self-comprehension, checking effectiveness of strategies being used, revising strategies being used, and so on. N. Anderson (1991), Barnett (1989), and Cohen (1990) have compiled large lists of reading strategies which combine cognitive strategy use and monitoring. The ability to use metacognitive skills effectively is widely recognized as a critical component of skilled reading. In numerous studies it has been shown that good readers are more effective in using metacognitive skills than less fluent readers. There is also a developmental factor involved, with older readers making better use of metacognitive skills than younger readers. In the last 15 years, there has been considerable research on the role of metacognitive strategies in reading and the feasibility of improving these strategies through direct training and instruction (e. g., Lysynchuk, Pressley, & Vye, 1990; Nist & Mealey, 1991; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McColdrick, & Kurita, 1989). Similarly, second language research has focused attention on the effectiveness of strategy training for improved reading comprehension (e.g., Barnett, 1989; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Cohen, 1990; Kern, 1989; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991).

A "reading components" perspective is a practical and guiding research direction to the extent that such an approach leads to important insights into the reading process and classroom practices. In this respect, it is evident that a component skills approach, at least in the broad sense outlined by researchers, is indeed a useful approach for teachers of reading.

2.2 Current Theories of L2 Reading

This section provides an overview of three main reading models derived from L1 reading studies and most frequently referred to in order to describe the L2 reading process: bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. However, the focus will be on the interactive model of reading, which combines bottom-up processing and top-down processing.

2.2.1 Bottom-up Models

When foreign language readers attempt to read a text with a great number of unfamiliar words, they are likely to approach the text in an isolated way and disregard the context of the whole text. The bottom-up models, or text-driven approach to reading, assume that the reading process starts from decoding the print on a page and continues as the reader decodes and constructs meaning out of the text linearly from the smallest chunks to the largest, and then modifying the prior knowledge on the basis of information provided in the text (Barnett, 1989; Carrell, 1988; Urquarth & Weir, 1998). As also argued by Grabe and Stoller (2002), "bottom-up models suggest that all reading follows a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little interference from the reader's own background knowledge" (p. 32). Thus the emphasis is on small chunks

of text like letters, words, and sentences rather than the overall message of the text as a whole.

Gough's (1972 cited in Urquarth & Weir, 1998) bottom-up model, for example, assumes that the reader begins with letters, converting them into phonemes through decoding. As soon as the reader recognizes the phoneme as a word, he then goes on with the next word. This continues until he recognizes all the words in a sentence, at which point he applies the syntactic and semantic rules to give a meaning to the sentence. Finally, he reads the text aloud. Hence, Gough's reading model describes the process of reading aloud (Urquarth & Weir, 1998).

The bottom-up views of reading are criticized due to their negligence of the reader contribution in the process of meaning construction because they consider reading a matter of decoding words rather than a process of interacting intelligently with the text to comprehend it in its integrity. However, the bottom-up models may help to understand the processes that less-proficient L2 readers go through (Barnett, 1989), and help to detect and treat their reading deficiencies.

2.2.2 Top-down Models

Top-down models emphasize the reader's own interpretation of the text and prior knowledge, or schemata (Anderson & Pearson, 1988), besides the reader's goals and expectations; thus, they are also called reader-driven models (Barnett, 1989). The reader, according to these models, is in a cyclical process of making guesses about the message of the text and checking the text for confirming or refuting them based on his/her prior knowledge or the contextual clues (Goodman, 1968; Urquarth & Weir, 1998). The reader, while doing this, needs to attend only to the general features and

content of the text; therefore, s/he does not have to know all the bits and details contained in the text. In addition, when students make predictions and anticipate content, they are better prepared to make intelligent guesses when they come across unfamiliar words and structures (Barnett, 1989).

In his overview of reading models, Barnett (1989) portrays the theories of Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith as the basis of top-down views of reading which emerged during the early seventies. In explaining Goodman's model of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, Barnett suggests that readers use their sentential and contextual knowledge to compensate for their deficiencies in vocabulary, and go through four processes in reading: predicting the meanings in the text, reading enough of the text, confirming their guesses or correcting themselves in case they are wrong or there is insufficient information in the text. Similar to Goodman's predicting reader, Smith's anticipatory reader combines his prior knowledge and his expectations from a certain text with the learned information from the text (Barnett, 1989). Thus, Goodman and Smith give utmost importance to the reader, namely, to his L1 reading abilities and prior knowledge.

The top-down approach has contributed a great deal to explain the reading process with its emphasis on the reader; nevertheless, it only explains the situation of skillful and fluent L2 readers with a certain level of linguistic proficiency, and it does not give a true picture of the situation of less proficient language learners. In other words, this approach is criticized for its overemphasis on the prediction of meaning at the expense of identifying lexis and grammatical forms (Eskey, 1988; Clark, 1988).

The Interactive Approach to reading, on the other hand, appeared to be a compromise for the dilemma created by bottom-up and top-down approaches.

2.2.3 Interactive Models

For the interactive models of reading, interaction might mean two different concepts: (a) a general interaction between the reader and text; that is, the reader uses both textual information and his/her background information to comprehend the information in the text; and (b) an interaction of both bottom-up and top-down processing working together simultaneously in comprehending a text (Grabe, 1991; Carrel, 1988; Eskey, 1988). In other words, while the reader decodes the text, s/he uses his/her reasoning skills based on his/her background information. Moreover, these two acts interact with each other, and occur simultaneously rather than sequentially (Rumelhart, 1977). As a result, readers have the chance to compensate for deficiencies in one aspect (e.g., vocabulary) by relying more on the other sources (e.g., background information) (Stanovich, 1980). Therefore, good readers combine the knowledge of the language (grammar and vocabulary) and knowledge of the world (background knowledge) through the use of reading strategies (Eskey, 1988; Carrell, 1988).

Several interactive models of reading are mentioned in the field for L1 reading. Rumelhart (1977), acknowledged to be the originator of the interactive approach to reading, suggests that different kinds of information come from various knowledge sources. Mentioning several study findings, he concludes that syntactical, semantic, lexical and orthographic knowledge influence the reader in comprehending a text. "Thus, all of the various sources of knowledge, both sensory and nonsensory, come

together at one place and the reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all the knowledge sources" (Rumelhart, 1977, p.588).

Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) propose a semantic model of reading comprehension explaining how semantic structures or propositions are processed for comprehension. According to this model, the reader recreates another text through classifying propositions of the author as relevant or irrelevant, which is seen as the key in text comprehension. Thus, the reader's goals in reading a text have utmost importance since they direct the way the text is transformed into a new text.

Stanovich (1980), along the same lines as Rumelhart, suggests that reading comprehension occurs on the basis of information flowing simultaneously from various sources, as mentioned above. However, he calls his model an 'interactive-compensatory' one, meaning that a weakness in one area of knowledge can be compensated for by strength in another area. Practically speaking, he means that two readers might comprehend a text equally well using their strengths in different areas of knowledge.

Interactive models of reading offer us a more direct description of the reading process of L2 learners. Eskey (1988) suggests that the automatic identification of lexical units and grammatical forms activates the schemata of L2 reader to employ high-level skills to comprehend and interpret a text. Thus, low-level skills are necessary to use high-level skills. "Developing readers must therefore work at perfecting both their bottom-up recognition skills and their top–down interpretation strategies. Good reading – that is, fluent and accurate reading – can result only from a constant interaction between these processes" (Eskey, 1988, p. 96). Eskey sees

language knowledge as a kind of schema, which is activated automatically by proficient learners but not others. In other words, information provided by both bottom-up and top-down processing require background knowledge; therefore, none can be neglected at the expense of the other. Instead, information coming from both sources need to be used interactively, contributing to each other, and ultimately leading to reading comprehension.

Bernhardt (1991) identifies three text-driven (bottom-up) and three reader-driven (top-down) factors to explain the L2 reading process. She lists text-driven factors as word recognition (understanding word meanings), phonemic/graphemic decoding (identifying words with their spelling or pronunciations), and syntactic feature recognition (recognizing grammatical relationships among parts of a sentence). Reader-driven factors are intra-textual perception (relating the statements in a text), metacognition (awareness of reader's own strategies during reading), and prior knowledge (reader's background knowledge related to the text). These factors altogether contribute to successful L2 reading. Bernhardt suggests that text-driven (bottom-up) and reader-driven (top-down) processes start interacting as linguistic competence increases, though they appear separately at early stages of linguistic competence.

As Bernhardt points out, language proficiency plays an important role in L2 reading in that beginning L2 readers focus on lower-level processing strategies (e.g., word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge; that is, they use textual information to confirm and predict the information in the text. Similarly,

Carrell (1988) emphasizes the importance of language proficiency for successful L2 reading. Limited control over language may lead the reader to heavily rely on background knowledge, which may cause short-circuit, i.e. "reading that does not end with meaning" (Goodman, 1988, p.17). Therefore, in order to read in an L2, a threshold level of L2 linguistic ability must first be achieved.

The importance of a linguistic threshold for L2 readers is obvious when it comes to using effective reading strategies because a limited level of proficiency hinders comprehension, and may force the L2 readers to use only bottom-up or only top-down reading strategies (Clarke, 1988; Devine, 1988). However, Devine argues that linguistic threshold is not only related to lexis and grammar knowledge but also to the nature of background knowledge and text. In other words, it depends on the types of the texts and the amount of background knowledge readers bring with them as they read.

Therefore, another key factor in L2 reading within the interactive theory is background knowledge or schemata (Urquhart & Weir, 1998), which is defined as "a reader's existing concepts about the world" (Barnett, 1989, p. 42). Carrell (1983) argues that native speakers utilize top-down and bottom-up processes, and nonnative speakers do not process a text like native speakers; instead, they process the literal side of the text without making the necessary connections between the text and the relevant background knowledge.

Schema theory for L2 reading suggests that readers need to activate prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read, and that this activated knowledge facilitates the reading process (Carrell, 1988). Thus, it is agreed that foreign language

students need more than word meanings in order to understand a text (Davis & Lyman-Hager, 1997). As Davis (1989) found in her study, subjects who received background information before reading did better in understanding of a literary text.

Finally, reading strategies have an important role in realizing successful reading according to interactive models of L2 reading. Strategies can be defined as "abilities that are potentially open to conscious reflection and use" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 17), or more specifically as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Because foreign language learners are also readers of their L1, they would probably transfer their available reading strategies when reading L2 texts. Once they reach a certain threshold level, learners can transfer L1 reading strategies, and combine them with newly-acquired ones to comprehend the text better. There is evidence in the literature (Barnett, 1989; Carrell, 1988) supporting the claim that using reading strategies enhances reading comprehension. Good reading strategies enable L2 readers to exploit the resources they have for successful reading comprehension. In other words, reading strategies trigger the background knowledge or the knowledge of the language related to the text being read.

To sum up, an interactive approach to reading provides a more developed description of L2 reading because it considers the contributions of both lower-level processing skills and higher-level comprehension/reasoning skills as well as processing skills by means of good reading strategies. Thus, the L2 reader needs to acquire a certain level of L2 proficiency in order to exploit good reading strategies.

That is to say, proficient readers are able to utilize both bottom-up and top-down processing, and successful comprehension is the result of an interaction and collaboration between both types of processing (Eskey, 1988; Bernhardt, 1991).

2.3 Reading Strategy Research

This section briefly discusses the relevant research done on reading strategies.

2.3.1 Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension

Because numerous studies have investigated strategies used by L2 learners, before proceeding to an overview of these studies, it would be beneficial to provide the reader with a conceptual framework in order to allow for consistency in the terminology used throughout this paper. Although a number of studies have attempted to conceptualize the notion of strategies used by language learners, Oxford (1990) particularly offers a useful and comprehensive classification scheme of the various strategies used by learners. Within the broader context of reading strategies, the following six strategies can more appropriately be referred to as substrategies. These strategies are cognitive, memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

Cognitive strategies are used by learners to transform or manipulate the language. In more specific terms, thse might include note taking, formal practice with the specific aspects of the target language such as sounds and sentence structure, summarizing, paraphrasing, predicting, analyzing, and using context clues.

Techniques that help the learner to remember and retrieve information are referred to as *memory strategies*. These include creating mental images through

grouping and associating, semantic mapping, using keywords, employing word associations, and placing new words into a context.

Compensation strategies include skills such as inferencing, guessing while reading, or using reference materials such as dictionaries.

Metacognitive strategies are behaviors undertaken by the learners to plan, arrange, and evaluate their own learning. Such strategies include directed attention and self-evaluation, organization, setting goals and objectives, seeking practice opportunities, and so forth. In the context of reading, selfmonitoring and correction of errors are further examples of metacognitive strategies.

Learners also use *affective strategies*, such as self-encouraging behavior, to lower anxiety, and encourage learning. It might also include the ability to deal with difficult texts soberly and without any sign of panic.

Lastly, *social strategies* are those that involve other individuals in the learning process and refer to cooperation with peers, questioning, asking for correction, and feedback; for example, while reading, a student may ask another individual for feedback about his/her reading responses.

It is important to recognize that the above strategies can be used to facilitate learning, or can be used to facilitate comprehension. For example, a learner can employ the memory strategy of grouping in order to learn vocabulary words more quickly and more effectively. Similarly, grouping can also be used to facilitate the understanding and meaning of words. Furthermore, such strategies will vary depending on the language area or skill to be mastered. In other words, task requirements help determine strategy choice; learners would not use the same strategy

for writing an essay as they would for engaging in informal conversation in a second language.

2.3.2 Reading Strategies of Successful and Unsuccessful Learners

Since much of the research in the area of reading strategies has stemmed from first language studies in reading, a review of both the major research in first language and second language learning is included. In many first language studies, the use of various strategies has been found to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension (Baker and Brown, 1984; Brown, 1981; Palinscar and Brown, 1984). Some studies have also investigated the reading strategies used by successful and unsuccessful language learners. In a second-language study, Hosenfeld (1977) used a think-aloud procedure to identify relations between certain types of reading strategies and successful or unsuccessful second language reading. The successful reader, for example, kept the meaning of the passage in mind while reading, read in broader phrases, skipped inconsequential or less important words, and had a positive self-concept as a reader. The unsuccessful reader on the other hand, lost the meaning of the sentences when decoded, read in short phrases, pondered over inconsequential words, seldom skipped words as unimportant, and had a negative self-concept.

Block (1986) also used a think-aloud procedure in her study of non-proficient readers from which she was able to obtain information about four characteristics, namely integration, recognition of aspects of text structure, use of general knowledge, personal experiences and associations, and response in extensive versus reflexive modes which differentiated successful from less successful, non-proficient readers. In the reflexive mode, readers related affectively and personally, directed their attention

away from the text and toward themselves, and focused on their own thoughts and feelings, rather than on information from the text. In addition, they tended to respond in the first or second person. In the extensive mode, the reader's focus was on understanding the ideas of the author, not on relating the text to themselves. They tended to respond in the third person. Among the non-proficient readers. Block investigated one group which she designated as "integrators", integrated information, were generally aware of text structure, responded in an extensive mode by dealing with the message conveyed by the author, and monitored their understanding consistently. The "non-integrators" on the other hand, failed to integrate, did not recognize text structure, and were more reflexive in that they relied much more on personal experiences. Overall, the "non-integrators" made less progress in developing their reading skills and demonstrated less success after one semester in college.

2.4 Sources of Difficulty in L2 Reading

As can be seen from the entire preceding discussion about the definition of reading, factors influencing reading, and the various strategies of readers, the difficulties stem from a multitude of reasons and in no way are they easy to identify and categorize into groups. From a general overview, it can be seen that the problems usually originate from the lack of sufficient competence in L2 and poor and wrong use of skills by L2 readers. Apart from these learner factors, the features of the text such as content, length, linguistic complexity and organizational pattern also affect the quality of comprehension as indicated by many researchers. As the above discussions have already dealt with readers' strategies, this section will focus on language proficiency, lexical knowledge, background knowledge, transfer of L1 skills, transfer from L1

knowledge, coherence, cohesion and textual organization of texts, metadiscourse awareness, and the ability to draw inferences. Furthermore, some relevant issues will be discussed in relation to how they can shed light on L2 readers' difficulties. Much of the research attempted to explain the strategies of successful readers, not the unsuccessful ones. In other words, the literature does not offer enough insight into the poor readers' difficulties. Thus, it can be inferred that the characteristics of successful readers are not available in poor readers.

Many studies focused on the relationship between proficiency level (generally referring to grammatical competence) and performance in reading. The main research usually focused on two opposite poles: Is poor reading a 'language problem' (linguistic) or a 'reading problem' (strategies)? A multitude of research has been done and results show that both are at work depending on context and many other intervening variables. Yorio (1971) claims that reading problems are largely due to imperfect knowledge of language and language interference in the reading process. It is suggested that reading involves knowledge of language, ability to predict and remember the previous cues and ability to make associations between different cues previously selected. The results of the work by Padron and Waxman (1988) reveal that besides the students' level of English (L2), the use of the wrong cognitive strategies interferes with their level of comprehension. A study, which directly confronts the question of whether reading in a second language depends on reading skills or on the level of proficiency, is that of Carrell (1991). This experimental study claims that both factors directly affect reading ability, which is a conclusion similar to the one reached, in a later work, by Bernhardt and Kamil (1995), who also believed that language

ability is a major determinant of successful reading. When there is a language deficiency, readers are not able to make use of syntactic, contextual, semantic and discoursal clues (Haynes, 1993; Devine, 1984). The research carried out by Lee and Schallert (1997) holds that an advanced level of proficiency in the L2 (a threshold level) is required to be able to make effective use of reading strategies employed in the mother tongue. However, Bamford and Day (1998) criticized similar work on the grounds that the texts used were of high linguistic level and elementary level readers were at a disadvantage.

Researchers in the L2 reading area have found that, in general, more proficient readers exhibit the following types of reading behavior:

• Overview text before reading

• Employ contextual clues such as titles, subheadings and diagrams

• Look for more important information while reading and pay greater attention to it than other information

• Attempt to relate important points in text to one another in order to understand the text as a whole

• Activate and use prior knowledge to interpret text

• Reconsider and revise hypothesis about the meaning of text based on text content

• Infer information from the text and determine the meaning of the words unknown

• Monitor text comprehension

- Identify main ideas and use strategies to remember text like paraphrasing, summarizing and making notes

- Understand relations between parts of text and recognize text structure

- Change reading strategies when comprehension is perceived not to be proceeding smoothly

- Evaluate the qualities of text, and reflect on and process each part at intervals

- Anticipate or plan for the use of knowledge gained from the reading (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

Singhal (2001) found that there is a strong and direct relationship between reading strategies, metacognitive awareness and reading proficiency. Successful readers appear to use more strategies than less successful readers and also appear to use them more frequently. Better readers also have an enhanced metacognitive awareness of their own use of strategies and what they know, which in turn leads to greater and improved reading ability and also proficiency in the language.

Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998) identified vocabulary knowledge as "a critical component of reading comprehension and claimed that it is an important predictor of reading ability. Coady (1993) asserted that readers with better vocabulary knowledge are generally believed to be better 'comprehenders'. Most current L1 and L2 reading theories maintain that processing at the word level is central to successful reading and that lack of skill at recognizing words is almost always a predictor of difficulties in developing reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1986; Grabe, 1991). In addition, automatic word identification is now considered as one of the most striking differences between skilled and less skilled readers. As Perfetti (1995) describes it, "fast context-

free word identification and rich context dependent text understanding are the hallmarks of skilled reading".

Closely related to the importance attached to lexical development in L2 reading is the notion of a 'lexical threshold' (Yorio, 1971; Devine, 1987). It claims that reading ability and strategy use are dependent upon L2 proficiency and that below a certain threshold in L2 proficiency, comprehension processes used by readers in L1 cannot be used as effectively in L2 reading. For some researchers like Laufer (1992), lexical level in L2 is a better predictor of reading competence than the reader's general reading ability. However, some others, like Anderson (1994) and Mott (1981), claim that L1 reading ability rather than competence in L2 determines a reader's capacity to read in L2. Similarly, the failure in L2 reading is viewed as directly attributable to poor reading ability in L1. A more current and well balanced viewpoint today is that it is extremely difficult to solve the question of the extent to which reading is simply a function of general language ability and the extent to which it is a specific cognitive skill, more dependent on general background knowledge and on the use of text strategies than on linguistic knowledge and decoding skills. Well-known scholars in the field such as Alderson and Urquhart (1984); Silberstein (1987); Devine (1989); Eskey (1988); and Coady (1993) – also agree on a balanced and critical interaction between language proficiency on the one hand and reasoning and reading ability, on the other, as an explanation for reading problems in a foreign language . Thus they take the view that second language readers must reach a certain level in L2 before they can effectively read in the second language.

Lack of appropriate schema or background knowledge has also been proved to be an obstacle to L2 readers' comprehension of authentic texts. According to schema–theoretic view (Anderson and Pearson (1984), reading is a top-down and bottom up interactive process and readers' background knowledge plays a significant role in comprehension. Existing knowledge interacts with new knowledge in comprehending a text. Following Schema Theory, a number of studies have aimed at demonstrating the importance of background knowledge in L2 reading. Some studies find that a match between background knowledge presupposed by the text and that possessed by the readers leads to a better comprehension than a mismatch (Johnson, 1981). Other studies show that providing students with background knowledge facilitates learning and understanding of unfamiliar texts (Johnson, 1982). Chan (2003) found that both background knowledge and language proficiency affect L2 reading and he further claims that background knowledge is more significantly beneficial to low proficiency readers than high proficiency readers. He adds that background knowledge is less important than language proficiency in L2.

Reading in L2 is not a monolingual event since second language readers usually have access to their mother tongue (L1) during the reading process, and many readers use it as a strategy, one of which is mental translation, to comprehend an L2 text. Kern (1994) studied the role of mental translation as a cognitive strategy in L2 reading comprehension process using verbal report interviews. He found out that this strategy was frequently used to understand L2 text and seemingly served the functional purpose of facilitating the construction and conservation of meaning; it was called on especially when the readers needed to respond to specific obstacles to comprehension

such as unfamiliar words and structures. Through their study of mental translation in L1, Upton and Lee-Thompson (2001) conclude that the role of the L1 goes far beyond merely serving as linguistic "decoder ring". In fact, they claimed, the use of L1 by L2 readers to help them cope with word and sentence level problems, confirm comprehension, predict text structure and content as well as monitor text characteristics and reading behavior, supports a sociocultural view of language as a tool for thought. They also verified the idea of Kern (1994) proving that the difficulty in thinking about difficult concepts and ideas in an L2 places an extra burden on memory and comprehension processes, that is why L2 readers switch to their L1 to think about what they are reading. However, the higher the proficiency was, the lower the amount of cognitive reliance on L1. Likewise, supportive use of L1 decreased as the proficiency level increased and then leveled off.

Another source of difficulty or influence on a reader's ability to acquire information from L2 text is the way the text content is organized and explained — in other words, how coherent a text is, and also how skilled the reader is in seeing the organizational patterns in different genres of L2 text.

The concept of coherence has been used to describe the kind of textual organization that facilitates the reader's task. Coherence is brought to text by the readers who rely on their world knowledge when perceiving the underlying relationships that make up the constituents of a text (Ulijn & Salager-Meyer, 1998). Van Dijk (1977) identifies two types of coherence: global (macro level) and local (micro level) coherence. The former has to do with the overall structure and order of propositions in a text; the latter being related to the inter-sentential relations. He

claims that coherence also depends on the readers' view of the 'textual world', which includes extralinguistic elements like the writer's intention, the nature of audience addressed, the relationship that exists between the reader and the writer.

Research has shown that skilled readers are better able to fill gaps left by deleting cohesive links in a text than less skilled readers, and that both good and poor readers found this task easier in narratives than in expository texts (Maclean and Chapman, 1989). Salager-Meyer (1994) was able to show that textual/structural variables operate differently depending on the extent of the reader's background knowledge and linguistic competence, and that variables such as exposure to similar reading material in both L1 and L2 , background knowledge and L2 competence outweigh the importance of such structural variables. Furthermore, McKeown et al (1992) have demonstrated that greater textual coherence can compensate for some knowledge gaps, and that background knowledge is most useful if a text is coherent enough to allow the reader to see the connections between the information in the text and the reader's previous knowledge. In their study on the role of interest and text structure, Spooren and Hoeken (1998) concluded that the effect of structure on the reading process was much more noticeable than that of interest. They also claimed that text structure is an important support to an L2 reader to learn about relatively uninteresting (boring) as well as interesting topics.

Clyne (1991) argues that the discourse pattern employed in academic texts are culturally determined and that the broad organization of texts produced by English speaking scholars differs from texts produced by, lets say, German scholars. Influenced by the ideas of background knowledge, Wallace (1992) supports that since

discourses are socially determined and culture-specific, readers from different socio-cultural backgrounds from that of the writer may find the meaning of even apparently simple texts obscure. This might mean that L2 readers will automatically have somewhat more difficulty reading and comprehending a text in the L2.

Fox (1994) and Mauranen (1993) both stress the existence and also significance of cultural variations in a global world in which mastery of discourse conventions seems to be one of the "sine-qua-non"'s of performance on the international academic scene. As summarized by Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998), there is enough evidence that native culture affects the discourse of texts written for academic and professional purposes. That is why L2 readers in an academic setting will have to deal with such cultural difference in reading an academic authentic text in the foreign language.

Language skills may not be the only limiting factor in L2 reading comprehension as seen in many studies mentioned. Recent research has shown that text topics do interact with gender differences in L2 reading (Brantmeier, 2002).Text content may increase the L2 reader's burden at the intermediate level of instruction. Brantmeir (2003) found out that lack of topic familiarity interfered with L2 reading comprehension and that low levels of enjoyment and interest factors did not prevent performance on written recall tasks. She commented that topic familiarity was important, but enjoyment and interest in the topic mattered very little. She concluded that non-linguistic factors such as gender, passage content, and topic familiarity may increase the L2 reader's burden.

Another crucial area of problem lies in the ability to make inferences, differentiate between literal and figurative language and see the implications not overtly stated. To understand a passage, it is often necessary to understand not only the literal meaning of the text, but what it implies and means as a whole piece of writing. Some inexperienced L2 readers may not grasp the implications and may just let them go unnoticed. Knowledge of grammar helps readers understand sentences, but this is not sufficient to understand the overall message intended by the writer. Some students have the misconception that if they understand all the parts of a passage, they can automatically understand the whole. Many L2 readers are not knowledgeable about the daily life, school life, ways of thinking, patterns of discourse in the target language countries like England and the USA; this might result in comprehension failure. Readers who do not have sufficient cultural and social competence in English-speaking cultures may not understand certain meanings or may misunderstand them because they interpret meanings using their own cultural and social assumptions and frame of reference.

Inferencing involves the mental process of recognizing a text, or integrating ideas from various parts of a text in order to figure out and construct an appropriate message from the propositional content of the text (Thorndyke, 1973). According to Oakhill and Garnham (1988) and Chikalanga (1991), a text is no more than a collection of words and paragraphs until a reader draws inferences. Winne et al (1993, p.53) claim that 'inferencing is the cornerstone of reading comprehension', with 'even the simplest type of literal comprehension' demanding 'that we engage in inferencing'. As most of what is in a text is implicit, understanding implied meanings presupposes

an understanding of explicit meanings and the ability to distinguish main ideas crucially depends on skills such as identifying relations between parts of a text (Oakhill and Garnham, 1988). An ideal L2 reader makes use of syntactic, semantic, and discoursal clues in the texts, in addition to identifying and activating background knowledge which brought to bear on the propositions of the text, which are structurally linked and divided into semantic units (Rumelhart, 1977). Since inferencing involves a set of different skills and processes, failure in any component may hinder the inferencing process or result in drawing inappropriate or faulty inferences.

Another relevant point to consider is the issue of 'metadiscourse' in reading. The interaction between the reader and writer is known as metadiscourse and it aims to help readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes towards the text (Vande-Kopple, 1997). In L2 instructional contexts, it has been claimed that an awareness of metadiscourse is particularly useful in helping non-native speakers of English with the difficult task of grasping the writer's stance over an issue when reading challenging authentic materials. Bruce (1989) suggests that this ability enables non-native readers to better follow the line of reasoning especially in argumentative texts and results in a better global comprehension. Crismore (1989) believes that metadiscourse can promote critical thinking, as readers are able to formulate their own opinions and compare them to those of the writer. In her study of metadiscourse in ESP reading, Camiciottoli (2003) supported the idea that awareness of metadiscourse can have a positive influence on comprehension. As an instructional implication, she suggested that ESL readers should be given special instruction on how to benefit from

metadiscourse markers and that students should be encouraged to practice how to look for hedges, boosters, and first person pronouns.

One established view of the problems faced by both second language readers and listeners takes the following form: Weaker second language learners worry about not understanding each word of the input. They focus their attention at word level and this occupies much working memory capacity, preventing them from building the words into higher-level meaning. There is, in fact, research against and in favor of this argument. Gernsbacher (1990) suggests that it is a characteristic of less skilled readers that they build small-scale units of meaning and are unable to integrate these units into larger ones. Clarke (1980) also takes the view that the attention of lower-level readers is so focused upon decoding that they are unable to transfer into L2 the kind of higher-level processing that comes naturally to them in the native language. Cummins (1979) advances a similar 'threshold' theory that a minimum language competence is necessary before effective use of higher processes can be achieved. However, not all researchers are in agreement. Stanovich (1980) adopts a very different view. He proposes that the relationship between top-down and bottom-up information is regulated by an 'interactive compensatory' mechanism. He argues that when a message is degraded for some reason like bad handwriting, readers automatically compensate by relying more heavily than normal on contextual clues. Likewise, Perfetti (1985) believes that weaker L1 readers make considerable use of contextual clues and that their problems derive mainly from slower access to word meanings because of their inability to decode inaccurately. They use higher-level information for compensation purposes.

2.5 Communicative Competence and Reading

This section discusses the concept of Communicative Competence and how it is related to reading skills.

2.5.1 Definition of Communication

Communication is defined as

> The exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals… (it) involves the continuous evaluation and negotiation of meaning on the part of the participants" as well as " a reduction of uncertainty" (Canale,1983, p.4).

According to Canale (1983), communication has the following characteristics: it

a) is a form of social interaction

b) involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity

c) takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts

d) is carried out under limiting psychological and other constraints

e) always has a purpose

f) involves authentic language

g) is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes

It is these characteristics that gave way to the birth of the term "Communicative Competence (CC)", which later formed the basis and rationale for the Communicative Approach in language teaching profession.

2.5.2 Communicative Competence

For the past three decades, language-teaching professionals and researchers have emphasized the role of communicative competence and the appropriate means to effectively use it in a classroom context. This emphasis has developed from theories of

language that view language use as a primary component that must be addressed in studies of language acquisition, teaching and assessment (Hudson, 2000).

Communicative competence was first proposed by Hymes (1972) and Campbell and Wales (1970) as an alternative to the strong view posited by Chomsky that linguistic competence was limited only to knowledge of grammatical rules. Communicative competence perspectives, in contrast, view the role played by context of discourse beyond sentential constructions as essential to any understanding of competence and performance. Thus models of communicative competence have broadened the view of what "knowledges" are necessary in order to use a language (Bachman and Savignon, 1986; Cunningham, 1996). The 70's saw linguists and socio-linguists pushing for language classrooms to center on teaching communicative competence. Widdowson (1979) argued that focusing on form over the potential that language has in use is irrelevant if the end result is knowledge that can neither be accessed nor applied in communication, an argument which has been repeated often since then (Canale, 1983; Cook ,1989; Ellis, 1990; Morrow, 1979; Sinclair and Renouf, 1988; Spolsky, 1985; Widdowson, 1989).

The lack of a clear-cut approach to incorporating communicative competence in the classroom (Hadley, 1988) and in testing (Bachman, 2000) thirty years later underlines the difficulty in defining it.

Current models of communicative competence include knowledge of language functions and language contexts as well as knowledge of grammar. The frameworks that have evolved over the years include grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence (Canale and Swain,

47

1980). According to Bachman (1990), communicative competence consists of two distinct components: organizational and pragmatic. Organizational competence includes grammatical competence and textual competence, pragmatic competence involves illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence, each encompassing finer aspects.

Referring to Canale and Swain's model of CC, Spolsky (1989) and Widdowson (1989) argue that knowing the grammar of a language is irrelevant if the speaker is ignorant to the rules of use. Coulthard (1985) argues that correct interpretation is essential in any act of communication, whether it is the interpretation of the sender's message or the interpretation of the receiver's knowledge. In short, CC involves more than knowledge of the language's structure (Cunningham, 1996).

2.5.3 Components of Communicative Competence

Canale's (1983) description of communication led him to develop just such a framework that has been widely adopted up to the present day. According to this model (Table 1), CC is composed of the previously mentioned four components.

Table 1 Components of Communicative Competence

Type of competence	Definition
Grammatical Competence	Refers to the extent that mastery of the language code has occurred, including vocabulary knowledge, word formation, syntax, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics

Table 1 continued

Sociolinguistic Competence	Refers to mastery of the sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse; "the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately… depending on the contextual factors". For example, the status of participants, the purpose of the communication and the conventions associated with the context
Discourse Competence	Refers to the mastery of "how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text" suitable to the genre; includes use of cohesion and coherence
Strategic Competence	Refers to the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies we employ during breakdown in communication or when we lack any of the competencies to communicate effectively; also used to enhance the effectiveness of communication

2.5.3.1 Grammatical (Linguistic) Competence

Grammatical competence refers to sentence-level grammatical forms, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactical and phonological features of a language and to make use of those features to interpret and form words and sentences. One can demonstrate grammatical competence not by stating a rule but by using a rule in the interpretation, expression, or negotiation of meaning (Savignon, 2002).

Grammatical competence includes features and rules of language including vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics (Canale, 1983).

2.5.3.2 Sociolinguistic (Sociocultural) Competence

Sociocultural competence, a broader view of what Canale and Swain (1980) identified as sociolinguistic competence, extends well beyond linguistic forms and is an inter-disciplinary notion having to do with the social rules of language use. It requires an understanding of the "social context" in which language is used: the roles of participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction. Participants in multicultural communication are sensitive not only to the cultural meanings attached to the language itself but to social conventions concerning language use, such things as taking turns, appropriateness of content, nonverbal language and tone. These conventions influence how messages are interpreted by language users. In addition to cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity is essential. It also includes a willingness to engage in an active negotiation of meaning along with a willingness to suspend judgment and take into consideration the possibility of cultural differences in conventions of use. Together these features might be subsumed under the term "cultural flexibility" or "cultural awareness" (Savignon, 2002).

Appropriateness of utterances in social contexts refers to both appropriateness of form and appropriateness of meaning. Appropriateness of meaning concerns the extent to which particular communicative functions (commanding, complaining, and inviting), attitudes, (politeness, formality, anger, encouragement) and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation. Appropriateness of form concerns the extent to which

a given meaning (including communicative functions, attitudes, and ideas) is represented in a verbal and/or non-verbal form that is proper in a given sociolinguistic context (Canale, 1983).

2.5.3.3 Strategic Competence

The coping strategies that language users employ in unfamiliar contexts, with constraints arising from imperfect knowledge of rules, or such impediments to their application as fatigue or distraction, are represented as strategic competence. The effective use of coping strategies is important for communicative competence in all contexts and distinguishes highly effective communicators from those who are less so. (Savignon, 2002)

Canale (1983) asserts that strategic competence is also used to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberately soft and slow speech for rhetorical effect) besides its use for compensation purposes.

2.5.3.4 Discourse Competence

Discourse competence is concerned not with isolated words or phrases but the interconnectedness of a series of utterances or written words or phrases to form a text, a meaningful whole. The text might be any genre: a poem, an e-mail message, a weather forecast, a telephone conversation or a novel. Two important concepts in discourse competence are cohesion and coherence. Text coherence is the relation of all sentences or utterances in a text to a single global proposition. The establishment of a global meaning, or topic, for a whole poem, e-mail message, sportscast, telephone conversation or a novel is an integral part of both expression and interpretation and makes possible the interpretation of the individual sentences that make up the text.

Local connections or structural links between individual sentences provide cohesion and these are usually at the surface level (Savignon, 2002).

According to Canale (1983), two general comments should be made about the components of CC. First, the four areas of competence distinguished serve only to illustrate what CC 'minimally' includes. The question of 'how' these components interact with one another is not made clear. The second is that this framework is a modular, or compartmentalized one, not single or global factor.

The stress in communicative perspectives on language use reflects an emphasis on the importance of viewing language in context. As Savignon (1991) noted, communicative language teaching embraces both the goals and the processes of learning, thus providing a focus on interaction and language acquisition. This perspective of reading and comprehension as active and interactive is consistent with the notion that comprehension models need to incorporate both rules and strategies (Van Dijk, 1985). For him, strategies are applied to rules in order to reach an adequate text interpretation, and strategies are defined, in part, in terms of readers' purpose and determined need. Thus the end goal of the reading process will determine what strategies are applied to which rules in order to determine such reflections of ability as depth of processing or time spent in reading. Current research has come to view ability as variable and highly dependent on context and purpose, as Savignon (1991) suggested. Thus from a communicative competence framework, it is important to recognize that a language learner should be expected to demonstrate the ability and knowledge to apply reading skills to a task in purposeful sociocultural contexts.

As noted before, reading models have changed over the years. Currently, however, researchers agree that reading is interactive and compensatory (Stanovich, 1980). As with language in general, reading is not just the sum of discrete skills associated with reading act such as skimming, scanning, and reading for main ideas or guessing from context. What is clear from the research is that skills are difficult to define in practice (Snow and Lohman, 1993). Skills appear to cover wide bands of overlapping abilities. These abilities usually go hand in hand with overall language ability and range from local text recognition to and processing to broader text interpretation and use strategies (Hudson, 1996). Thus, it is plausible to have a communicative competence perspective on reading ability.

Since the reading process also involves a form of written communication between the author of a text and the reader, CC can be integrated into the reading ability. Savignon (2002) points out that the essence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence. She also adds that the area of concern of CLT is not exclusively 'face to face' communication. The principles of CLT apply equally well to reading and writing, which involve readers and writers as agents of communication in the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning.

The era in which the researchers looked for problems and difficulties in either text itself or the language learner only is now over. It is a shared knowledge that reading is an interactive process and requires analysis and interpretation in multiple and interactive ways. CC and CLT should be the guiding concepts or frameworks to

analyze and overcome reading difficulties and shape the activities in and the nature of reading classes.

2.6 Communicative Assessment of Reading

Current language teaching methodology views language use as a communicative and interactive process, and takes the notion of Communicative Competence (CC) as its starting point. Since the development of CC is the main objective for teaching, determining what we teach and how we teach, it would appear that a model of CC would also help us identify assessment objectives and testing techniques.

From the CC perspective, it is important to address academic reading as a meaning-based activity that is purpose and comprehension-driven. Reading is motivated by the reader's particular purpose and propelled by increasing comprehension of the texts. Further, given that language is embedded in contexts and tasks, academic reading assessment should focus on contexts and purposes and address narrow language abilities as they emerge from the local context. Whether it involves primary school children or university students, it seems clear that most comprehension is linked to a purpose, and it is thus important to examine reading within the context of that purpose.

In addressing the context and purpose issues in reading, Hill and Parry (1992, cited in Hudson) argue against an autonomous model of reading that 'treats reading as an autonomous skill that is independent of other factors and transferable across all kinds of texts' (p.444). On the contrary, they emphasize the social nature of the reading process in which both reader and writer are involved in an exchange.

According to Bennet (1993, as cited in Hudson, 1996), a reader's ability is not a uniform construct, in that reading performance will vary depending on such factors as task demand, purpose, and knowledge. Believing that there is a need for balancing general and context specific views of ability since specialized and general knowledge operate together, he adds: "Whereas general skills in the absence of a rich domain-specific knowledge base are ineffectual, a domain-specific knowledge base without general skills may only function effectively with formulaic problems' (p.7-8).

Hudson (1996) lists six implications from his research as to how communicative assessment of reading ability should be carried out:

1- Reading assessment should be able to go beyond the multiple choice test technique to be able to fully reflect and represent the nature of the real world reading tasks. One reason for this is that examinees cannot be made to apply knowledge which they acquire from the text by reading and to restructure the information they confront in a text. The second is that, as Bennet (1993) pointed out, in some ways tests comprised of selected-response items appear to assume that some skills can be separated into smaller units and isolated from applied contexts. However, skills overlap and are applied in particular contexts depending, on among other things, reading purpose.

2- There may still be a need to incorporate multiple-choice or other selected response formats in order to balance general and context-specific tasks. There is a clear need to measure the underlying reading competence of the examinees. It is important to assess both comprehension ability and the application of that comprehension.

3- Comprehension does not take place in a vacuum. Comprehension involves the application of multiple skills and abilities in carrying out a task or tasks. Thus reading assessment should be, at least in part, task-based. Authentic academic tasks, such as answering essay test questions, reading textbooks or journal articles and taking notes should be identified and incorporated into the assessment. Likewise, authentic texts should be used, given the importance of text structure and cohesive elements. Thus, tests should reflect the tasks that are representative of the ways in which ability is applied in academic contexts.

4- Texts in the tests should be coherent. This means that the examination may involve thematically based texts in terms of content. Such an organization reflects the large amount of real-world academic reading activity that is organized around particular courses or research activities.

5- Score interpretation and use should reflect real world academic tasks as well. Thus, in order to reflect the variability in solving real-life reading tasks, assessment may need to go beyond providing a reading score and present a literacy score that is derived from performance on well defined tasks.

6- Reading could be integrated with any of the other language skills. The test format could be such that the examinee acquires information on a particular topic from reading or listening and then produces some written or oral product. For example, the examinee might read a passage and summarize the information. Summary tasks can represent what the examinee understands about a text as he or she reads. A written summary can indicate the gist in the examinee's mind, and this may represent overall comprehension of a passage.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.0 Presentation

This chapter focuses on the design of the study, research questions, subjects and data collection instruments along with data collection procedures.

3.1 Overall Design of the Study

This study is a diagnostic and exploratory case study based on classroom research carried out in an EFL context. The steps followed throughout the study will be presented in this section.

The data were collected through six reading comprehension quizzes which were designed in a communicative fashion and revised by a committee of three experienced reading instructors. These quizzes aimed to cover all four components of communicative competence; in other words, they included questions related to all four components of communicative competence. The question types were drawn from the previous exams in the Foreign Language Education (FLE) department. In addition, some new types of comprehension questions addressing four components of CC were adapted or adopted from Nuttall (1996), Grellet (1983) and Munby (1979). The purpose was to find out the difficulties in EFL reading experienced by freshman students in the FLE department at METU, and to develop a communicative perspective on these reading problems.

In order to prepare tests which reflect the practices in the reading courses and to decrease researcher bias, the three reading teachers in the department, including the

researcher came together and formed a committee. The researcher consulted this committee throughout the research study at different stages.

The researcher, after analyzing sample exam papers and relevant resource books on the assessment and teaching of reading, designed 6 reading tests. He first collected a number authentic texts from newspapers and magazines and with the consent and approval of the two other members of the committee, 6 texts were chosen to be used in the study. Next, he prepared comprehension and vocabulary questions based on each text. Then, the two committee members gave feedback on the quality and appropriateness of these questions. Some items were rejected, some items were changed, and at times, some new items were added.

As the next step, the researcher described what each question was intended to measure and eventually, he categorized these descriptions into four main categories: four components of CC; Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, Strategic and Discourse competencies. Preparing the categories of reading skills under CC framework; a blueprint of possible skills was developed. Using these "codes", he labeled all the questions in the tests indicating which skills or "codes" are tested by a specific question. He trained the two other committee members on how to code the questions using the newly formed scale. Then, he asked them to do coding alone. Finally, they compared their codes. When there was a difference, they negotiated and decided on one option. Sometimes, new categories were added, and sometimes new codes were created which reflected exactly for what the item was intended. Thus, the process of refining the categories and codes was an ongoing one.

In the end, a total of 6 reading quizzes, and a list of CC categories, which classified reading skills into four groups, were created. Frequently, it was not possible to design an item that purely tested one subskill at a time. Thus, each question usually tested more than one subskill.

A total of six consecutive reading quizzes were administered to the students attending the FLE 126 Reading Skills II course, one each week. After the tests were administered, the researcher marked them alone first. He decided whether an item was correct or incorrect. Then the two members also did the marking on their own. They compared the results: When there was discrepancy among the three markings, they negotiated the answers again and decided unanimously correct or incorrect. Analyzing the wrong answers, they also refined the categories involved in a specific question and the actual CC codes, too.

As the last step, the researcher analyzed the results of the exam to see how well they did, which items posed more difficulty, which items were easier and which categories of CC turned out to be more problematic for the students.

Through the analysis of these results, the study aimed at finding answers to three different questions specified in the following section.

3.2 Research Questions

1. What are the common problems that result in reading comprehension failure by EFL students from a communicative competence perspective, as indicated by the examination results?

2. Which areas of communicative competence need the most attention for better comprehension to take place?

3.   What can be done to reduce these problems and increase the quality of reading comprehension by the reading teachers?

3.3 Participants

The subjects of the study were 29 first-year freshman students studying to be English teachers in the FLE Department, METU. These students were attending the reading course coded as FLE 126 Reading Skills 2. The researcher was teaching this class.

Classes in the FLE Department are formed on the basis of alphabetical lists of surnames and the students' proficiency levels are very close to each other. The passing score on the METU English Proficiency Exam, which the students have to pass to be able start their studies as freshman, is 60 out of a hundred and the average score of the FLE department is around 70 although some students get as high as 90.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, 6 reading comprehension quizzes (examinations) were used as data sources. These quizzes were based on six different authentic texts selected from newspaper and magazine articles. Three reading instructors came together and formed a committee. Functioning as judges, they categorized the skills into different components, and later, also marked the student papers, too.

3.4.1 The Reading Quizzes (Examinations)

The reading quizzes (see App. A), sometimes referred to as tests or examinations, were designed for the purpose of determining the areas in which the students had difficulty in comprehending authentic texts and in responding to reading tasks. After the researcher had finished designing the items on the tests and labeling

which skills an item required, he cooperated with the two other committee members and they sought consensus on these labels. They sometimes changed the question, or rewrote it to reflect the sub-skills labeled by the researcher. At other times, when they decided an item was good enough, they fine-tuned the labels so that there was complete overlapping between what the label said and what the item intended to measure.

The tests included items that required the necessary skills in EFL reading and these questions were inspired by the implications of communicative language teaching, which emphasizes real life reading practices. The question types were designed in accordance with Canale and Swain's (1983) categorization of sub-skills under four main components of CC; and based on relevant chapters in both Nuttall (1988), Grellet (1983), Alderson (2000) and Munby (1978). (See App. B.)

The quizzes included both vocabulary and comprehension questions. The number of question on the quizzes varied between 20 and 51. All the questions required short answers or one-word answers.

The tests were administered to 29 students and the results were analyzed to see the difficulties in each component of CC.

3.4.2 The Texts

All the texts were authentic sources intended for native readership. The passages were taken from *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines. As Alderson (2000) notes, it is more appropriate to choose texts for examination use from popular fiction and non-fiction on the grounds that they are likely to be less biased in terms of difficulty, and therefore more suitable for tests of reading. Hence, the text topics were not too

specific for the purpose of not putting some students at a disadvantage. The topics chosen include happiness, dealing with information in a modern age, whether life getters better or worse in the modern times, obesity and eating habits, New York City subway and American feelings after September 11. Text length changed between, approximately, 750 and 1200 words.

3.4.3 The Raters (Scorers)

The raters were selected from the reading teachers in the department. Judge A was the researcher himself and he coordinated the two other committee members. Judge B was a native speaker of American English and an associate professor, who taught English, particularly reading skills, for almost 40 years. He provided feedback both on the quality of items on each quiz and also gave invaluable help in labeling items on the CC framework. Judge C was also an EFL reading and writing teacher with a seven-year experience.

The raters' (scorers) job was to designate CC labels to items on the quizzes, giving feedback to the researcher on the quality of the examinations as well as marking the papers, correct or incorrect for each student answer.

First, the researcher gave CC labels to each item on the quizzes. Then, he gave these labeled questions to both of the other committee members and asked them to look at the labels and indicate whether they agreed or not. After giving them some days to analyze these labels, the researcher arranged a meeting and they looked at the questions whose labels caused disagreement among the three raters. The raters explained their reasons for agreement or disagreement. In the end, they decided on one label after discussion, or they kept both of the labels for certain particular questions.

Inter-rater reliability was around 0, 85, ranging between 0, 77 and 0,91. This means that there were different labels for around 3 or 4 questions in a test with 20 comprehension questions. (Vocabulary sections were given the same labels since they were exactly the same in their nature.)

As for the marking of the papers, again, first the researcher did the marking alone indicating the questions about which he had doubts and then gave the marked papers to the other raters. They went over the items and pondered about the items which the researcher had difficulty in marking correct/incorrect. Finally, the researcher and the two other raters came together and discussed all of the unmarked questions. They unanimously decided whether they were correct or not by comparing the different responses by different readers to the same question.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

After all the 6 quizzes had been administered consecutively, the researcher marked the papers identifying the incorrect answers on the quizzes. He, then, analyzed the results of each exam and identified the mean score of each test. Then, he was able to select the items that posed difficulty for students. Afterwards, he explored why a specific item was difficult for students. In other words, he tried to diagnose which skills the students lacked to be able to answer the questions considering the CC labels for each question. Next, the other committee members also looked at the answers, labeled them correct or incorrect and then gave their feedback on why they agreed or disagreed with the researcher about the reasons for the students' errors. All disagreements in categorization and labeling were resolved by discussion and

persuasion. Finally, the researcher and the two other committee members altogether refined the labels for each question and the CC codes.

To be able to identify the type of difficulty posed by each question, the researcher also drew some conclusions from his previous experiences since he has taught eight EFL reading classes at different times.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected through quizzes throughout the semester were analyzed to diagnose the items that were relatively difficult, and thus had lower means compared to the other items in the quiz.

Depending on the mean score of each quiz, the items whose mean scores were lower than overall mean score of the whole test were studied to see which skills they required and why the students failed to get those items right.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Presentation

In this chapter, quantitative results of the six quizzes will be presented and the descriptive interpretation and explanation of relevant items on each test will follow.

4.1 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

This section includes mean scores of each item on all of the six tests and also overall mean scores for all of the tests. Qualitative data derived from the analysis of the test results is used to diagnose which items on the tests were more difficult for students. The marking of the papers was first done by the researcher himself. Later, two other committee members separately marked exams using the same answer key. In all the tests, inter-rater reliability was above 0, 85. In other words, they all agreed at large that students' answers were correct or incorrect.

In the next step, the researcher and the committee members studied all the items which got a mean score that is below the average, and usually it was the halfway between the lowest score and the highest score, which is varied between 0,45 and 0,70 depending on a specific test. Here, also the reliability analysis scale for each test is presented and the items that were labeled difficult according to above mentioned criteria are highlighted.

4.1.1 The Results of Test 1

The results obtained from the test 1 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of Test 1

		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 1				
1.	T1Q1A	,6138	,4852	26,0
2.	T1Q1B	,5769	,5038	26,0
3.	T1Q2	,6138	,4852	26,0
4.	T1Q3	,8462	,3679	26,0
5.	T1Q4	,8846	,3258	26,0
6.	T1Q6	,6138	,4852	26,0
7.	T1Q7	1,0000	2,0976	26,0
8.	T1Q8A	,7308	,4523	26,0
9.	T1Q8B	,6923	,4707	26,0
10.	T1Q9	,5992	,4297	26,0
11.	T1Q10	,1538	,3679	26,0
12.	T1Q11	,1923	,4019	26,0
13.	T1Q12	,9231	,2717	26,0
14.	T1Q13	,6154	,4961	26,0
15.	T1Q14	,1923	,4019	26,0
16.	T1Q15	,6154	,4961	26,0
17.	T1Q16	,3462	,4852	26,0
18.	T1Q17A	,5769	,5038	26,0
19.	T1Q17B	,5000	,5099	26,0
20.	T1Q18	,9231	,2717	26,0
21.	T1Q19	,5769	,5038	26,0
22.	T1Q20	,8077	,4019	26,0
23.	T1Q21	,5000	,5099	26,0
VOCABULARY				
24.	T1Q22	,3846	,4961	26,0
25.	T1Q23	,8077	,4019	26,0
26.	T1Q24	,6538	,4852	26,0
27.	T1Q25	,8462	,3679	26,0
28.	T1Q27	,7308	,4523	26,0
29.	T1Q28	,8846	,3258	26,0
30.	T1Q29	,6923	,4707	26,0
31.	T1Q30	,9231	,2717	26,0
32.	T1Q31	,7308	,4523	26,0
33.	T1Q33	,5000	,5099	26,0
34.	T1Q34	,7308	,4523	26,0
35.	T1Q35	,7308	,4523	26,0
36.	T1Q36	,8462	,3679	26,0
37.	T1Q37	,3846	,4961	26,0
38.	T1Q38	,6538	,4852	26,0
39.	T1Q39	,9231	,2717	26,0
40.	T1Q40	,5000	,5099	26,0
41.	T1Q5	1,0000	,0000	26,0
42.	T1Q26	1,0000	,0000	26,0
43.	T1Q32	1,0000	,0000	26,0

T1Q26, T1Q5, T1Q32 has zero variance				
Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	26,3077	28,3815	5,3274	40

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,6277	,1538	1,0000	,8462	6,5000	,0449

4.1.2 The Results of Test 2

The results obtained from the test 2 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of Test 2

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 2			
	Mean	Std Dev	Cases
1. T2Q1	,9655	,1857	29,0
2. T2Q2	,4138	,5012	29,0
3. T2Q3	,3828	,5085	29,0
4. T2Q4	,3793	,4938	29,0
5. T2Q5	,3793	,4938	29,0
6. T2Q6	,4483	,5061	29,0
7. T2Q7	,4828	,5085	29,0
8. T2Q8	,3586	,4355	29,0
9. T2Q9	,7241	,4549	29,0
10. T2Q10	,6552	,4837	29,0
11. T2Q11	,3793	,4938	29,0
12. T2Q12	,3621	,3509	29,0
13. T2Q13	,9310	,2579	29,0
VOCABULARY			
14. T2Q14	,6207	,4938	29,0
15. T2Q15	,4828	,5085	29,0
16. T2Q16	,3103	,4708	29,0
17. T2Q17	,4828	,5085	29,0
18. T2Q18	,4483	,5061	29,0
19. T2Q19	,3103	,4708	29,0
20. T2Q20	,1034	,3099	29,0
21. T2Q21	,4483	,5061	29,0
22. T2Q22	,1379	,3509	29,0
23. T2Q24	,4138	,5012	29,0
24. T2Q25	,8621	,3509	29,0
25. T2Q26	,3448	,4837	29,0
26. T2Q27	,2414	,4355	29,0
27. T2Q28	,0345	,1857	29,0
28. T2Q23	,0000	,0000	29,0

T2Q23   has zero variance

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	13,1034	11,6675	3,4158	27

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,4853	,0345	,9655	,9310	28,0000	,0596

4.1.3 The Results of Test 3

The results obtained from the test 3 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Results of Test 3

		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 3				
1.	T3Q1	,6586	,4756	28,0
2.	T3Q2	,6586	,4756	28,0
3.	T3Q3	,9643	,1890	28,0
4.	T3Q4	,5729	,3150	28,0
5.	T3Q6	,4643	,5079	28,0
6.	T3Q7	,7857	,4179	28,0
7.	T3Q8	,5357	,5079	28,0
8.	T3Q9	,1071	,3150	28,0
9.	T3Q10	,9286	,2623	28,0
10.	T3Q11	,6286	,4756	28,0
11.	T3Q12	,8929	,3150	28,0
12.	T3Q14	,8571	,3563	28,0
13.	T3Q15	,7500	,4410	28,0
14.	T3Q17	,7143	,4600	28,0
15.	T3Q18	,7143	,4600	28,0
16.	T3Q19	,8571	,3563	28,0
17.	T3Q20	,6071	,4973	28,0
18.	T3Q21	,7143	,4600	28,0
19.	T3Q22	,7143	,4600	28,0
20.	T3Q23	,6586	,4756	28,0
VOCABULARY				
21.	T3Q24	,3214	,4756	28,0
22.	T3Q25	,4286	,5040	28,0
23.	T3Q26	,5000	,5092	28,0
24.	T3Q27	,7500	,4410	28,0
25.	T3Q28	,7500	,4410	28,0
26.	T3Q29	,7143	,4600	28,0
27.	T3Q30	,7500	,4410	28,0
28.	T3Q31	,6071	,4973	28,0
29.	T3Q32	,7143	,4600	28,0
30.	T3Q33	,5357	,5079	28,0
31.	T3Q34	,6786	,4756	28,0
32.	T3Q35	,6429	,4880	28,0
33.	T3Q36	,4286	,5040	28,0
34.	T3Q37	,6071	,4973	28,0
35.	T3Q38	,5357	,5079	28,0
36.	T3Q39	,6786	,4756	28,0
37.	T3Q40	,6429	,4880	28,0
38.	T3Q5	1,0000	,0000	28,0
39.	T3Q13	1,0000	,0000	28,0
40.	T3Q16	1,0000	,0000	28,0

* * * T3Q5	has zero variance			
* * * T3Q13	has zero variance			
* * * T3Q16	has zero variance			

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	24,5000	16,0370	4,0046	37

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,6622	,1071	,9643	,8571	9,0000	,0296

4.1.4 The Results of Test 4

The results obtained from the test 4 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Results of Test 4

		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 4				
1.	T4Q1	,9655	,1857	29,0
2.	T4Q2	,7241	,4549	29,0
3.	T4Q3	,3448	,4837	29,0
4.	T4Q4	,6310	,2579	29,0
5.	T4Q5	,8276	,3844	29,0
6.	T4Q6	,5862	,5012	29,0
7.	T4Q8	,9655	,1857	29,0
8.	T4Q9	,7586	,4355	29,0
9.	T4Q10	,6552	,4837	29,0
10.	T4Q11	,9655	,1857	29,0
11.	T4Q12	,7241	,4549	29,0
12.	T4Q13	,9310	,2579	29,0
13.	T4Q14	,7241	,4549	29,0
14.	T4Q15	,8621	,3509	29,0
15.	T4Q16	,8276	,3844	29,0
16.	T4Q17	,8966	,3099	29,0
17.	T4Q18	,9655	,1857	29,0
18.	T4Q19	,2414	,4355	29,0
19.	T4Q20	,6207	,4938	29,0
20.	T4Q21	,7241	,4549	29,0
21.	T4Q22	,1379	,3509	29,0
22.	T4Q23	,7931	,4123	29,0
23.	T4Q24	,5862	,5012	29,0
24.	T4Q25	,7241	,4549	29,0
25.	T4Q26	,4483	,5061	29,0
26.	T4Q27	,7586	,4355	29,0
27.	T4Q28	,7586	,4355	29,0
VOCABULARY				
28.	T4Q29	,4483	,5061	29,0
29.	T4Q30	,3793	,4938	29,0
30.	T4Q31	,9655	,1857	29,0
31.	T4Q32	,7241	,4549	29,0
32.	T4Q33	,3103	,4708	29,0
33.	T4Q34	,4138	,5012	29,0
34.	T4Q35	,3793	,4938	29,0
35.	T4Q36	,2759	,4549	29,0
36.	T4Q37	,1724	,3844	29,0
37.	T4Q38	,7931	,4123	29,0
38.	T4Q39	,7586	,4355	29,0
39.	T4Q40	,5172	,5085	29,0
40.	T4Q41	,5517	,5061	29,0
41.	T4Q42	,3103	,4708	29,0
42.	T4Q43	,7241	,4549	29,0
43.	T4Q44	,5517	,5061	29,0

Table 5 Continued

44.	*T4Q45*	*,7586*	*,4355*	*29,0*
45.	T4Q46	,3793	,4938	29,0
46.	T4Q47	,7241	,4549	29,0
47.	T4Q48	,1034	,3099	29,0
48.	T4Q49	,5862	,5012	29,0
49.	T4Q50	,8966	,3099	29,0
50.	T4Q7	1,0000	,0000	29,0

N of Cases =		29,0		

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	31,1724	25,3621	5,0361	49

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,6662	,1034	,9655	,8621	9,3333	,0593

4.1.5 The Results of Test 5

The results obtained from the test 5 are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Results of Test 5

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 5				
		Mean	**Std Dev**	**Cases**
1.	T5Q1	,5966	,3099	29,0
2.	T5Q2	,6207	,4938	29,0
3.	T5Q3	,5862	,5012	29,0
4.	T5Q4	,8621	,3509	29,0
5.	T5Q5A	,7586	,4355	29,0
6.	T5Q5B	,6207	,4938	29,0
7.	T5Q6	,9310	,2579	29,0
8.	T5Q7A	,6207	,4938	29,0
9.	T5Q7B	,4138	,5012	29,0
10.	T5Q8	,9655	,1857	29,0
11.	T5Q9	,8621	,3509	29,0
12.	T5Q10	,8276	1,8336	29,0
13.	T5Q11	,6897	,4708	29,0
14.	T5Q12	,6552	,4837	29,0
15.	T5Q13A	,6897	,4708	29,0
16.	T5Q13B	,6552	,4837	29,0
17.	T5Q14	,6552	,4837	29,0
18.	T5Q15	,8966	,3099	29,0
	VOCABULARY			
19.	T5Q16	,2759	,4549	29,0
20.	T5Q17	,9310	,2579	29,0
21.	T5Q18A	,3448	,4837	29,0
22.	T5Q18B	,8621	,3509	29,0
23.	T5Q18C	,6207	,4938	29,0
24.	T5Q19	,7241	,4549	29,0
25.	T5Q20	,4483	,5061	29,0
26.	T5Q21	,4483	,5061	29,0
27.	T5Q22	,8621	,3509	29,0
28.	T5Q23	,7586	,4355	29,0

Table 6 Continued

		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
29.	T5Q24	,7586	,4355	29,0
30.	T5Q25	,4828	,5085	29,0
	N of Cases =	29,0		

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	20,7241	17,5640	4,1909	30

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,6908	,2759	,9655	,6897	3,5000	,0342

4.1.6 The Results of Test 6

The results obtained from the test 6 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Results of Test 6

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEST 6				
		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
1.	T6Q1	,4828	,5085	29,0
2.	T6Q2	,5862	,5012	29,0
3.	T6Q3	,6207	,4938	29,0
4.	T6Q4	,8621	,3509	29,0
5.	T6Q5	,6655	,1857	29,0
6.	T6Q6	,5172	,5085	29,0
7.	T6Q7	,8621	,3509	29,0
8.	T6Q8	,7931	,4123	29,0
9.	T6Q9	,9310	,2579	29,0
10.	T6Q10	,9310	,2579	29,0
11.	T6Q11	,5172	,5085	29,0
12.	T6Q12	,6621	,3509	29,0
13.	T6Q13	,5862	,5012	29,0
14.	T6Q14	,7586	,4355	29,0
15.	T6Q15	,7241	,4549	29,0
16.	T6Q16	,8621	,3509	29,0
17.	T6Q17	,5552	,4837	29,0
18.	T6Q18	,7586	,4355	29,0
19.	T6Q19A	,3103	,4708	29,0
20.	T6Q19B	,2414	,4355	29,0
21.	T6Q20	,5517	,5061	29,0
	N of Cases =	29,0		

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
Scale	14,3793	4,5296	2,1283	21

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	,6847	,2414	,9655	,7241	4,0000	,0413

As can be seen from the preceding 6 tables indicating the descriptive statistics for the quizzes, the means of the tests vary between 0,48 and 0,69 out of 1,0. The average of the 6 quizzes as a whole is 0,63. There was a gradual improvement towards the last quiz; the lowest being the second quiz with a mean of 0,48 and the highest the fifth one with the mean of 0,69.

The questions with means lower than the mean of the whole test are used as examples to explain the difficulties of the students in a descriptive manner.

4.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

After all the tests were prepared through laborious work, the committee members came together and tried to identify all the skills involved in each test under four categories, which corresponded to the four components of CC. This procedure was followed until all the tests were labeled. In the end, the researcher ended up with an inventory of reading skills showing how each component of CC contributes to or affects reading performance in EFL. The researcher, using this inventory of skills, analyzed the difficult questions on the test with a diagnostic eye. If an item had a mean score which was lower than the mean score for the whole test, that item was considered to have posed difficulty for students. The reason for this was to see which of those items were decreasing the average score. In some cases, certain questions which the researcher found worthy mentioning were also described although their mean scores were above the mean score of the test.

The codes that describe the reading skills in four categories of CC (See appendix B) are used to exemplify and discuss the results of the quantitative data. Among the codes mentioned in the appendix, only the codes that posed difficulty for

the readers are described and then accompanying sample questions from different tests are presented to better illustrate how that skill functions in actual reading performance.

4.3 Difficulties in Discourse Competence

There were a total of 18 different items put under the category of Discourse Competence in the CC codes that describe the skills in reading (App B). The items which proved to be challenging for the students as indicated by exam results will be discussed one by one.

Table 8 below shows all the test numbers and the questions in which the reading skills related to discourse competence are involved. For example, "T1Q5" means "the fifth question in the first test". By referring to the indicated questions and tests in Appendix A, one can understand how a skill is measured in a specific question. While interpreting the difficulty level of each question mentioned, readers are urged to keep in mind the mean score of the whole test in which the question took place. For example, a mean score of, let's say, 0,65 may not seem to be a difficult question considering rules of thumb for determining item difficulty level suggested literature on testing. However, if the mean score of the whole test is around 0,70, then that question is below the mean and can still be considered moderately difficult.

Table 8 Reading Skills Related to Discourse Competence

A- Discourse Competence:
1. Identifying inter-sentential relations and lexical cohesion (Grellet, 1983)
(a) Recognizing the semantic relationship between topically related words in different sentences T1Q5, T1Q6, T1Q10, T1Q12, T4Q3, T4Q8, T4Q4, T4Q8, T4Q11, T4Q14, T4Q15, T4Q16, T4Q17, T4Q19, T4Q20, T4Q21, T4Q22, T4Q23, T4Q24, T4Q28-50, T5Q1, T5Q7, T5Q13, T5Q15, T6Q1, T6Q19, T3Q2, T3Q21-40

Table 8 Continued

(b) Recognizing words with similar meaning (synonyms) *T1Q2, T1Q7, T1Q14, T3Q4, T3Q7, T4Q6, T4Q7, T4Q8, T4Q15, T4Q18, T4Q19, T4Q20, T5Q13,* *T3Q21-40*
(c) Recognizing words with opposite meaning (antonyms) T1Q3, T4Q4, T4Q8, T4Q18, T4Q19, T6Q10, T3Q21-40
(d) Recognizing sentences that support the same line of reasoning (similarity) T1Q4, T2Q1, T2Q2, T2Q3, T2Q16, T2Q7, T2Q13, T3Q7, T3Q13, T3Q17, T5Q10, T6Q13
(e) Recognizing sentences that support the opposite line of reasoning(difference) T1Q3, T1Q4,
(f) Recognizing the super-ordinate and hyponym words T1Q2,
2)   Deducing the meaning of sentences with the help of cohesive devices T1Q15, T4Q3, T4Q4, T4Q13, T4Q17, T4Q21, T4Q23, T4Q27, T6Q18, T6Q12, T6Q18,
3)   Recognizing pronoun references and reference phrases T1Q9, T5Q4, T5Q12, T6Q15, T6Q19
4)   Recognizing the function/ role of discourse markers
5)   Recognizing intra-sentential relations T1Q5, T1Q6, T2Q2, T6Q12, T3Q1,
6)   Following the line of reasoning of the writer
(a)   Recognizing statements/expressions carrying negative meaning T1Q5, T1Q17A, T3Q8, T3Q12, T3Q17, T4Q10, T4Q13, T4Q16, T4Q21, T5Q12, T5Q7, T6Q11,
(b)   Recognizing statements/expressions carrying positive meaning T1Q5, T1Q17A, T3Q8, T4Q10, T4Q21, T6Q13, T6Q14, T6Q16,
7)   Recognizing the overall message of the text T1Q18, T1Q20, T2Q7, T2Q11, T3Q20, T4Q25, T4Q26, T5Q18, T3Q17
8)   Differentiating the main ideas from the supportive details T5Q6, T3Q3,
9)   Comparing ideas mentioned in different parts of the text
a) To interpret the meaning of the text as a whole (macro level) T1Q7, T1Q16, T2Q7, T3Q2, T3Q3, T3Q5, T3Q6, T4Q26,
b) To decide on the truth value of a statement (micro level) T1Q18, T1Q19, T3Q2, T3Q3, T3Q5, T6Q4, T6Q15,

Table 8 Continued

10) *Putting together smaller pieces of information spread over text to make inferences, e.g.: clues at the word or sentence level (too much text dependence problem)*   *T1Q1, T1Q10, T2Q1, T3Q1-2, T3Q6, T3Q2, T3Q10, T3Q12, T4Q14, T1Q10, T1Q17, T5Q5, T5Q10,*
11) Recognize the topic of a text and give a name or title to the text   T2Q10, T3Q13, T3Q19, T5Q18, T6Q1
12) Differentiating facts from opinions   T2Q5, T3Q5, T6Q17
13) Identifying the main ideas of paragraphs   T1Q5, T1Q8A-B, T1Q13, T1Q15, T1Q17B, T2Q4, T2Q6, T2Q8, T2Q10, T2Q12, T3Q7, T3Q8, T3Q9, T3Q12, T3Q15, T3Q17, T3Q20, T4Q17, T4Q21, T4Q24, T4Q25, T4Q27, T5Q6, T5Q17, T5Q18,
14) Arriving at the right answers by the integration of the different paragraphs of a text together (like putting all the pieces together to solve a puzzle)   T1Q6, T1Q8A, T1Q11, T1Q15, T1Q16, T1Q18, T1Q19, T2Q4, T2Q6, T2Q9, T3Q16, T4Q25, T4Q26, T6Q4
15) Understanding and defining concepts which are not clearly/explicitly defined through analysis of the any features or examples given in the context   T1Q6, T1Q11, T3Q10, T4Q14, T6Q3, T6Q17, T6Q19
16) Understanding rhetorical organization and its effects on the way information is presented   T2Q12, T3Q10, T3Q16, T6Q18
17) Recognizing the inter-paragraph relations through reference and understanding how one specific paragraph fits into the whole text (the role/function of each paragraph in the making up the whole text)   T1Q16, T2Q8, T2Q12, T5Q17, T5Q18
18) Synthesizing the information across sentences and paragraphs and drawing inferences to reach a conclusion or summary   T1Q18, T6Q4

Below the skills that proved difficult or problematic are analyzed through sample questions.

D1: Identifying Inter-Sentential Relations and Lexical Cohesion (Grellet, 1983)

(a) Recognizing the semantic relationship between topically related words in different sentences

This skill is one of the most useful skills that are needed in foreign language reading. It helps the readers easily see the cohesion between ideas. Without mastering this skill, making sense of what we read would be very hard. However, many students have difficulty in developing this skill as can be seen in the following examples from the tests. The tests and the accompanying texts are provided in Appendix A.

T5Q13: In the 3rd paragraph, A) Find a word related to "hauling". B) Find another word related to "moving" (L.36).

The third paragraph in the text includes the following section:

> ... And considering just how much <u>moving</u> and <u>hauling</u> the subway does each day, you can't help but be impressed. For the subway is an enduring marvel of mass-transit engineering: trains make 6,800 trips each day over 731 miles of rail, carrying 3.7 million people.

This question requires the readers to associate the verb "to carry" with "hauling" and the word "trip" with "moving". To be able to recognize these relations, a reader has to identify the meanings of "carrying" and "making trips". However, this task was not so easy for them and the percentage of correct answers for "moving" was 68 whereas it was 65 for "hauling".

T1Q6: Which sentence helps us guess the meaning of "affluent" and "impoverished"?

To be able to answer this question, the readers have to pay attention to the first sentence of the second paragraph in the text. It says that

> Any seasoned traveler can attest to the fact that <u>wealth and happiness do not usually cohabit</u>. Visit Europe and be mystified by the unsmiling faces and furrowed brows in the most affluent countries. Visit Africa and marvel at the laughter and general merriment, even in the most impoverished ones.

In this context, African countries are meant to be happy although they are impoverished whereas European countries are still seeking happiness although they are affluent. If the students can make the connection between the first sentence of the paragraph and the following sentences, they can easily answer this question. But in the exams, a number of students (39 %) were not able to understand that impoverished means poor in that context and affluent means rich.

T4Q4: What can be the meaning of "contradiction"? Which other word(s) is it related to in the same paragraph?

This question was intended to see whether the students would be able to recognize the connection between the first sentence of the introductory paragraph and the following ones. The first sentence mentions about "contradictions of modern life". The next one talks about "progress paradox: How life gets better while people feel worse". The students were unable to digest the information from different sentences and make educated inferences as to meanings of the words in the very close context. Although most of them already knew the meaning of the word "contradiction, the percentage of correct answers were 63.

(b) Recognizing words with similar meaning

This skill is closely related to the previous one. The difference is that it deals with the synonyms in different sentences, or words that can replace each other. This skill is important because most of writers use synonyms to achieve lexical cohesion and to make their writing more attractive and easy to follow. Below are a few examples.

T1Q14: Which word can replace "subsistence" in par. 6 line 13?

Throughout the whole text, the author emphasizes the idea that wealth does not usually result in happiness. In the sixth paragraph, the criterion for human development is discussed and it says that an illiterate "subsistence" farmer scores virtually zero on the human development scale. In the previous paragraphs, "impoverished" and "enough to subsist" are used as clues which might help the reader to guess the meaning of subsistence. Hence, the students are expected to replace "subsistence" with "poor" or "impoverished". But, only 60 percent could answer it correctly.

T4Q19: Find a pair of synonyms one of which is in the 3rd paragraph and the other in the 5th paragraph.

This question is asking the student to recognize the synonymous words in consecutive paragraphs. The first phrase is "once *deeply-ingrained* in the American psyche" and the next one is "*deep-seated* in the minds of many". Although the word "deep" is shared in both phrases and the way they are used is very similar, 38 percent of the readers could not answer this question correctly.

(c) Recognizing words with opposite meaning

This skill is vital in dealing with authentic texts and most of the students were relatively better in the questions requiring this skill. But, it was not directly asked in the tests; it was indirectly tested in items that required the umbrella skill of inter-sentential relations and lexical cohesion. The question below exemplifies this category.

T4Q8: How would you guess the meaning of "affordable" through the contextual clues?

The first paragraph of the text talks about how much progress the modern life has witnessed, adding that our great-great-grandparents would be shocked if they came back to world today. Then, it says "unlimited food at affordable prices", "so much to eat" that obesity has become a problem not only for the "well-off". If a student recognizes the opposite relationship between unlimited food and affordable prices, he can guess the meaning of "affluent". Another way is to realize the relationship between being obese, well-off and "affordable". This question was not very demanding for the students and almost 95 percent of them got this right maybe solely because they already knew the meaning of "affordable".

(d) Recognizing sentences that support the same line of reasoning

This skill is crucial in reading comprehension to be able to detect the shift in the direction of reasoning. It is highly important to know which way the writer is heading the reader and whether he is proving an idea or refuting it. Being able to follow the writer's reasoning will make the reader more comfortable during the reading process. It is extremely important to have a tight grasp of the writer's way of thinking before we could make sense of the ideas mentioned. The sample item below can exemplify this category.

T2Q2: Explain the following phrase using the clues in the context:

"to indulge in a goody" (P.7)

The first sentence of the seventh paragraph in the text says that we have been declared guilty as a by-product of an endless nagging "to eat less fatty food, eat smaller portions, and indulge only rarely in a goody." As can be seen from the examples above, the common property is that they are all necessary "healthy

practices" to lead a life without medical intervention. The reader is expected to realize that the writer cited these behaviors as practices that doctors would advise. But, here the crucial point is that the adverb "rarely" and adjective "occasional" are ignored by the reader. Without the word "rarely", "indulging in a goody" is something detrimental to health. Thus the possible answer would be "overeating or drinking and having party, involving in activities that ignore your health". However, most of the students could not provide acceptable answers. Only 42 percent of them could give a correct answer that would reflect their understanding of the writer's reasoning.

(e) Recognizing sentences that support the opposite line of reasoning

This skill is almost the same as the previous one except that here the reader is expected to detect the shift in the reasoning. In other words, it requires the reader to be able understand that a sentence has a positive or negative meaning in relation to the previous one. The question below is a good example of a shift in meaning marked by an adverb with a negative meaning.

T1Q3: How do you understand whether "alas" has a positive or negative meaning?

In the first paragraph of the text, the writer tells the story of some villagers and businessmen. There are two important sentences here which give us clue as to the meaning of "alas". The first one says "the businessman had sought seeds of efficient agriculture" and the second says "Alas, when the next season came, the peasants didn't plant anything." Students are expected to realize that the second sentence is in fact not the desired result. So, "alas" would mean "but", or "however", which will indicate the contrast between what was expected and what actually happened.

D2: Deducing the Meaning of Sentences with the Help of Cohesive Devices

One of the contextual clues that help a reader guess the meanings of unknown words is cohesive devices. If readers can carefully analyze the cohesive links between ideas, it will make the meanings of unknown vocabulary items clearer. It also helps the readers have a better understanding of the whole passage. Some of the questions proving difficult in the tests are given below.

T1Q15: What is the white man's logic to reach happiness?

To be able to answer this question, the readers have to make use of cohesive devices so that they can understand who can be the white man among the nations and groups mentioned along the text. It might be the Bakutu tribe, Mexicans, or Americans. They can answer the question only if they can link the last paragraph to the previous one by attending to the cohesive devices. This question also requires the reading skill coded as D14, ability to connect different paragraphs to reach an answer, since it necessitates the integration of two paragraphs before they could produce a correct answer. A correct answer would be "the white man believes that happiness comes as by-product of wealth." Since this question required the integration of various skills, only 19 percent of the students could give a correct answer for it.

D3: Recognizing Pronoun References and Reference Phrases

This skill is a very traditional but indispensable one in reading comprehension. Without knowing what/who the pronouns or phrases with similar features are referring to, it is extremely difficult to understand the messages. One example would be enough to show that how significant it is in making sense out of texts as well as how

challenging it might be as opposed to the common belief that finding referrals is an easy task.

T1Q9: What does "this strange phenomenon" refer to?

In the third paragraph of the text, it is claimed that

It is not a new insight that the relationship between material and emotional welfare seems to be an inverse one. When the carpenter of Galilee declared that man does not live by bread alone, he reminded all those who see man as *Homo oeconomicus* of their materialist blinkers.
What is the explanation for this strange phenomenon? Maybe it has to do with the cerebral and the visceral. Mankind has known for a long time that too much self-scrutiny is not conducive to happiness.

In other words, rich countries are not the happy ones. This is also the main idea of the whole paragraph, which makes it more salient for effective readers. But, since students are used to looking for proper names or single words while dealing with referrals, it was not so easy for them to find out what the phrase "this strange phenomenon" referred to. Most of the answers were at an acceptable level, but still 41 percent was unable to find the right answer.

D5: Recognizing Intra-Sentential Relations

Being able to understand the relations among the units of meaning or clauses within a sentence is another skill that directly aids reading comprehension. The reader has to be aware of lexical phrases, adverbs, discourse markers and other grammatical features that affect meaning within a single sentence. In some cases, where such sentences are the key elements of text carrying the main idea, incapacity to get the correct message from such a sentence may result in incomprehension on a larger scale unless the reader monitors his/her comprehension in a timely manner. Recognizing the meaning relations in a sentence may also help the reader identify the meaning of

unknown lexical phrases or idiomatic expressions as can be seen in the following example from test 6.

T6Q12: What is the relation between "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" in p.7? Explain what you understand.

In the text, the first sentence of paragraph 7 is "Americans like to talk the talk of svelteness, but they walk the walk of obesity", which stresses the contrast between what they believe to be true and how they actually behave in real life. It is normal for students not to know the meaning of "svelteness" and the meaning of the idiom, but an effective reader who recognizes the function of "but" can easily understand that "svelteness" and "obesity" should be opposites. But around 34 % of the students could not give satisfying answers to this question.

T1Q6: Explain the words "empirical" and "impressionistic" in your own words. (p., Lines 1-2)

This question is also partially dependent on the ability of the student to see inrtra-sentential relations. The first sentence of the third paragraph in the text says that

> For those who prefer <u>empirical to impressionistic</u> evidence, there are opinion polls. I recall that back in the '80s, a survey asked Western Europeans the mother of all questions: Are you happy? The Germans, the richest, were the most miserable. The Irish and Portuguese, the poorest, turned out to be the most contented.…

Here the reader is expected to link empirical evidence to opinion polls; and do the same for impressionistic evidence and personal observations, which have already been mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, this question got one of the lowest mean scores on the first test: Around 40 percent of the students could not infer

the meanings of empirical and impressionistic, and mostly they confused the two if they were able to give an asnwer.

D6: Following the Line of Reasoning of the Writer

(a) Recognizing statements/expressions carrying negative meaning

To be able to correctly interpret the messages coded by the writer on the pages; it is essential that a reader get into the perspective of the author and follow his reasoning. The capacity to understand the writer's perspective may also help the reader guess the meanings of unknown vocabulary using the data available in the context. The following example from Test 1 is a vivid example of how failure to follow the reasoning of the writer results in miscomprehension.

T3Q8: State whether the following statement is true or false referring to text.

"In the past, European cultures were more simplistic and direct than American culture." True or false?

The first sentence of the third paragraph in the text says that

> American culture used to be the blunt, plain-spoken cousin of more courtly and opaque European cultures ... *But*, along the way, especially during the economic boom of 1990's and the casual comfort it brought to us, we lost much of that candor.

Although the first sentence in itself is enough to reach the answer, the following sentences, especially the conjuntion "but" and the adverb more, indicate a noticeable shift in meaning. Even if there are some unknown words, they are not a barrier to infer that American culture was more direct and simplistic than European ones in the past. Only 53 percent of the students could answer this question correctly.

(b) Recognizing statements/expressions carrying positive meaning

T1Q17A: Paraphrase the sentence "Man doesn't live by bread alone" in your own words.

The last sentence of paragraph three in the text states that

> When the carpenter of Galilee declared that man does not live by bread alone, he reminded all those who see man as *Homo oeconomicus* of their materialist blinkers.

If you closely follow the writer's reasoning in the previous sentences, you could easily interpret this sentence as "Materialistic well-being is not enough for man to be happy or survive." However, almost 45 % of the students got the message wrong since they failed to follow the reasoning developed in the previous lines of the same paragraph. Some of them said it meant "…just bread is not enough for man, he needs more money, cars and houses, etc", which is totally the opposite of what is implied in the paragraph, also in direct opposition to the overall theme of the text..

D7: Recognizing the Overall Message of the Text

T1Q18: State whether the following statement is True or False.

"According to the text, intellectual minds search for the ways to happiness."

Throughout the text, it is claimed that too much self scrutiny is not conducive to happiness and that, for intellectuals, the pursuit of happiness is something unbecoming of cultured people. In spite of this emphasis, some students still were not able to grasp the overall message of the text; and 33 % of them gave the wrong answer to this question.

T4Q26: According to the text, why are Americans, in general, unhappy or dissatisfied?

This question requires the readers to synthesize the information and evaluate the overall message of the text in order to reach an inclusive and satisfying answer. In the text, after mentioning a lot of reasons for Americans' being unhappy, the author concludes saying that happiness is not something that can be reached through external means; it comes only within. However, Americans are not aware of this. It is apparent that 35 % of the students were not able get overall message from the text by combining all the clues.

D9: Comparing the Ideas Mentioned in Different Parts of a Text

Some texts can be better understood only after different parts of the texts are compared and analyzed. If a reader tries to build his/her understanding on a single part of the text, it might often be misleading since other paragraphs may not necessarily defend the same idea. Only after integrating information from different paragraphs can they understand the intended messages of the author. This is actually what causes difficulty in the following examples from two different tests.

T2Q7: Fill in the blanks: The author talks about the wrong actions of the older generations to show/ prove the reader that …………………………………

There is not a specific answer to this question in the paragraph where the author talks about the wrong behaviors of older generations. However, if a reader refers to other paragraphs, it will be understood that the main premise is that modernization and ownership of too much knowledge does not necessarily put us ahead of our grandparents. Namely, we are in no better condition than our ancestors although life seems to have progressed a lot. However, this implication was not so

easy to infer for the students and 52 percent of them could not provide a correct answer.

T3Q2: He bought not only winter boots, but also some other expensive shoes. True or False?

This question is intended to see whether the reader compares what he understood in the first paragraph with the following paragraphs. In the first paragraph, the writer says that "Ninety five dollars later, I strode out not with mere boots, but with Rocky-brand Pathfinder Extremes, shoes with more intimidating capabilities than a daisy-cutter bomb." For a naive reader, it seems that the author bought two pairs of shoes, which is not the case, as implied in the following paragraphs. 33 percent of the students naively continued to believe that the author bought two different shoes although "pathfinder extremes" was a euphemism for winter boots.

T3Q6: The man now regrets buying these boots since he paid an exaggerated price for them. True or false?

This is another question which proved challenging for naive readers who were not able to integrate what they understood from different parts of a text. This question also requires the students to realize that the first part of the question is correct, but that the reason given is not. It is true that the man feels regretful for buying these shoes, but the reason is not its price: It is his ideology against buying overly hyped possessions and products reflecting an overbaked sense of confidence and control. 55 percent of the readers who did not relate the second paragraph to the rest of the whole text failed to correctly answer this question.

D10: Putting Together Smaller Pieces of Information Spread Over Text to Make Inferences: Clues at the word or sentence level (Too Much Text Dependence Problem)

This skill requires the readers to identify the specific clues from different sections of a text and make inferences based on them to reach a conclusion not openly stated. They have to first digest the information, make it their own and express it showing their full comprehension of the text. The following questions exemplify such abilities.

T1Q10: Provide a synonym from the text for each of the following words:

(p.4-L.2)   1-visceral: ....   2-cerebral: ....

This question requires the readers to put together pieces of information available in different paragraphs and deduce the meaning of the words. There are some other similar concepts in the other paragraphs that will aid the reader to arrive at the meaning of these two concepts. The only thing they have to do is to pay more attention to the discourse clues to see the relationship between these concepts. The text also provides some example behaviors of both viscerals and cerebrals, which eases the job of the reader. Words like "intellectual", "elite", "sophisticted", "shallow", "deep thinker", "malcontents" and "cultured" occur throughout the text. The readers' job is to figure out which words describe cerebral and which others refer to visceral. However, this task was not so easy for them, and only 15 percent of the students, who were high achievers in the overall test, could see the relationship.

T1Q1A: Paraphrase the Subtitle in Very Simple Language.

(Subtitle: Why is it that economic success does not necessarily bring personal contentment?)

The objective of this question was to encourage the students to use their ability to synthesize information from the text, and without depending on the bookish language, create a simple subtitle for the text. Answers such as "Why doesn't money bring happiness?" would be quite acceptable. However, students were too dependent on the words of the subtitle, almost changing nothing, but the syntax. They could easily reach this message if they analyzed the first sentences of each paragraph. This shows that they cannot digest the messages so readily and make the information their own. They cannot create their own answers to questions, but just find a relevant sentence from the text. As a result, 35 percent of the students provided unacceptable answers for this question.

D11: Recognize the Topic of a Text and Give a Name or Title to the Text

One of the biggest signs of overall comprehension and interpretation of a text is to be able to find a title which summarizes or reflects the message given in the text. For this purpose, the title of a text in the second test was deleted and the students read the text without a title. Then they were asked to provide a title which reflects the overall message. The example question below is a good example of how well they can perform on such tasks.

T2Q10: Find an appropriate title for the text which reflects the main theme or the real message.

This question is intended to see whether the student can come up with good titles which reflect the messages conveyed by the text. As can be seen from the mean score of the item, 35 percent of the students were unable to provide a valid title for the

text. Most of the answers were too specific or reflected only one aspect of the issue. A similar case is provided in the following question from Test 3.

T3Q13: Perfuming the pig means the same as overreliance on fantasy images and elevation of the ordinary. True or false?

If a reader gets the overall message of the text, there is no way to miss the correct answer. Moreover, this item did not require them to come with their own title. So, this question was relatively easier and got a mean score of 0,75, meaning 25 percent failed. It can be concluded that producing a title is more difficult than recognizing the overall message in the form of a multiple choice or true-false format.

D13: Identifying the Main Ideas of Paragraphs (Topic Sentences)

The main idea of a paragraph is the author's message about the topic. It is often expressed directly or it can be implied. Finding the main idea of a paragraph is one of most essential skills in reading comprehension and helps the reader better understand the unknown vocabulary as well as the supportive details. In most of the cases, finding the main idea would be enough to get a general idea about what message the text is trying to convey. However, it is more difficult to identify a main idea when it is inferred or implied. Main ideas can be asked directly or indirectly. Here are some examples from the tests.

T1Q17B: Paraphrase the sentence "Too much self-scrutiny is not conducive to happiness." in your own words.

This sentence is the topic sentence of the fourth paragraph, which states the main idea. To be able to paraphrase this sentence, assuming that they may not know "scrutiny" and "conducive", they have to understand the main idea conveyed in the whole paragraph. However, if they cannot realize that this sentence is not the topic

sentence, they will have less chance of providing a satisfying paraphrase. 50 percent failed in this question.

T2Q4: Fill in the blanks considering the relevant paragraph.

"The news programs in the past used to be better appreciated because ….. "

The first sentence of the fifth paragraph is the topic sentence and it states the main idea or argument of the paragraph. In the following sentences, some examples are mentioned. However, the word "to appreciate" is not used in the paragraph. Words like "look forward to" and "to anticipate" are available. But a quick reading of the whole paragraph gives the effective reader quite a clear message. A big majority of the students gave very specific reasons based on the examples. The problem of "over" text-dependency was again observed: they just provided phrases and sentences copied from the text, failing to digest the information and providing a personal paraphrase. In addition, they were not able to relate the topic sentence to the remaining of the paragraph and the example events mentioned. A great majority of the students (63 %) gave incorrect answers to this question, proving that paraphrasing the main idea of a paragraph is a difficult task.

T5Q18-A-B-C: If you wanted to give headings to each paragraph, what would you prefer for the paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. Use your creativity and common sense.

This question asked the readers to identify the main idea conveyed in the paragraph and create an appropriate title which shows their understanding.

Although the readers were good at coming up with good titles for the third paragraph, they were not so good at understanding the second and fourth paragraphs.

The reason for this is that, as it seems through the analysis of these paragraphs, the topic sentence of the third paragraph clearly states what the paragraph will be talking about in a question format and there is one general idea developed throughout the paragraph. Moreover, the examples are self-explanatory. However, in the second and fourth paragraphs, there is not just one line of reasoning and the ideas seem to be loosely related. Some students were unable to identify a dominant idea in these paragraphs since they could not see the relations between units of meaning. 85 percent of the students could create a title for the third paragraph, whereas the percentages for the second and fourth paragraphs were 34 and 62, respectively.

D14: Arriving at the Right Answers by the Integration of the Different Paragraphs of a Text Together (Putting All the Pieces Together to Solve a Puzzle)

Some questions require the readers to integrate the information they receive from different paragraphs to reach a specific idea which was not explicitly stated in a single sentence or paragraph. Here the reader's job is to seek similar ideas in the neighboring paragraphs to make logical inferences.

T1Q11: Consider the sentence "A happy intellectual is an oxymoron."(P.4-L.12) Explain what you understand from the word "oxymoron", an epistemological term. What might it mean?

The fourth paragraph of the text emphasizes that too much self-scrutiny is not conducive to happiness, and thus intellectual people who reflect on things deeply can never reach happiness. So, being unhappy is a sign of an intellectual and sophisticated mind as reinforced by the fifth paragraph, too. After reading these paragraphs and taking the whole text into consideration, the reader is expected to conclude that being

both happy and intellectual simultaneously is a paradox. Because, according to the text, you can be either of them at the same time. So, answers like "two contradictory ideas" or "paradox" would be acceptable. Although any logical explanation showing that the reader understood what was wrong with the phrase "a happy intellectual" was accepted as correct, 85 percent failed.

D15: Understanding and Defining Concepts Which are not Clearly/Explicitly Defined Through Analysis of any Features or Examples Given in the Context

Most of the authentic texts introduce new concepts or ideas, and in some texts, these concepts might be used by the authors without clearly defining them for the reader. They assume that the readers will infer from the context what they actually mean when they introduce a new phrase or use a word in an unusual meaning which the readers are not familiar with. The readers also have to follow the semantic relations between the examples or defining characteristics of these concepts in order not to experience confusion or miscomprehension. The questions below are two of the examples taken from the tests.

T1Q6: Explain the words "empirical" and "impressionistic" in your own words. (p.3-L.1 and 2)

In this question, it is assumed that students are not familiar with the terms "impressionistic" and "empirical", both related to conducting research. The case being so, the students have to refer to the contextual clues to be able to infer the meanings of these terms and their relation to each other. If they can identify the defining characteristics of one of the two terms, they can infer that the other should be on the

other end of the continuum. If "empirical" is based on numbers and quantitative data, then "impressionistic" should be based on words, impressions, observations and descriptions derived from qualitative data. If they can realize that "opinion polls" in the fourth paragraph are related to numbers or percentages, they must infer that empirical should be based on numbers. However, 35 percent of the students had difficulty identifying this relation and thus failed to answer this question correctly.

The same difficulty is experienced by the students in Test 1 Question 11, which was already mentioned in the skill coded D14 above. Here, the students were not able to come up with a definition of the word "oxymoron" in spite of the salient contextual clues pointing at the meaning of this word.

D17: Recognizing the Inter-Paragraph Relations through Reference and Understanding How One Specific Paragraph Fits into the Whole Text (The Role/Function of Each Paragraph in the Making Up of the Whole Text)

To be able to understand the rhetorical organization of a text, it is essential that one understand the relations between paragraphs. One idea which seems to be supported in a paragraph might be refuted by the next one. Or, a writer might start criticizing an idea at the beginning of his article, but afterwards, he might actually come to defend the same idea with more convincing evidence, which is in fact one of the strategies in argumentative texts. And in some cases, readers may not relate a specific event or situation in the introduction to the following paragraphs, and doesn't understand why the author used that example. The questions below are indicating that some students might be unaware of these features of texts.

T1Q16: In the first paragraph, why does the author give the example of African peasants? What does he try to achieve?

This question inquires whether the students can understand the rationale behind the example that the author mentions in the first paragraph, considering the other paragraphs and subsequent reference to the same example in the last paragraph. The author talks about a conversation between African peasants and some businessmen:

> Some years ago, the story goes, a large corporation gave African peasants fertilizer so that their crop would double. And indeed it did. The businessmen thought they had sown the seeds of efficient agriculture. Alas, when the next season came the peasants didn't plant anything. "Why don't you plant?" the businessmen asked. The peasants thought this question somewhat silly. "Our last harvest was double," they replied. "We have enough to feed our families till next year." Whether a rural legend or not, the story illustrates the different answers people give to the question, How much does man need? One says, "Enough to subsist." Another may say, "As much as possible." The latter certainly creates more wealth. But does he also create more happiness?

However, in that context, there is no further explanation on this issue. In the last paragraph, there is again reference back to this event. Only then we understand the aim of the author: To raise the question of "What is the right means to reach happiness", the author gave the African peasants' understanding of happiness as compared to what Americans understand from happiness. In other words, the author finishes the essay talking about the same anecdote. However, most of the students, 39 percent, failed to understand the rationale for the use of this example at the beginning of the essay.

T2Q12: Does the last paragraph contradict the first one? Explain.

This question tests the reader's ability to see the connection between different paragraphs, whether they support or contradict each other, and the ability to draw

conclusions based on different paragraphs. In the text, the first paragraph claims that "Too much consciousness is a disease!" and that "Ignorance is a bliss!"

> I CAN'T RECALL WHO, but in a fit of frustration, one of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's characters blurts out, "Too much consciousness is a disease--a thorough-going disease." Although we recognize this as a redundancy, it was meant to point to something that plagues our world. Columbia journalism professor Todd Gitlin writes in his new book, Media Unlimited: How the Torrents and Sound Overwhelm Out Lives: "We're cursed with awareness [of] data bases, archives, libraries." We long have been told by existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as by Marxists, that the point is not so much to absorb knowledge, but to act upon it.

Yet, in the last paragraph of his essay, the author adds that "we don't get enough news since there is not a follow-up to the stories that once captured the headlines."

> Yet, in some ways, we don't get enough news since there is a lack of "'follow-up" to stories that once captured the headlines. We want to know how things turned out. Environmentalists were screaming that the Everglades were drying up. Is this still true or not, given the abundance of rain the Southeast has received? What ever happened to the stolen computers from Los Alamos and what kind of secrets were in their database? What is the status of the search for radioactive materials the Department of Energy can't account for? And couldn't some enterprising reporter find out more about the Russian submarine Kursk that met disaster? Too often we are left in limbo, but then again, we are getting used to it.

At first glance, it seems that this paragraph is in direct opposition to the first paragraph. However, analyzed carefully, it supports the same idea because the last sentence in the first paragraph also claims that "… the point is not so much to absorb, but to act upon it." To put it another way, *the amount of news* we receive is less important than *the quality of the news* or how useful they are. With this perspective in mind, the last paragraph also contributes to the overall message of the text which is also supported by the title: "Too much consciousness is driving us nuts".

Unfortunately, 64 percent of the students failed to realize this delicate relationship between the first and the last paragraphs of the essay.

4.4 Difficulties in Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence in reading involves knowing what is expected socially and culturally in texts as well as recognizing the sociocultural implications of sentences. It also includes the knowledge of appropriate language production associated with different contexts and for different purposes, an understanding of language functions such as apologizing, making requests, or asking for information, an understanding of genres such as argumentative or expository texts. A reader is supposed to be able to interpret the meanings of sentences as shaped by the context. In other words, reading involves assigning communicative values to statements: It is not enough to understand the grammatical structure of a statement, but also to attend to its illocutionary force. Attitudes and implied messages must also be considered as part of the sociolingustic component. The following table indicates the reading skills that involve the use of sociolinguistic comptence.

Table 9 Reading Skills Related to Sociolinguistic Competence

B- Sociolinguistic Competence:
1) Understanding and awareness of the social context of the text:
a) The source of text T4Q1, T3Q3, T3Q4, T3Q5
b) The topic and genre of text
c) The status of writer
d) The purpose of the text T4Q3, T1Q18
e) The targeted audience

Table 9 Continued

2) *Identifying the appropriate meaning of a statement/sentence in a specific context/setting*   *T5Q1, T5Q2, T6Q12, T3Q1, T3Q14, T1Q15, T1Q17A,*
3)   Understanding the meaning of culturally based information (information with cultural references)   T5Q13, T5Q8, T5Q14, T6Q11, T4Q25, T3Q11, T1Q17A , T5Q16, T6Q19
4)   Recognizing the writer's purpose in selecting certain words, examples but not others   T1Q20, T3Q1, T2Q5, T2Q6,
5)   Deducing the writer's attitude and tone from the text based clues such as word selection, choice of grammatical forms and background knowledge   T1Q20, T3Q1, T3Q11, T3Q12, T3Q16, T2Q10, T5Q2, T6Q12, T6Q5
6)   Recognizing prejudice and bias versus objectivity   T2Q5, T2Q6,
7)   Understanding the cultural implications of words, phrases and sentences in their specific context   T5Q8, T5Q9, T5Q14, T6Q2, T6Q17, T4Q2, T4Q11, T4Q12, T2Q3, T2Q5
8)   Inferring the communicative value of statements (illocutionary forces)   T5Q8, T6Q10, T6Q6, T6Q8, T3Q11, T3Q14, T3Q15, T1Q17A, T2Q1

The following section provides examples of sociolinguistic reading skills in which the students experienced difficulties.

SC1: Understanding and Awareness of the Social Context of the Text:

Knowledge about the author, the social context of the text, the targeted audience, the genre of the text and so forth are important factors that affect the reading comprehension process. An awareness of such features can drastically increase the level of EFL readers' comprehension. Only "understanding the purpose of the text" was problematic for the readers or some readers did not take it into consideration.

d) Understanding the Purpose of the Text:

Before a reader can have an overall understanding of the text at hand, it is compulsory that s/he recognize why such a text was written or published: What is the the outstanding aim of this piece of writing? Hence, this question requires the readers to be aware of the sociolinguistic conventions pertaining the function of written pieces in a language or culture, literary or non-literary. Thus, after seeing the big picture, it

will be quite easy for the reader to actively use his top-down thinking and fill in the small gaps in case any incomprehension has taken place. The following examples are illustrating such a case.

T4Q3: How do you understand whether the word "intriguing" has a negative or positive meaning?

This question was based on a Time magazine article in the form of a book excerpt. The word "intriguing " is used in the subtitle next to the picture of the book being introduced. The sentence reads: "Author Gregg Easterbrook offers intriguing theories about the contradiciton of modern life in a new book, The progess paradox: How life gets better while people feel worse." The students, not knowing the exact meaning of "intriguing", and thinking that both "contradictions" and "paradox" had negative meanings, perceived "intriguing" as a negative word, forgetting that the purpose of a book excerpt is to introduce and promote a book, and the content of the essay is quite informative and interesting, as expressed by the students themselves. Another influence on their answer was a kind of negative tranfer from Turkish: The Turkish word "entrika", inspired by the verb "to intrigue", has a negative meaning. Since they were not able to use their logical reasoning and their knowledge of sociolinguistic competence, 66 percent of them failed to give a positive answer to this question.

T1Q18: According to the text, intellectual minds search for the ways to happiness. True? – False?
To be able to answer this question, the readers have to draw inferences from the overall message dominant in the passage and also use their cultural knowledge about philosophical questions and the cultural connotations of the concept of

"happiness". In a few points of the text, the author exclaims "Too much knowledge is dangerous" and "Self-scrutiny does not lead to happiness". Nevertheless, 43 percent of the students thought that intellectual minds are happier.

SC2: Identifying the Appropriate Meaning of a Statement/Sentence in a Specific Context/Setting

While reading authentic texts, some sentences might seem to be vague for EFL readers since they cannot identify the intended meaning of the statement as coded by the writer. To be able to overcome this problem, they have to carefully analyse the contextual clues and use their cultural knowledge. If they sense that what they understand from a statement does not fit into the context, they had better go back and reanalyse the statement and look for clues. In the following examples, the readers are urged to see the connotations or implied messages of certain statements as shaped by the contextual and cultural factors. The linguistic structures usually provide some help for the readers, too.

T3Q1: The man (author) spent more than he had expected in the outfitter's.

The answer to this question lies in the section of the first paragraph that says

> Shortly before September 11, I walked into a mountain outfitter's store to buy a pair of winter boots. *Ninety-five dollars later*, I strode out not with mere boots, but with Rocky-brand Pathfinder Extremes--shoes with more intimidating capabilities than a daisy-cutter bomb. Rocky's literature assures me they are "aggressively styled." Rather than insulation, they have a "moisture-wicking fleece lining."

Normally, units of money cannot be used as time expressions. So, the readers should look for a hidden meaning in this statement. Using their cultural and linguistic

knowledge, they are expected to understand the implied message: He didn't expect to spend that much money on just a pair of winter shoes. 33 percent of the students were not able to understand the implied message in this statement.

T1Q17A: Paraphrase the sentence "Man doesn't live by bread alone." in your own words.

This sentence might convey two meanings depending on the sociocultural context. If the context favours the idea that "man should possess as much as possible", it might mean human beings need many other material possessions in addition to bread. Yet, if the context favours the idea that "man does not need only material stuff," then it might mean that human beings do not live on only food, but also spiritualism or emotional/ psychological well-being. It is the reader's job to decide which situation is the case. 43 percent of the students misinterpreted the context or ignored it and gave a wrong answer to this question.

SC3: Understanding the Meaning of Culturally Based Information (Cultural References)

Very often authentic texts have reference to cultural values, beliefs and knowledge to make the points more vivid and interesting for the native readers. However, this might pose a problem for EFL readers since they do not share the same cultural experiences with the author. The only thing they can do is to attend to the contextual clues and their general world knowledge as well as their native culture. With logical reasoning and activation of relevant background knowledge, they can most of the time make sense of cultural references. Below are some example questions that require the students to make inference as to the meanings and implications of cultural references in the texts.

T6Q11: Deal-a-meal cards usually become so..........................that you could sell them in a yard sale. (p.7)

This item requires the reader first to follow the writer's line of reasoning and then to guess what a yard sale looks like: Which products are sold there and why. The context gives us some clues in the sixth paragraph where yard sales are mentioned: Discourse markers such as "but", some general cultural knowledge such as putting your old stuff in the back of your closets and lastly the idea that diets and exercise equipment are only temporary obsessions. A reader attending all these features could easily figure out the fate of Deal-a-meal cards after people give up diets and fitness equipment. To sum up, after reading the whole paragraph, the reader is expected to coclude that "Deal-a-meal cards soon become so unpopular that they can be sold in a yard sale among the old and unnecessary stuff." However, almost 50 percent of the students could not reach this conclusion and gave wrong answers for this question.

T1Q15: What is the white man's logic to reach happiness?

This question basically requires the students to follow pronoun references throughout the text. However, there is also one more way of reaching the correct answer: Through using their cultural knowledge and the analysis of the white man's behaviors. It is mentioned in the passage that poor countries of Africa are more grateful and try to survive with limited resources whereas people in rich Western countries are not aware of how much worldly materials they possess. If the reader can use their world knowledge that there is no end to how much man can want to possess, they would easily understand that white man's way to happiness must go through

"earning as much as possible" and then becoming happy. Only 57 percent could answer this item correctly.

SC4: Recognizing the Writer's Aim in Selecting Certain Words, Phrases and Examples

In authentic texts, authors frequently prefer to give different meanings to ordinary words or they particularly choose specific words or concepts to add emphasis to their ideas. These specific words might give us clues about what attitude or stance the author holds over the issue.

T2Q5: Which sentence/phrase of the 6th paragraph informs us about how neutral or biased the war related news was? Explain why it was the case.

In the sixth paragraph of the text, the author comments on how biased the war-related news was. He does not openly say that the news was not reflecting the truth, but he prefers to word it as: "… many of us questioned the objectivity of the news from reporters 'embedded' with the troops. Some critics translated the term to mean 'in bed' with Pentagon." Here, the readers are expected to realize that the author does not believe in the objectivity of the news. Although it seemed to be quite easy, merely 37 percent of the students could identify the phrases "embedded with the troops" and "to be in bed with the Pentagon".

T2Q6: Why do you think Kraft Foods has changed their marketing strategy as suggested by the author?

This question requires the reader to detect the use of specific words by the author to convey implicit messages, without openly mentioning his ideas to avoid strong reaction from the parties involved. In paragraph 7 in the text, the author

comments that "this *cynic* wonders" whether it is the goodwill or the fear of lawsuits that prompts the marketing change. The use of "cynic", "nagging", "much-touted" and "myriad products" also give the readers clues about the writer's intended message conveyed implicitly. Nevertheless, 56 percent of the students could not benefit from such clues and failed to provide the correct answer.

SC5: Deducing the Writer's Attitude and Tone from the Text-based Clues such as Word Selection, Choice of Grammatical Forms and Background Knowledge

Sometimes authors do not want to explicitly declare their stance on an issue but implicitly imply it through their selection of words and grammatical forms and expect the reader to interpret it for themselves. Some authors use irony and satire to express their feelings and ideas and leave the interpretation to the readers. Here a reader's job is to use his background knowledge and textual clues available in the text to decode the hidden message of the author. Accompanying examples from the tests present similar cases.

T2Q10: Find an appropriate title for the text which reflects the main theme or the real message conveyed by the author.

This question asks the reader to identify the author's attitude and message on the issue of having too much knowledge. Since the title of the text is deleted by the researcher, students have to identify the overall message conveyed by the author and come up with a title which reflects the author's views on the issue. The reader's job is to infer the writer's stance from the word selection, presentation of ideas and examples chosen by the author. The original title of the text was "Too much consciousness is

driving us nuts". 35 percent of the students were not able to find a title that overlapped with the writer's stance.

T3Q20: The writer hopes the amount of importance given to fantasy images and inflated advertising language will fade away as a result of the terrorist attack. True or false? Explain.

This question can only be answered by identifying the author's exact attitude towards the topic since he does not explicitly express his position. His attitude can be identified only after reading all the paragraphs since clues are spread over the whole text. A careful reader can easily identify the words and phrases through which the author expresses his position, which is parallel to the above statement in T3Q20. Some clues are frequent use of quotation marks, exaggerated language, and ironical language style spread throughout the text. Readers can also benefit from their knowledge of the world: the attack on the World Trade Center and its aftermath, and the attitudinal changes in the American media and public towards life and other countries. However, 40 percent of the students were not able to give the correct answer, which is True.

SC: 7 Understanding the Cultural Implications of Words, Phrases and Sentences in their Specific Context

Some words might arouse different connotations for people from different cultures. An EFL reader's job is to perceive the implications of words loaded with cultural meaning as perceived by native speakers. Some expressions might mean less than they seem to mean for native readers of English, which makes comprehension more difficult for EFL readers. The following examples are just a few of such instances from the tests.

T6Q2: Fill in the blanks considering the first paragraph.

"**In the fast food industry, top-priority is given to …**"

This question tests the readers' understanding of the word "godliness". The first sentence of the text states that "In the fast food industry, cleanliness is next to godliness, but portion control is not far behind." Without understanding what it means "to be next to godliness", and without knowing that human cannot achieve "godliness", a reader cannot identify the item which has the top priority. Some students said it is godliness itself, whereas some others said it was portion control, and also cleanliness. In other words, without knowing the concept of "godliness", the reader has a less chance of putting the items in the order of importance. And it was the case with most of the students reading the passage: 42 percent could not decide on the correct answer.

T6Q17: The American Obesity Association (p.11) looks like the name of an association which tries to … . However, … .

This question asks the reader to detect the cultural differences between the two different schemata that the name of the institution arouses in the readers' mind and the actual role of it in the American society. Any reader who sees the name "American Obesity Association" thinks that it must be an institution which tries to cure or prevent obesity in the public. However, as mentioned in the text, this schema is not validated since this association provides legal help to obese people. The readers were not so good at seeing this difference and 45 percent of the students failed to fill in the blanks correctly.

SC: 8 Inferring the Communicative Value of Statements (Illocutionary Force)

Reading teachers must not only be aware of cultural and socio-linguistic differences underlying the communicative behavior of native and non-native users of English, but also transmit such awareness to their learners while reading authentic texts from the target culture. Inferring the intended meaning or communicative value of a statement, which shows the function of that sentence -to inform, to warn, to threaten, to criticize or to compliment- directly adds to the overall comprehension of a reader by revealing the author's intention. Below are two example questions that show how students might fail to realize the communicative value of statements.

T6Q6: Rewrite (paraphrase) "You don't need a statistician to tell which way the bathroom scales are tipping". (p.5)

This question requires the reader to figure out the writer's intended message and then paraphrase it. This sentence shows that the author holds the American people responsible for their being overweight because, he believes, it is not so difficult to interpret the numbers on a bathroom scale. Some students (49 %) were stuck with the literal meaning and failed to read between the lines; they could not recognize the communicative value of the statement.

T3Q11: The author agrees that the home protection device which triggers an ultrasonic tone upon detection of any motion is a vital instrument for home owners against messy pets. True or False?

Although this statement is incongruent with the overall message conveyed by the essay, some students mistakenly believed that this statement reflected the author's

real belief and they based their thinking on a specific sentence, whose communicative value they failed to recognize. It was the sentence in the fourth paragraph: "a catalog advertises a home-protection device that, if a sensor detects any motion or vibration, triggers an ultrasonic tone "followed by the digital recording of your command." 38 percent of the students interpreted this statement as reflecting the author's literal thinking and failed to give the correct answer: False.

4.5 Difficulties in Strategic Competence

Strategic competence in reading involves the effective use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to facilitate comprehension or repair the comprehension problems in case any occur while reading. Some examples are paying attention to word formation and using one's morphological knowledge to guess word meanings, relating cultural references to one's own culture and developing tolerance for ambiguity, using one's background knowledge to make smart guesses about the text content, monitoring comprehension failure and recognizing inconsistencies, guessing the meaning and use of unknown vocabulary from contextual clues, benefiting from the title and the non-linguistic text features such as pictures, charts and diagrams, etc.

Without developing effective reading strategies, rapid and correct comprehension would not occur by itself. The effective readers are the ones who can actively use their thinking skills, act logically and use their linguistic abilities at the highest level to make the most out of a text and regularly check their comprehension of text to confirm what they understand is correct.

Table 10 Reading Skills Related to Strategic Competence

C- Strategic Competence:
1)   Guessing the meaning and use of unknown vocabulary from contextual clues T1Q4, T4Q6, T4Q7, T4Q8, T4Q9,T4Q10, T4Q13, T4Q14, T6Q7, T6Q8, T6Q10, T6Q11, T6Q13, T6Q14, T6Q16, T6Q18, T6Q20, T4Q15,-20, T4Q22, T4Q24, T4Q28-51, T3Q4, T3Q7-9, T3Q12, T3Q18, T3Q21-40, T5Q1, T5Q5, T5Q7, T5Q9, T5Q10, T5Q11, T5Q13, T5Q14, T5Q19, T5Q16, T5Q20-25
2)   Finding the main idea of a paragraph before getting into smaller details T5Q3, T5Q12, T3Q15
3)   Understanding what a question demands before reading the text T5Q12,
4)   Using logical reasoning upon encountering difficulty in comprehension T5Q12, T6Q6, T6Q8, T4Q22, T1Q11,
5)   Benefiting from the title and the non-linguistic text features such pictures, charts and diagrams T4Q1, T3Q19,
6)   Recognizing the unknown words that can not be guessed from context
7)   Using deductive reasoning over the text T4Q24, T5Q12, T1Q17A, T1Q11, T6Q6
8)   Using inductive reasoning over the text T1Q10, T1Q6, T1Q5, T1Q2, T1Q13, T1Q18,
9)   Recognizing contradictory and supportive ideas T5Q17, T6Q12, T4Q25, T4Q26,
10)   Locating where an idea is mentioned in the whole text T4Q27
11) Monitoring comprehension failure and recognizing inconsistencies T4Q27, T3Q20, T3Q11, T2Q12, T1Q17,
12) Activating and using background and general world knowledge T5Q8, T5Q14, T5Q16, T1Q11, T2Q7, T6Q17, T6Q5, T6Q6

Below are some categories of strategic competence in reading in which readers had difficulty.

ST1: Guessing the Meaning and Use of Unknown Vocabulary Items from Contextual Clues

Almost every authentic text includes a certain percentage of unknown vocabulary. Research by Laufer (1989) and Liu and Nation (1985) shows that readers need to know 95% of the words in a text to gain adequate comprehension and be able to guess the unknown words from context. In addition, using a dictionary is not always a practical solution to dealing with unknown words. Let alone the burden of carrying a dictionary at all times, frequently referring to a dictionary slows down the reading speed and becomes a boring task after a while. Thus, it is essential readers attempt to guess the meanings of unknown words to better comprehend authentic texts.

This category was the most frequent one since it is at work at all levels of comprehension. It might be at the word level or at times it might affect the comprehension of the whole text if the message is hidden in one key word. It usually goes hand in hand with discourse competence.

T4Q22: What can an SUV be (p.7)? How do you make this inference from the text?

The seventh paragraph in the text talks about the unsettled character of progress: Each new solution brings with it another problem. For example, you have access to easy communication thanks to cell phones. But you cannot escape office calls and must get around "in dread of lunatics who speed in *SUV's* while yakking into cell phones". The readers were expected to understand that SUV must be a kind of a vehicle in which you could speed and talk on the phone. Here, the preposition "in" helps the readers to infer that it must be a vehicle and also the verb "to speed". However, 86 percent never thought that it could be a car. They said it might be a computer game, or a space shuttle, failing to provide the correct answer.

T5Q14: Who can be the "patrons"? (L. 44) Explain or describe.

To be able to answer this question, a reader has to visualize the scene of a poor musician who is sitting on a subway stair and playing an instrument while some people are rewarding his/her performance by putting a few coins into a hat lying on the ground. One sentence in the fourth paragraph of the text gives the clues: "As you wait for your train, you can listen to (sometimes) talented musicians from around the globe, some merely pounding on drums, others trying out bona fide repertoires for whatever patrons will put into their hats." Here, the reader also has to activate some cultural knowledge or schemata: In subways, there are beggars playing instruments and asking for money. And some people who appreciate their music usually donate some amount of money to help them. Yet, some students were misled by the Turkish word "patron", meaning "a boss", and believed that the bosses of these musicians were putting the money into the beggar-hats. The answer to the question would be the "subway riders" or "passengers" who help the poor musicians. However, 35 percent of the students could not guess the meaning of "patrons" correctly.

ST3: Understanding What a Question or Task Demands Before Reading the Text

Some students are quite impulsive in their answers and do not take enough time to reflect upon what the task/question demands before they start looking for the right answer in the text. This skill is also related to paying enough attention to the question stem. The result of not doing so is usually a wrong answer as can be seen in the following example from test 5.

T5Q12: Considering subway is economical for passengers, how much do you have to pay to go to Brooklyn or Queens?

This is a simple question as long as the students carefully read the question stem and also the relevant sentences in the third paragraph. It is only a matter of simple calculation. The paragraph gives information about both taxi fares and subway fares while comparing the two. The paragraph starts in the following way:

> Why, then, do New Yorkers swear by it? One reason is economic: $1.50 to travel any distance, anywhere in the city. Compare that with a $12 cab fare from, say, the United Nations to Columbia University, on the other side of Manhattan. Traveling to New York's so-called outer boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn or the Bronx - anything entailing a bridge from Manhattan - can easily cost three times as much.

Some students (35 %) calculated how much the fare would be if you took a cab and said $36, rather than calculating how much it would cost by subway, $1.50, failing to provide the right answer. They did not pay attention to the question stem and ignored the word "economical" in the question stem. They also ignored the fact that taxis have to pay a toll to cross the bridge, but that subways do not cross bridges.

ST4: Using Logical Reasoning upon Encountering Difficulty in Comprehension

Another crucial strategy readers need to employ during reading is to be able to apply logical and critical reasoning skills upon encountering difficulty in understanding. Below is one example that shows some students might fail to use their logical thinking skills when they realize they are experiencing difficulty in comprehension.

T2Q3: Explain the expression "to sweat the small stuff" in your own words (p.2).

The second paragraph of the text is as follows:

It may be true that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but we are coming increasingly closer to appreciating the wisdom of the old folk saying that ignorance is bliss. The more we know, the more nervous we become and the less able we are to put things into perspective. It has become impossible not to "*sweat the small stuff*." When it comes to advertising, we had better check the small print, for as the maxim cautions, the big print giveth; the small print taketh away. We only have to listen to an announcement about some new medication's glorious effects--followed by the quiet rejoinder telling us that "this may not be for everyone" and that nausea, cramping, headaches, etc. may accompany it. Headlines give us news about likely cures for cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and even old age, only then, almost as a footnote, to confess that these are still in the experimental stage and, even if successful, getting them on the market is years down the road.

Although the author does not explicitly explain the idiom "to sweat the small stuff", he later provides examples where people have to "sweat the small stuff". It is normal for EFL readers not to know this expression and have difficulty in making sense out of it. However, upon thinking logically, a reader is expected to look for clues or evidence as to what it might mean in the close context of the paragraph and the whole text. The clues, underlined in the paragraph above, are of great help to a reader who knows how to relate examples and ideas to each other. 62 percent of the students could not give the correct answer. Although the number of such questions were limited in the tests, it is clear that some students may have such problems while dealing with authentic texts that include idiomatic expressions.

ST11: Monitoring Comprehension Failure and Recognizing Inconsistencies

An important sign of healthy comprehension is monitoring the comprehension process. Monitoring comprehension is the ability of a reader to be aware, while

reading, whether a text is making sense or not. In other words, a reader has to be aware whether he is on the right track or not, whether he experiences inconsistencies in his comprehension and what he can do to fix the problem. When we are reading a particularly challenging text, or we are having problems comprehending a text, we are more aware of our efforts to monitor our comprehension. Additionally, our strategy use is more controlled and we are consciously thinking about what strategies we might use to help get us on track again. When we are aware of our need to monitor our comprehension as we read a text, and when we purposefully choose strategies to help us understand that text, our efforts are metacognitive.

We have some in-head strategies such as comparing and contrasting ideas, generating questions about the text and relating the information to our personal experiences, as well as rereading the important parts. Yet, some poor readers are not aware that they have not comprehended what they're reading. Here is one example related to identifying the inconsistencies.

T3Q11: The author agrees that the home protection device which triggers an ultrasonic tone upon detection of any motion is a vital instrument for home owners against messy pets. True or False?

The answer to this question lies in the middle of the text. It might be normal for the readers not to realize that they misunderstood the author's message. However, many students, who could not give the correct answer for this question, correctly answered questions 13 and 16, which contradict the above statement. If the writer is criticizing fantasy images and the elevation of ordinary (question 13), how can he be fascinated by such a trivial instrument designed to roust pets at home? Although

questions 13 and 16 were answered correctly by all the readers, the percentage of students who could answer question number 11 was 62. This shows that some students did not monitor their comprehension and thus were unable to recognize the inconsistency.

ST7: Using Deductive Reasoning over the Text

When people think deductively, they accept certain ideas as givens or general laws, and then they place specific examples as complying with those laws or general statements. In reading comprehension, this means that a reader can find the main idea of paragraph or text and then apply it to specific statements considering all the other clues. Below are some examples in which the students failed to apply deductive reasoning.

T5Q12: Considering that the subway is economical for passengers, how much do you have to pay to go to Brooklyn or Queens?

This question requires the reader to identify the topic sentence or main idea of the paragraph and then use that information to calculate how much one would have to pay to go to a place mentioned. The first sentence of the paragraph gives the main idea: **"**One reason is economic: $1.50 to travel *any distance, anywhere in the city.*" In other words, the distance to the place does not matter at all while calculating the fare. All places are just $1.50. However, 35 percent gave a wrong answer to this question.

T1Q17A: Paraphrase the sentence "Man doesn't live by bread alone." in your own words.

The third paragraph's main idea is that money and happiness are mutually exclusive, and this is stated in the topic sentence of the paragraph: "Any seasoned

traveler can attest to the fact that wealth and happiness usually do not cohabit." The third paragraph completes this one by providing some more empirical evidence. The idea promoted in this paragraph is stated in the topic sentence:" It is not a new insight that the relationship between material and emotional welfare seems to be an inverse one". In this context, the sentence" Man does not live by bread alone" means that man needs more than material possessions to be happy because, according to the paragraph, Jesus Christ uttered this to criticise materialists' world view. Otherwise, it would not support the main idea. 43 percent of the readers were unable to paraphrase this sentence correctly.

ST8: Using Inductive Reasoning over the Text

When people think inductively, they observe conditions around them and draw general conclusions based on these specific elements. While reading, the readers are expected to draw conclusions based on the available examples or specific ideas about a notion. In the following example, the readers failed to successfully carry out inductive reasoning.

T1Q10: Provide a synonym from the text for each of the following words: (p.4-L.2)

1-visceral: **2-cerebral:**

The text does not explicitly define what cerebral and visceral are. However, the fourth and fifth paragraphs provide some example behaviors and characteristics of cerebrals while comparing them with viscerals. Some typical characteristics of cerebrals mentioned in the text are: thinking too much, self scrutiny, being cultured, being elite, deep thinker and a well-rehearsed frown. Some words implicitly describing viscerals are: shallow, unsophisticated, thinking ignorance is bliss, and

being uncultured. Taking all these clues into consideration, the readers were expected to find synonyms for "cerebral" and "visceral". However, 85 percent failed to provide a correct answer.

ST5: Benefiting from the Title and the Non-Linguistic Text Features such as Pictures, Charts and Diagrams

While dealing with authentic texts, some information outside paragraphs such as pictures, footnotes, titles, charts and diagrams might be useful in making sense of the text. At times they are even more informative than the text for an effective reader. Only in two of the tests was such a question asked: in the fourth test, to see whether the students would go to the end of the essay and read the footnotes in fine print, and in test 3 to see whether the students could figure out why the author put such a picture over the text (See appendix A). Other tests also included some pictures, but students were not asked questions related to them.

T4Q1: What do you think an "excerpt" is?

There is no mention of the definition of excerpt or any other clues about it, but only an introductory sub-title about the book being introduced. However, at the very end of the essay on the bottom of the second page, in fine print, it says in capital letters: "FROM THE PROGRESS PARADOX: HOW LIFE GETS BETTER WHILE PEOPLE FEEL WORSE, BY GREGG EASTERBROOK. © 2003 PUBLISHED BY RANDOM HOUSE.

35 % of the students were not able to give a correct answer to this question, and almost all of those who answered correctly already knew what excerpt meant: No

reader read the fine print at the very bottom of the page. They all gave answers using their lexical knowledge of the word.

T3Q19: The writer put the "Marlboro-man" picture over the text to show the fantasy images of the magnificient American spirit. True or False?

The author put a picture of the Marlboro Man, as advertised by the company in their campaigns, over the text to make it more attractive and also used the picture as proof to verify his ideas. Most of the students (85 %) got this question right maybe solely because it was a True-false item, not an open-ended question.

ST12: Activating and Using Background and General World Knowledge

Background knowledge is the information a student already has about a certain subject or content area. Students gain knowledge about a wide range of topics through their daily lives, interests, experiences, family, and community. When students read, they draw on their background knowledge to help make sense of new information.

This skill requires the reader to integrate his cultural/background knowledge into his reading ability while dealing with new information in authentic texts. In other words, a reader has to activate his general world knowledge to make sense of statements which are difficult to interpret only through linguistic means. The following questions required some use of background knowledge.

T6Q5: What does a "height-to-weight-index" tell us? (p.3)

In the third paragraph of the text, it is claimed that two thirds of American adults "20 to 74 years old are classified as overweight (using a common height-to-weight index) as are about one in six young people ages 6 to 19." Here, the text does not give information about the index, but using their background knowledge on the

topic, they are expected to describe what a height-to-weight index indicates. Good readers who had never encountered such an index could have used the words "using" and "to classify" and said that it is a device used to classify people as to whether they are overweight or not by looking at their height and weight. 34 percent of the readers were unable to interpret this phrase.

T6Q17: Fill in the blanks.

The American Obesity Association (p.11) looks like the name of an association which tries to ………. However; ………

The students are expected to activate their background knowledge and schemata about such organizations and then check this piece of information against new information in the text, and realize the difference between the two. Although the name seems to suggest that the organization is trying to help prevent obesity and cure it, the real function of it, according to the text, is to provide legal help for obese people to sue fast-food companies like Burger King and McDonalds. Yet, 45 percent of the students could not correctly answer this question.

4.6 Difficulties in Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence is the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary; knowledge of how words are structured into sentences, as well as knowledge of morphology and semantics. Insufficient knowledge of the readers in any of these components might result in poor comprehension.

The table below shows the linguistic skills that are tested in the quizzes used in this study.

Table 11 Reading Skills Related to Linguistic Competence

D- Linguistic competence:
1) Identifying the right meaning of a word in context using lexical knowledge T1Q1A, T1Q1B, T4Q1, T4Q2, T4Q5, T4Q22, T4Q23, T4Q28-51, T3Q4, T3Q21-40, T5Q5, T5Q13, T5Q19-25, T6Q2, T6Q11, T6Q13, T6Q14, T6Q16, T6Q20
2) Understanding grammar structures such as tense and parts of speech T5Q3, T2Q2
3) Correctly expressing what is understood from a text T5Q6, T4Q2, T2Q11, T2Q12, T5Q17
4) Recognizing and using morphological clues and word formation rules T1Q11, T4Q9, T4Q4, T4Q8
5) Paraphrasing a statement using one's own words T1Q1A-B,
6) Understanding how punctuation marks change or add to the meaning of words, phrases and sentences T4Q12, T2Q6,
7) Understanding idiomatic expressions and everyday language T5Q13, T6Q12, T6Q14, T3Q1, T5Q16, T2Q2
8) Differentiating between literal and figurative or connotative meanings of words and sentences T5Q1, T6Q7, T6Q9, T4Q5, T3Q2, T3Q3, T3Q4, T3Q5, T3Q14,
9) Understanding relations within a sentence between subordinate and main clauses T6Q2, T3Q3, T3Q5

L1: Identifying the Right Meaning of a Word in Context Using Lexical Knowledge

L1A: Recognizing the meanings of words

There were a great number of words that the students did not know. As can be seen from the vocabulary sections of the quizzes, students had some amount of difficulty since they did not know the meanings of the words. However, this was not a huge hindrance to their reading and did not stop them. For example, the vocabulary section in test 2 shows that out of 15 vocabulary items asked in the test, only four

items got a score above the average. Likewise, in test 3, only 8 items out of 20 got a score above the average.

To sum up, there were many vocabulary items that the students had not seen before, but they were still able to read the text. Understanding the relations among units of meaning and using their discourse competence were more helpful than knowing each individual word in a text during the reading process, as also reported by the students themselves.

L1B: Dealing with words with more than one meaning

Some words might have different meanings in different contexts and it is up to the readers to use his/her lexical knowledge in order to arrive at the correct meaning intended by the writer. For full comprehension to occur, it is essential that a reader be able to guess the right meaning of a key word with more than one meaning. Homonyms or homographs are especially hard to process, as readers seem to fix on one meaning, but do not detect lack of fit in the context. Sample questions below indicate such instances.

T6Q13: How does the last sentence of p.7 help us understand the meaning of "run through"? Explain.

The verb "to run through" occurs once in the following context:

> Americans like to talk the talk of svelteness, but they walk the walk of obesity. Diets and exercise equipment are obsessions, but they can be <u>run through</u> as quickly as a platter of buffalo wings on a football Sunday. Abdomenizer and Deal-a-Meal infomercials fill the airwaves, but a few months later, the Abdomenizers are hidden in the backs of closets and the Deal-a-Meal cards are the stuff of yard sales.

This verb has the following meanings according to the Cambridge Online Dictionary:

run through sth
to repeat something in order to practise it or to make sure that it is correct
We had to stay behind at the end of the rehearsal to run through a couple of scenes.
run-through noun
We'll certainly need time for a run-through before the concert.
to explain or read something to someone quickly
I'll just run through what I've written with you and see if you've anything to add.
He ran through a list of names but I didn't recognize any of them.
if you run through money, you spend a lot of it very quickly
In just under six months he'd run through all the money his father had left him.
if a quality runs through something, it is in all of that thing
The theme of the domineering mother-figure runs through all his work.
Sadly, racism runs right through society.

The readers are expected to either draw on their vocabulary knowledge or contextual clues to be able to identify the right meaning of the verb. The most appropriate meaning for this context is the one related to spending money very quickly. Possible answers would be "to give up so quickly" or "to become outmoded". However, only 58 percent could answer this question correctly.

T6Q20: How do you know that "file" does not mean "dosyalamak" (to put papers into a file) in Turkish?

The verb "to file" occurs in the following context:

…This summer Mr. Barber, who has had two heart attacks, <u>filed</u> a class-action lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court, claiming that McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and Kentucky Fried Chicken put his health at risk by not disclosing what was in their food or warning him about the dangers of overconsumption. The food industry dismisses Mr. Barber's lawsuit as frivolous. But some legal experts liken his action to the early lawsuits filed by smokers against the tobacco industry. …

The most frequent meaning of the verb "to file" known by Turkish EFL students is "To put or keep (papers or documents) in useful order for storage or reference". And this question was aiming at increasing their awareness of contextual clues such as "NY state Supreme Court", "dismisses" and "the early lawsuits", which help the readers

identify the right meaning of a word. They were expected to detect the clues that show "to file" had another meaning than the one they already knew. This task was not easy at all for them and 45 percent failed to provide correct answers.

L5: Paraphrasing a Statement Using One's Own Words

Paraphrasing or rewriting involves understanding the intended meaning of a statement and re-expressing it using your own words. In this way, it also depends on students' linguistic competence. If a reader is able to assign the correct meaning to a statement given in a context, it shows that the reader has grasped the meaning encoded by the author of the text. The following questions are examples of such kind.

T5Q3: Paraphrase the second sentence of the first paragraph:
"I've actually come to enjoy it."

This sentence tries to detect whether the readers are able to identify the intended meaning of the sentence using the contextual clues. Although most of the students understood the gradual aspect of the verb "to come", some students (42 %) mistakenly believed that the sentence was showing purpose: The author came to the USA to enjoy the subway. Those students also ignored the use of present perfect tense in the sentence, which shows that it cannot express purpose, but refers to a gradual process.

L7: Understanding Idiomatic Expressions

Some of the barriers in comprehending authentic texts originate from unknown idiomatic expressions. If the reader encounters such an unknown expression, he has to draw on other linguistic elements and contextual clues. If nothing helps the reader, it is

possible to miscomprehend some information. In the following examples, the readers

had difficulty caused by such unfamiliar idiomatic expressions.

T2Q2: Explain the following expression:

 "Indulge in a goody" (p.7):

> Quite frankly, we are done being bawled out. Guilt has been heaped upon us as a by-product of this endless nagging to devour less fatty food, eat smaller portions, and <u>indulge only rarely in an occasional goody</u>. In a much--touted ad campaign, Kraft Foods promises to help us by making its myriad products with less salt, sugar, fat, etc. The manufacturer claims it will offer smaller portions and reduce the prices accordingly. (This cynic wonders if it's not so much goodwill that prompts this marketing change as it is the fear of lawsuits, given the strange but current notion that everyone is a victim rather than a free agent.)

Most of the students (59 %) did not know the meaning of "to indulge in a

goody" and failed to give a correct answer to this question. The rest were able to get

the meaning through contextual clues such as "less fatty", "smaller portions", "rarely",

and "occasional".

T2Q3: Explain the expression "to sweat the small stuff" in your own

words.

This expression occurs in the following context:

> It may be true that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but we are coming increasingly closer to appreciating the wisdom of the old folk saying that ignorance is bliss. The more we know, the more nervous we become and the less able we are to put things into perspective. It has become impossible not to <u>"sweat the small stuff."</u> When it comes to advertising, we had better check the small print, for as the maxim cautions, the big print giveth; the small print taketh away. We only have to listen to an announcement about some new medication's glorious effects--followed by the quiet rejoinder telling us that "this may not be for everyone" and that nausea, cramping, headaches, etc. may accompany it. Headlines give us news about likely cures for cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and even old age, only then, almost as a footnote, to

confess that these are still in the experimental stage and, even if successful, getting them on the market is years down the road.

Most of the students (62 %) were not familiar with the expression "to sweat the small stuff" and failed to provide the correct answer.

T6Q12: What is the relation between "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" in p.7? Explain what you understand.

Americans like to <u>talk the talk of svelteness, but they walk the walk of obesity</u>. Diets and exercise equipment are obsessions, but they can be run through as quickly as a platter of buffalo wings on a football Sunday. Abdomenizer and Deal-a-Meal infomercials fill the airwaves, but a few months later, the Abdomenizers are hidden in the backs of closets and the Deal-a-Meal cards are the stuff of yard sales.

If the students knew this phrase was used to express contrast or concession, they could easily answer this question. Some of them were able to get the correct meaning from the contextual clues such as "but", "svelteness" versus "obesity", but still 34 percent of the students failed to provide the right answer.

T6Q1: How do you know that "desserts", in the title, must be a play-on-words or have another meaning (in addition to sweet food)?

The title of the text is:

"OUR JUST (BURP!) DESSERTS" by HENRY FOUNTAIN

This question did not directly ask the meaning of the expression "(our) just desserts", but the title's relation to the text. If the phrase meant just sweet food that we eat after meals, there would not be a logical connection between the title suggests and what the text actually discusses. So, it must have had another meaning. Since the text is not simply about "desserts", "just" must mean something else, too: This idiom employs *desert* in the sense of "what one deserves". If the students were aware of the meaning of this phrase, they would easily relate the title to the text. However, 52

percent of the readers failed in this question since they did not know the meaning of the expression.

L8: Differentiating between the Literal and Figurative or Connotative Meanings of Words and Sentences

To understand a text, students need to know how to decode words and make inferences. Some sentences and words mean much more than their literal meaning offers. Very often, words and sentences acquire implied meanings once they are embedded in a real context. Multiple meanings of words often cause comprehension difficulties, especially for learners of English as a second/foreign language.

For some of these readers, there is a tendency to interpret each word separately and literally, but figurative meaning must be identified as a whole, considering not only the isolated words, but the total context. Input from the reader's experiential background is essential in the construction of meaning. Examples below from the tests further illustrate the readers' difficulty.

T5Q1: A) What does the word "underground" mean in the title? B) Which phrase refers back to this word in the first paragraph?

The students were supposed to decide whether the word "underground" had its usual meaning with which they were familiar, "below the surface of the earth", or another meaning. When the students related the title to the whole text, they were able to give the correct answer. But, when they took it separately, failure was unavoidable. 41 percent of the students were unable to find out that underground meant "the subway".

T3Q4: There were even some literary works written about these expensive boots.

In this question, the students had to interpret the following sentence in the first paragraph:

> Shortly before September 11, I walked into a mountain outfitter's store to buy a pair of winter boots. Ninety-five dollars later, I strode out not with mere boots, but with Rocky-brand Pathfinder Extremes--shoes with more intimidating capabilities than a daisy-cutter bomb. <u>Rocky's literature</u> assures me they are "aggressively styled." Rather than insulation, they have a "moisture-wicking fleece lining." If ordinary boots have inner soles, mine possess authoritative-sounding "footbeds.…

Some students (43 %) who could not relate literature with informative tags on the shoes (little brochures or advertisements) interpreted the underlined phrase as "literary works" and failed to give the correct answer. They also failed to use the background knowledge that authors do not write literary works on shoes. In addition, they ignored the verb "to assure", which means to "attempt to convince/persuade".

4.7 Overall Interpretation of the Results

Considering all the questions in which students experienced difficulty, discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence, followed by strategic and linguistic competence, proved to be problematic.

The main problem was that students lacked the capacity to digest the information from texts and make it their own. They were too dependent on the wording of the texts while writing their answers. This might mean that they could not totally comprehend the text but just found the relevant information through scanning. Also they had more difficulty in answering textually implicit questions than textually explicit questions, as Alderson (2000) also categorized them as local and global questions.

Another problem they experienced was the incapacity to follow lexical cohesion. They were not able to relate the concepts to each other and create a meaningful whole out of all the smaller pieces. This caused difficulty in getting the overall message of the texts as well as getting the main ideas of paragraphs and finding the topic sentences.

They also had difficulty in inferring the communicative values of statements and interpreting them correctly in line with the overall message. They were challenged by references to cultural events and concepts. Making inferences and drawing conclusions about matters directly mentioned in the texts were also challenging for the students.

Some students were not able to effectively use reading strategies such as deductive and inductive reasoning and monitoring their comprehension. At times, they failed to activate their relevant schemata and background knowledge to interpret new information.

Vocabulary was a good predictor of comprehension. Especially for poor readers, unknown vocabulary items posed a greater deal of difficulty, hindering their ability to make inferences and guess the meaning of words from context. If the amount of unknown vocabulary was overwhelming, as in the third quiz, they were discouraged to use their linguistic, discourse, sociocultural and strategic competencies effectively. Identifying the right meaning of words and dealing with idiomatic expressions were two of the linguistic problems. There were few grammar points they did not know, but vocabulary posed a relatively bigger problem in reading the authentic texts. However, it did not hinder their general understanding. Some students' comprehension level was

unable to go beyond literal comprehension. They misinterpreted figurative use of language and could not arrive at implied meanings.

It is generally assumed that abstract texts will be harder to understand than describing real objects, events or activities. Another implicit result of the study proved this belief: students had more difficulty dealing with abstract topics such as "excessive awareness" and "happiness" as can be seen from the average scores of the exams based on these topics. For example, test 2 discussed an abstract philosophical topic and students reported having a hard time dealing with it.

It is also assumed that literary texts are somehow harder to process, either because of the multiple layers of meaning they are held to contain or because of the wider and more complex range of language they exhibit. Looking at the mean scores of the tests given below, such a case can be observed in the third quiz: Although the questions were in true-false format, the students were not able to grasp the full meaning of the text since the author used a satirical style (use of mocking overstatement) through which he criticized the arrogant and patronizing American public. If they had required short answers, their difficulty would have doubled and their scores would have been much lower than at present.

As for the students' relative achievement in a six-week period, there was a gradual development in their scores as can be observed from the average scores of the quizzes below.

Test	1	2	3	4	5	6
Means	62,77	48,53	66,22	66,62	69,08	68,47

These results show that the tests were almost at the same level of difficulty. The gradual increase in the scores can be explained by learning through instruction and familiarity with question types.

Finally, the interaction among *text features* such as syntactic, lexical, discourse and topic of texts and *reader variables* such as reading skills, competence in the foreign language, and background and general world knowledge is so interdependent that no one specific variable can be shown to be the single most important factor.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Presentation

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the discussion of findings, implications for EFL reading classes and recommendations for further study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

At the beginning of the study, it was assumed that a larger portion of the reading difficulties were more related to strategic and linguistic competence than discourse and sociolinguistic competence as mentioned in the meeting of the reading teachers in the department. To this end, a committee of three was formed to devise reading tests that included a variety of reading skills.

First, six different reading tests or examinations were prepared by the researcher through frequent consultation with the two other members of the committee. These exams included different types of questions related to different reading skills. The response type was usually open-ended questions requiring short-answers, but also fill-in-the-blanks and true-false items were used.

After designing these exams, each item on the examinations was analyzed in terms of CC and labels were assigned by the researcher. Then, these items were negotiated with the two other committee members and a consensus was reached. At the same time, an inventory of reading skills was formed.

Next, these tests were consecutively administered, one each week. The exams were first marked by the researcher and then by the two other committee members. There was 85 percent inter-rater reliability between the two raters. For the items that caused conflict, they negotiated together and arrived at a shared decision.

As the next step, the results of the exams were analyzed and difficult items were selected. The researcher identified the skills that were tested through these difficult questions by looking at the labels given to each question before.

Finally, the results were analyzed to see the general problems of the students in reading and which components of CC were more problematic.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The first research question concerned finding the common problems that result in failure in reading comprehension. The results of the exam showed that the students were weak at the following reading skills: The items with asterisks are relatively more problematic than others.

- *Identifying inter-sentential relations and lexical coherence

- Deducing the meaning of sentences with the help of cohesive devices

- Following the line of reasoning of the writer

- Recognizing the overall message of the text

- *Comparing ideas mentioned in different parts of the text *

- Recognize the topic of a text and give a name or title to the text

- *Putting together smaller pieces of information spread over text to make inferences (too much text dependence problem)

- *Identifying the main ideas of paragraphs

132

- Understanding rhetorical organization and its effects on the way information is presented

- *Arriving at the right answers by the integration of the different paragraphs of a text together (like putting all the pieces together to solve a puzzle

- *Understanding and defining concepts which are not clearly/explicitly defined through analysis of any features or examples given in the context

- Recognizing the inter-paragraph relations through reference and understanding how one specific paragraph fits into the whole text (the role/function of each paragraph in the making up the whole text)

- Understanding and awareness of the social context of the text: d) The purpose of the text

- *Identifying the appropriate meaning of a statement/sentence in a specific context/setting

- Understanding the meaning of culturally based information (information with cultural references : Recognizing the writer's purpose in selecting certain words and examples)

- Deducing the writer's attitude and tone from the text based clues such as word selection, choice of grammatical forms and background knowledge

- *Understanding the cultural implications of words, phrases and sentences in their specific context

- *Inferring the communicative value of statements (illocutionary forces)

- *Guessing the meaning and use of unknown vocabulary from contextual clues

- Understanding what a question demands before reading the text

133

- Using logical reasoning upon encountering difficulty in comprehension

- Benefiting from the title and the non-linguistic text features such pictures, charts and diagrams

- *Using deductive reasoning over the text

- *Using inductive reasoning over the text

- Recognizing contradictory and supportive ideas

- Monitoring comprehension failure and recognizing inconsistencies

- *Activating and using background and general world knowledge

- Identifying the right meaning of a word in context using lexical knowledge

- *Differentiating between literal and figurative/connotative meanings of words and sentences

- *Understanding idiomatic expressions and everyday language

- *Paraphrasing a statement using one's own words

The second research question aimed to find out the component of communicative competence at which the students were weakest. As understood from the results of the exams, it is obvious that discourse competence occupies that position, followed by sociolinguistic, strategic, and linguistic competence.

Most of the reading skills that the students had difficulty in applying fall into the category of discourse competence since discourse competence helps the readers to relate words, sentences and paragraphs to each other. Without digesting the contextual clues and textual relations intertwined throughout texts, they were unable to interpret the meanings hidden on the page.

Sociolinguistic competence was also problematic since students were not familiar with the cultural references and implied meanings of certain words and phrases. Another reason for this situation was that the readers did not share with the writer the same cultural experiences, assumptions and understanding and view of the world.

As for the strategic competence, students were sometimes unable to use the necessary strategies to facilitate their comprehension of the texts. They were not always aware how they could increase their comprehension: They lacked meta-cognitive strategies.

In terms of linguistic competence, vocabulary and idiomatic expressions accounted for most of the problems. Rewriting ambiguous sentences and interpreting figurative language were the other elements that caused difficulty.

To conclude, discourse competence was weakest component among all the others and linguistic competence, except for the vocabulary aspect, was the strongest.

5.3 Implications of the Study for EFL Reading Classes

The third research question was related to the implications of this study for the teaching of reading in EFL contexts.

This study shows that EFL reading teachers should include a large variety of subskills of reading and attempt to teach beyond the sentence level comprehension and also beyond the literal comprehension. Teachers can use the list of reading skills developed in this study as a check mechanism to see how broad their aims and objectives are while designing their course syllabus and in their actual teaching.

135

Not only should the traditional skills related to linguistic and strategic competence, such as skimming and scanning techniques and answering literal comprehension questions, be emphasized, but also discourse and sociolinguistic competence should be given greater priority than at present. A healthy balance of all four components is the ideal for the readers to get the best results in their reading comprehension.

Critical thinking skills, logical reasoning and problem-solving should be emphasized in the reading classes, too. Reading is more effective when it is purpose-driven. Hence, it can be integrated with writing and literature courses so that students read for authentic reasons. Meanwhile, they will have the chance to develop academic skills such as summarizing, paraphrasing, giving personal judgment and criticizing the content of the texts by referring to the text.

Training the students on how to benefit from discourse and contextual clues, logical thinking skills and providing them with an introductory target language culture course would help them become better readers.

Lastly, overall understanding and implied messages of authors should be regarded as the ultimate aim of the reading process. If teachers view the reading process and the teaching of reading from a CC perspective, they will focus on a far greater number of components than has usually been the case and see the reading class as a place to develop students' CC, not just their reading skills. It will also lead teachers to see how reading courses are interrelated with other skills courses such as speaking and writing, which also have a CC focus.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

First, the focus of this study was not quantitative and detailed item analysis was not done for the questions. Further studies should pay attention to the quantitative aspects and run item difficulty and item discrimination analyses to exactly determine where the real difficulties lie.

Second, future studies can attempt to test each component separately with different tests. In other words, they can aim to decrease the effect of compounding variables.

Third, the exams should be administered to different and larger learner groups and their reliability should be higher.

Finally, there should be higher inter-rater reliability and markers should be trained by an expert in the field.

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APPENDIX A

FLE 126 (04) READING SKILLS 2
QUIZ #1

PART 1

•**Read the questions carefully and use only the space provided to write your answers. Write legibly and check your grammar.**

<mark>**D:Discourse, Sc:Sociolinguistic, St:Strategic L:Linguistic**</mark>

A- Answer the following questions by referring to the text provided. (each 0,5 pts.)
1-a)Paraphrase the subtitle in very simple language (eveyday language) .

L5

b)Paraphrase the sentence "they had sown the seeds of efficient agriculture".

L5

2-Find a word <u>in the first paragraph</u> which comprises (includes) all of the following concepts:

"peasant, fertilizer, crop, sow, harvest"

D 1B

3-How do we understand that "Alas" has a negative or a positive meaning? (p.1-L.4)

D 1E, D1C

4-Which phrase or word gives clue as to the meaning of "subsist"? Explain.(p.1-L.11)

ST 1, D1E, D1D

5-Which <u>sentence</u> helps us guess the meaning of "affluent" and "impoverished"?How? (p.2-L.6 & 9)

ST1, D1A, D12, D5A-B

6-Explain the words "empirical" and "impressionistic" in your own words. (p.3-L.1 & 2)

D14, ST1, D1A

7-Which words or sentence(s) help us guess the meaning of "upbeat"?Explain. (p.3-L.14)

D1B, ST1, D9

8-a)The second paragraph provides empirical evidence for the fact that money and happiness have an inverse relationship. True - False

D12, D13

b)What is the main idea of the third paragraph?

D12

9-What does "this strange phenomenon" (p.4- L.   1) refer to?

D3

10-Provide a synonym from the text for each of the following words: (p.4-L.2)

1-visceral: 2-cerebral:

D1A, ST1

11-Explain what you understand from the word (an epistemological term) "oxymoron". What might it mean? Consider the sentence "A happy intellectual is an oxymoron."(p.4-L.12)

D14, D13, ST1, ST4, SC6, L4(MORHOLOGY),

12-Which word(s) give(s) information about the meaning of "yardstick"?Explain.

D1A, ST1

13-Which sentence states the main idea of the fourth paragraph? (p.6-L.2)

D12 , L5,

14-Which word can replace "subsistence"? (p.6-L.13). Explain.

L1, L8, ST1, D1B, D5A

15-What is the white man's logic to reach happiness?

D13,D2, D5, D12, SC2, ST4

16-In the first paragraph, why does the author give the example of African peasants? What does he try to achieve?

D13, D8, D15(inter-paragraph relations)

17- a) Paraphrase the sentence "Man doesn't live by bread alone." in your own words.

SC3, SC2, SC8, D5, L8, L2, L5

b) Paraphrase the sentence "Too much self-scrutiny is not conducive to happiness." in your own words.

L5, ST1, D12

18- According to the text, intellectual minds search for the ways to happiness. True - False

SC1D, D6

19-Americans fall into the group of viscerals whereas Mexicans fall into the group of cerebrals.

True - False

D1A, D13, D8

20-What is the attitude of the writer towards the topic? What message does he try to give the readers?

D6, SC5

B- Find words in the text for each of the following words or definitions. Then write them next to each word/definition. Words are in the mixed order.(They are <u>not</u> chronologically listed as they occur in the text.) (0,25 pts. each)

ST1, D1a,b,c,d,e, D14, L1

1- Amusement, joyfulness -n. ....

2- Characteristic, sign, hallmark –n. ....

3- Criterion, measure –n. ....

4-Affirm, verify -v. ....

5-Occur, live, exist together -v. ....

6- Villager -n...................................

7-Based on words and feelings, not factual info or numerical data- adj.

....

8- A group of ships –n. ....

9-Eye-glasses for a horse –n. ....

10- Harvest -n. ....
11-Produce, result in –v. ....
12- Survive -v. ....
13- Experienced, hardened -adj...................................
14-Moral tale, anecdote, story –n. ....
15-Short sleep, snooze –n. ....
16- Uneducated, ignorant –adj. ....
17- Raise -v. ....
18- Be amazed/surprised -v. ....
19- Pleased, satisfied -adj. ....
20- Crazy, eccentric –adj. ....

GOOD
LUCK!!!

Gerd Behrens

Healthy, Wealthy and Unhappy

Why is it that economic success does not necessarily bring personal contentment?

SOME YEARS AGO, THE STORY GOES, A LARGE CORPORATION gave African peasants fertilizer so that their crop would double. And indeed it did. The businessmen thought they had sown the seeds of efficient agriculture. Alas, when the next season came the peasants didn't plant anything. "Why don't you plant?" the businessmen asked. The peasants thought this question somewhat silly. "Our last harvest was double," they replied. "We have enough to feed our families till next year." Whether a rural legend or not, the story illustrates the different answers people give to the question, How much does man need? One says, "Enough to subsist." Another may say, "As much as possible." The latter certainly creates more wealth. But does he also create more happiness?

Any seasoned traveler can attest to the fact that wealth and happiness do not usually cohabit. Visit Europe and be mystified by the unsmiling faces and furrowed brows in the most affluent countries. Visit Africa and marvel at the laughter and general merriment, even in the most impoverished ones.

For those who prefer empirical to impressionistic evidence, there are opinion polls. I recall that back in the '80s, a survey asked Western Europeans the mother of all questions: Are you happy? The Germans, the richest, were the most miserable. The Irish and Portuguese, the poorest, turned out to be the most contented. In 1998, a global survey by the Angus Reid Group constructed a Hope Index, asking people how optimistic they felt about the future. Pessimism reigned supreme in Europe, particularly in the countries along the Rhine. In Germany (per capita GDP $28,000) only 18% of the respondents were upbeat about the future, and in France ($26,000) it was 17%. By comparison, South Africa ($3,500) and Brazil ($4,400) scored 42% and 64% on the Hope Index. It is not a new insight that the relationship between material and emotional welfare seems to be an inverse one. When the carpenter of Galilee declared that man does not live by bread alone, he reminded all those who see man as *Homo oeconomicus* of their materialist blinkers.

What is the explanation for this strange phenomenon? Maybe it has to do with the cerebral and the visceral. Mankind has known for a long time that too much self-scrutiny is not conducive to happiness. "Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so," John Stuart Mill wrote more than 100 years ago. To intellectuals, the pursuit of happiness is something unbecoming of cultured people. It is appropriate, the élite might argue, only to the shallow and unsophisticated. How many novels or movies about happy people win critical acclaim? Anguish and discontent are taken as the mark of a deep thinker, a well-rehearsed frown as his badge. *Pace* Epicurus, a happy intellectual is an oxymoron.

To the cerebral, it is not so much that ignorance is bliss, but that bliss is ignorance. Suffering is often seen as a precondition not only for great insights, but for any meaningful existence. I suffer, therefore I am. Marcel Proust, one of the great malcontents of all times, held that the only possible paradise is the one we've lost. And if there are no obvious problems one can always invent some. Thinking up problems serves as a makework scheme for the problem-solving classes.

The realization that wealth breeds unhappiness calls for a new yardstick to measure human development. The current scale, the United Nations Human Development Index, classifies countries according to per capita income, literacy rate and life expectancy. These criteria, unsurprisingly, were drawn up by people with high per capita income, high literacy rates and high life expectancy. On this index a nation with a large proportion of short-lived illiterate subsistence farmers scores virtually zero. A nation of neurotics with two Ph.D.s each who will live to 90 gets full marks. The Bakutu, a tribe living in the Congo region of Central Africa, have always considered the white man's logic a bit batty. They call him *lolema djola feke*, "the bat that flies intensely but knows not where to."

According to the parable of the businessman and the fisherman, some Mexicans agree with the Bakutu. On holiday in a fishing village, an American businessman watches a local fisherman haul in a rather small catch. "Why don't you stay out at sea longer and bring in more fish?" the visitor inquires. "I like to spend my time playing with my children, taking a siesta with my wife, playing the guitar with my friends," the Mexican answers. The American is not impressed. "If you worked harder you could buy a second fishing boat, then a whole fleet. You could head up a large corporation, move to New York and list it on Wall Street. Eventually you could sell your stock and become very rich." "And then, señor?" the fisherman asks. "Then comes the best part", the businessman replies. "You retire. You move to a Mexican fishing village. You take a siesta with your wife and play with your children ..."
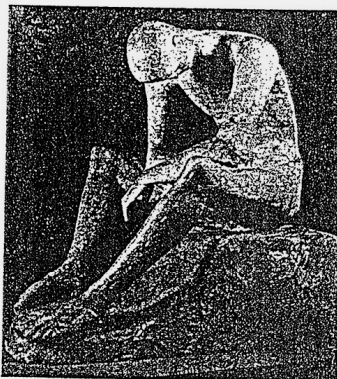
151

A- Answer the following questions based on the text given. Fill in the blanks providing the missing information where necessary (Based on the text titled "Too much consciousness is driving us nuts!").

1-According to paragraph one, all the famous names cited agree that

_____

D9, D1D, ST8, ST9, ST3, SC8

_____

2- Explain the following phrases/sentences:

We are done being <u>bawled out</u> (p.7):

_____

<u>Indulge in a goody</u> (p.7):

_____

ST1, L1, L7, L8, D1d,

3- Explain the expression "to sweat the small stuff" in your own words.

D1D, ST2, SC7,

4-The author misses the news programs in the past; specifically the

_____ of the news presenters .The news programs in the

past used to better appreciated because

_____

D12, D13, ST7

5- Which sentence/phrase of the 6th paragraph informs us about how neutral or biased the war related news was? Explain why it was the case. SC7, SC5, L6

_____

_____

6-Why do you think Kraft Foods has changed their marketing strategy as suggested by the author?

D13, D12, D1D,

7-The author talks about the wrong actions of the older generations to show/ prove the reader that

_____

D1D, D6, , SC6, ST2

8-How do paragraph 7 and 8 relate to the general theme and purpose of the whole text. Explain.

D12, D16

9-Some people have started to ignore the terror alerts and the underlying reason, besides economic and practical reasons, is the fact that

_____

D13, ST7

10- Find an appropriate title for the text which reflects the main theme or the real message conveyed by the author.

_____

D10, D12, ST7, SC5

11- Summarize the article in one sentence using your own words._____

ST9

12- Does the last paragraph contradict the first one? Explain. D15, D12, L1

13-Explain the phrase "years down the road".(p.2)

B- From the words underlined, find a word in the text which means the same as, or is synonymous with, the following words/definitions below:

L1, L8, ST1,

1-   To exclaim (v.) **:**

2-   to trouble(v.):

3-   tired, worn out, exhausted (adj.):

4-   to gratify, bow to(v.):

5-   a moral fault or failing (n.):

6-   satisfaction, satiation (n.):

7-   to eat greedily (v.):

8-   to praise or publicize loudly (v.):

9-   to spread something lavishly (v.):

10-   to assemble, to position (v.):

11-   endeavor, venture (n.):

12-   to indicate, to show, to mean (v.)

13-   military forces (n.):

14-   take steps or action, behave accordingly (v.):

Excessive awareness is driving us nuts BY Gerald F. Kreyche

I CAN'T RECALL WHO, but in a fit of frustration, one of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's characters blurts out, "Too much consciousness is a disease--a thorough-going disease." Although we recognize this as a redundancy, it was meant to point to something that plagues our world. Columbia journalism professor Todd Gitlin writes in his new book, Media Unlimited: How the Torrents and Sound Overwhelm Out Lives: "We're cursed with awareness [of] data bases, archives, libraries." We long have been told by existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as by Marxists, that the point is not so much to absorb knowledge, but to act upon it.

It may be true that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but we are coming increasingly closer to appreciating the wisdom of the old folk saying that ignorance is bliss. The more we know, the more nervous we become and the less able we are to put things into perspective. It has become impossible not to "sweat the small stuff." When it comes to advertising, we had better check the small print, for as the maxim cautions, the big print giveth; the small print taketh away. We only have to listen to an announcement about some new medication's glorious effects--followed by the quiet rejoinder telling us that "this may not be for everyone" and that nausea, cramping, headaches, etc. may accompany it. Headlines give us news about likely cures for cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and even old age, only then, almost as a footnote, to confess that these are still in the experimental stage and, even if successful, getting them on the market is years down the road.

Many of us are weary of the staccato of news items constantly being thrust upon us. Each month seems to bring another concern for our health: asbestos inhalation, mercury poisoning, mad cow disease, anthrax, small pox, West Nile virus, and now SARS.

The media--through TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet--bring us daily (nay, hourly) world and local reports, hype, fashion, politics, editorials, how-to projects, medical breakthroughs, etc. These all pander to the Aristotelian insight that humans have an insatiable desire to know. Yet, that sage philosopher also warned that a virtue gone to an extreme often becomes a vice.

Things were different decades ago, as information and its distribution were nowhere near as overwhelming. In the 1930s and 1940s, "Movietone News" was a special feature that unspooled with motion pictures in the local theater. The same for "Pathe News." Necessarily, these always presented stale reports, as it took days to put the "shorts" together. Still, they served a purpose in visually updating us, if belatedly, on the world scene. Those were the days when radio dominated and we looked forward to the optimistic presentation of Gabriel Heater, as he opened his program with, "There's good news tonight, folks." Even the crackling, high-pitched voice of H.V. Kaltenborn was eagerly anticipated. Few of the gathered listeners dared to interrupt those broadcasts with casual conversation. That would be as impolitic as talking during a "Lone Ranger" broadcast.

The question today is how much news--good, bad, or purely informational--can we absorb? There must be a saturation point and, perhaps, we have reached it. At the start of the war with Iraq, we were fed almost nothing but news and commentary, with other items either ignored or pushed into the

background. Despite the importance of the war and what it signified, many of us could not take the incessant drone of that theme. Then, too, the major news networks all seemed to present the same material and you could almost switch from one to the other without recognizing the difference. Moreover, many of us questioned the objectivity of the news from reporters "'embedded" with the troops. Some critics translated the term to mean "in bed" with the Pentagon.

Quite frankly, we are done being bawled out. Guilt has been heaped upon us as a by-product of this endless nagging to devour less fatty food, eat smaller portions, and indulge only rarely in an occasional goody. In a much--touted ad campaign, Kraft Foods promises to help us by making its myriad products with less salt, sugar, fat, etc. The manufacturer claims it will offer smaller portions and reduce the prices accordingly. (This cynic wonders if it's not so much goodwill that prompts this marketing change as it is the fear of lawsuits, given the strange but current notion that everyone is a victim rather than a free agent.)

If we reflect for a moment, we wonder how was it possible for our parents and grandparents ever to have lived into their 70s and, sometimes, even 80s. After all, they drank cream-laden milk, slathered plenty of butter on a variety of foods, fried all sorts of things in lard, and took several teaspoons of sugar in their coffee. They did not eat soy bean products or tofu, and very few were vegetarians. Nor did they follow any Mediterranean diet with olive oil a major ingredient--and don't forget the smelly garlic. (Realistically, the facts are that if you are 70 years old, you have a better chance of reaching 80 than a current-day 50-year-old does.) So why pay attention to all these alarms?

We are being scared to death more by the ominous tone of terrorism rather than by terrorism itself. Now we know the meaning of the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Frankly, we are becoming numb to announcements of new terror alerts. Recently, Arizona declared it would ignore some of the national security alerts as they were proving too costly to marshal resources. Besides, who can keep straight the color symbols for heightened or lowered anticipation of attack?

Yet, in some ways, we don't get enough news since there is a lack of "'follow-up" to stories that once captured the headlines. We want to know how things turned out. Environmentalists were screaming that the Everglades were drying up. Is this still true or not, given the abundance of rain the Southeast has received? What ever happened to the stolen computers from Los Alamos and what kind of secrets were in their database? What is the status of the search for radioactive materials the Department of Energy can't account for? And couldn't some enterprising reporter find out more about the Russian submarine Kursk that met disaster? Too often we are left in limbo, but then again, we are getting used to it.

#	T / F	State whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) by referring to the text "Perfuming The Pig". Explain briefly why it is True or False in the space provided.
1		The man (author) spent more than he had expected in the outfitter's. L7, SC2, SC4, SC5
2		He bought not only winter boots, but also some other expensive shoes. L8, D1A,D9
3		The man must have been looking for such high quality boots and was happy to eventually find them. L8,L9,D8, SC1
4		There were even some literary works written about these expensive boots . ST1, L8, D1B, L1, SC1
5		The man felt relief as he would not die even at the temperature of –54C. L8,L9,D8, SC1
6		The man now regrets buying these boots since he paid an exaggerated price for them. D8, D9
7		After the attack, the Americans began to rely more on their abilities than wealth. D12, D1D, D1B,ST1, B3
8		In the past, European cultures were more simplistic and direct than American culture. D12, ST1

9		American shoes reflect the highest technology and development of the United States of America. D12, ST1
10		"Pathfinder Extremes" is used as a fantasy image for winter boots. D14,D9,D15
11		The author agrees that the home protection device which triggers an ultrasonic tone upon detection of any motion is a vital instrument for home owners against messy pets. SC3,SC5,SC8
12		The author is against what is ostentatious or officious. SC5,ST1, D12, D9, D5
13		Perfuming the pig means the same as overreliance on fantasy images and elevation of the ordinary. D1D, D10, D14, ST 9, SC 4
14		"Custom Towing" had to change its name because of the shift in their business area. SC8,SC2,L8
15		The writer believes that the college students wrote their titles on their business cards to prevent confusion among the company staff. D12,SC8
16		The writer is not content with overreliance on fantasy images and calls this overhyped language "perfuming the pig"" D15, D13, SC5
17		The writer thinks that Pathfinder Extremes are not good enough to be used in Everest or Hindu Kush, very cold and snowy places. D1D,D12,D6
18		Overhyped language like "aggressively styled", or "moisture wicking fleece" psychologically makes people tougher and more active in time of war, like in Afghanistan. ST7, ST1,

19		The writer put the "Marlboro-man" picture over the text to show the fantasy images of the magnificient American spirit. <mark>ST5, D10</mark>
20		The writer hopes the amount of importance given to fantasy images and inflated advertising language will fade away as a result of the terrorist attack. <mark>D12, ST11</mark>

Refer to the specified lines in the text and try to guess the meanings of the words listed below. Use the context in which each word is used to be able to make correct guesses. <mark>ST1, L1,L8, D1A-B-C</mark>
1-intimidating (p.1, 5th line) means;
2- smack (p.2,4) means;
3- deed(s) (p.2,7) means;
4- machismo (p.2,9) means;
5-opaque (p.3,2) means;
6-candor (p.3,5) means;
7- cynics (p.3,5) means
8-mundane (p.3,9) means;
9-paragon (p.3,9) means;
10-blatant (p.3,10) means;
11- brim with (p.4,2) means;
12- roust (p.4,10) means;
13- yearning (p.5,1) means;
14-officious (p.5,3) means;
15-chagrin (p.5,11) means;
16-obtuse (p.6,5) means;
17- rampant (p.5,1) means;
18- bivouac (p.7,5) means;
19- summon (p.7,5) means;
20- tobaggoning (p.7,7) is related to .... sports.
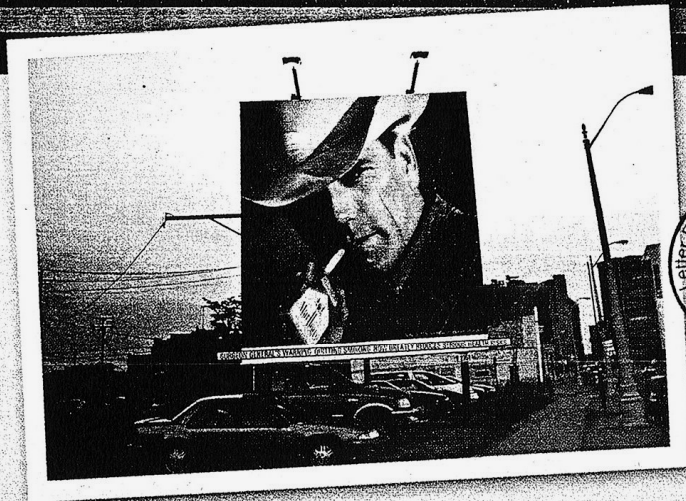
PERFUMING THE PIG • *By John McCormick*

SHORTLY BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, I WALKED INTO A mountain outfitter's store to buy a pair of winter boots. Ninety-five dollars later, I strode out not with mere boots, but with Rocky-brand Pathfinder Extremes—shoes with more intimidating capabilities than a daisy-cutter bomb. Rocky's literature assures me they are "aggressively styled." Rather than insulation, they have a "moisture-wicking fleece lining." If ordinary boots have inner soles, mine possess authoritative-sounding "footbeds." Their rubber components are "scent-free" and "ozone-resistant," solutions to boot problems I never knew existed. And they are rated to keep my toes warm when the air is -54°C, a temperature at which the rest of me would, in all likelihood, be dead.

These days, though, I don't feel as proud of my purchase as I did back in August. I think I know why. The press has it that we Americans are a more sober, sensible lot since the grim sport of terrorists smacked us in the face. We are focused now on the simple, on the essential, on the mission at hand. Out here on the great Midwestern prairie, that verdict sounds pretty accurate. In the past we too often relied on our overly hyped possessions, rather than our deeds, to convince us we are a strong people. We let the exaggerated and euphemistic claims of marketers sell us machismo. In short, we got our sense of worth by reading the manufacturer's tags hanging from our Pathfinder Extremes.

American culture used to be the blunt, plain-spoken cousin of the more courtly and opaque European cultures from which it sprang. But along the way, especially during the long economic boom of the 1990s and the casual comfort it brought to many of us, we lost much of that candor. Cynics in my part of the country call this overreliance on fantasy images "perfuming the pig," shorthand for attempts to make things more appealing and empowering than they really are. Through a decade of too much plenty, even items as mundane as winter boots have come to be peddled as paragons of high technology and class-conscious sophistication. Nowhere is this problem more blatant—and, this year, more so "last decade"—than during the holiday gift-buying season now in full swing.

Our holiday mail-order catalogs, most of them written before September 11, brim with products and phrases intended to confer on buyers this overbaked sense of confidence and control. Exam-

ple: one catalog advertises a home-protection device that, if a sensor detects any motion or vibration, triggers an ultrasonic tone, "followed by the digital recording of your command. Options include having your commands at low or high volume." Wow! How have I survived without that weapon against terrorism? Except that the purpose of this fearsome-sounding device isn't to capture stray Al Qaeda warriors. It's to roust pet dogs that jump on the furniture when no one's around to say "Get off."

This yearning to elevate the ordinary has grown rampant. On one front after another, Americans choose the ostentatious or officious rather than the direct and honest. I buy my running shoes from a store that sells men's tights with "waffle-weave performance," whatever that is, and women's jogging bras with "superior sweat management." And this urge to complicate reaches beyond materialism. At my church, we no longer have hymnals; we have "worship aids." When my car's engine failed along a busy expressway several weeks ago, I tried to locate a car-hauling company I'd used before, Custom Towing. I discovered to my chagrin that the business now goes by a new name: Custom Automotive Recovery Inc.

Inflation of job titles is a related cancer. In the 1970s, I knew a couple of college students who earned money by selling firewood to homeowners. The students gave out business cards that left no doubt as to who did what in their two-man company: "Tom Smith, President. Rob Johnson, Worker." Today, obtuse and supposedly impressive titles like director of strategic planning clutter Corporate America. If you're not at least an executive vice president by the age of 35, the neighbors will whisper that you probably just mop floors.

If the terror attacks put us in a mood to separate the useless chaff from the valuable wheat in our lives, discarding overhyped language and phony fantasies should be high on the agenda. I did not buy Pathfinder Extremes, I bought boots. I will wear them not to bivouac in the Hindu Kush until I'm summoned to rescue storm-battered climbers from Everest, but rather to take my kids tobogganing. And if I slip back into thinking that aggressively styled footwear makes me a tough guy, I will remind myself that, in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance got a lot done in sandals.

MCCORMICK *is the deputy editorial-page editor of the Chicago Tribune.*

FLE 126 (04) Reading Skills 2
Quiz #4

While reading the text titled "If life is good, why do the old days look better?" answer the following set of questions on both comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

1.   What do you think an "excerpt" is?
SC1A, ST5, L1

2.   Paraphrase the subordinate clause in the title. What does it mean for life to be "good"?
L5, L1, SC7

3.   How do you understand whether the word "intriguing" has negative or positive meaning?
SC1D, D1A, D2

4.   What can be the meaning of "contradiction"? How? Which other word is it related to in the same sentence?
D1C, D1A, D2

5.   Is "generation" a time expression/word? How do you define generation in your own words? List any examples.

L1, L8

6.   Find a synonym for "to materialize" which fits into the same context?
ST1, D1B

7.   Provide two other verbs (in the same paragraph) that can replace "struck".
ST1, D1B

8.   How would you guess the meaning of "affordable" through the contextual clues?
ST1, D1A-B-C

9.   What do you think the meaning of "overindulgence" is? Explain how and why.
ST1, L4

10.   What can be a synonym for "plague"?

ST1, D5A, D5B

11.   How would you understand "strawberry" is fruit, vegetable but not pie or cake?
D1A, SC7

12.   Why do you think "Utopia" starts with the capital letter "U" ?
L6, SC6, SC7

13.   Does "steady" have a + or - meaning? How do you understand? Any words as clues?
D5A, D2, ST1

14.   What/Who can be the "pollsters"? Give your reasons.
ST1, D9, D14, D1A

15.   What can be the meaning of "to budge" and what are the clues in the context? List specific words/phrases.
ST1, D1A, D1B

16.   Think of a word, which has the same meaning as "gloominess". How do you understand this meaning through context?

ST1, D5A, D1A

17.   Find two phrases/expressions which are related to "happiness" in the 3rd paragraph.
D1A, ST1, D12, D2

18.   Find a word which is the opposite of "small" in the 3rd paragraph.
ST 1, D1B, D1C

19.   Find a pair of synonymous phrases, one in the 3rd paragraph, and the other in the 5th one.
D1A, ST1, D1B, D1C

20.   Find a phrase in the 5th paragraph which can replace "psyche" mentioned in the 3rd paragraph.
D1A, D1B, ST1

21.   Do you think inheritance, a rigged system or quasi-larceny all have a positive meaning? How do you arrive at this conclusion?
D2, D5A, D5B, D1A, D12

22.   What can an SUV be? How do you make this inference from the text?
ST1, ST4, D1A, L1, L8

23.   What is the relationship between "constrained" and "to feel trapped"?
L1, D1A, D2

24.   How do you understand the meaning of "gratitude" from the context?
ST1, D12, D1A, ST7

25.   What is the solution to pessimism according to research results mentioned in the text?
D6, D12, D13, SC3, ST9

26.   According to the text, why are Americans unhappy or dissatisfied?

D8A, D6, D13, ST9

27.   Why is anxiety hard-wired into humans by evolution? Explain in your own words.

ST 10, ST11, L5, D12, D2
Try to guess the meaning of the following words by the help of the contextual clues available in the text. Synonyms are also acceptable. (Paragraph numbers are given in parentheses)
ST1, D1A, L1

28.	peruse (4):	42.	lunatic (7):
29.	lavish (4):	43.	to yak (7):
30.	agonizing (4):	44.	to undergo (8):
31.	unprecedented (4):	45.	overwhelming (8):
32.	sustain (5):	46.	to cease (9):
33.	calamity (5):	47.	conundrum(9):
34.	hard-wired (5):	48.	episode (10):
35.	bounty (5):	49.	toil (1):
36.	tangible (5):	50.	advent (1):
37.	to connote (6):	51.	inner (5):
38.	beneficiary (6):		
39.	polio (7):		
40.	to crop up (7):		
41.	dread (7):		

Gregg Easterbrook

If Life Is Good, Why Do the Old Days Look Better?

Author Gregg Easterbrook offers intriguing theories about the contradictions of modern life in a new book, The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse *(Random House; 355 pages). An exclusive excerpt:*

SUPPOSE YOUR GREAT-GREAT-GRANDPARENTS, who lived four generations ago, materialized in America of the present day. Surely they would first be struck by the scale and clamor of 21st-century living. The physical speed of contemporary life would also shock them; we live, work and try to relax surrounded by steel objects whizzing past, many of them guided by teenagers. Yet as your ancestors learned more about how we live, they would be dazzled. Unlimited food at affordable prices—strawberries in March!—so much to eat that in the Western nations, overindulgence now plagues not just the well-off but the poor. College as the common destination for the young, not just a place for the wealthy. Many other aspects of day-to-day life would amaze our recent ancestors: medical progress that in a century has increased the average life span from 41 years to 77; the end of backbreaking physical toil for most wage earners; the advent of instantaneous global communication and same-day travel to distant cities; home ownership for the majority, with air conditioning and flat-screen TVs for the masses. Our era knows, as well, incredible advances in freedom:

freedom of expression, sexual freedom, freedom from conscription. All told, your great-great-grandparents might say modern America is the realization of Utopia.

Yet how many of us feel positive about our moment, or even believe that life is getting better? Despite steady gains, it is common to hear Americans say, "My parents had it better than I do." Today Americans tell pollsters that the country is going downhill; that they feel unbearably stressed out; that their children face a declining future. The percentage of Americans who describe themselves as "happy" has not budged since the 1950s, though the typical person's real income has more than doubled. Far from feeling better about their lives, many are feeling worse. Such gloominess may seem strange in a country of ever higher living standards and personal freedom, but since discontented views are indisputably common, there must be reasons why they are held. Here are a few theories:

THE REVOLUTION OF SATISFIED EXPECTATIONS Research conducted by Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University, and by others who have come to about the same conclusion, shows that most people judge their well-being not by where they stand but rather on whether they think their circumstances and income will improve in coming years. For example, in the 1950s, when most American families lived in small houses, owned one car, and few if any family members attended college, people were in good spirits because they expected soon to earn and possess more. Now huge numbers of families live in spacious houses, own at least two cars, and send most children to college. But because so many now have so much, it's hard to expect that the coming years will bring significantly more. The expectation that each new year will be notably better than the last, once deeply ingrained in the American psyche, is fading. Many millions of Americans find they have what they once dreamed of having—and it does not make them happy.

CATALOG-INDUCED ANXIETY Today anyone can peruse the specifics of millionairehood. Television obsessively documents the lavish lives of the wealthy and glamorous. This creates, for some, a condition that might be called catalog-induced anxiety. People can see, in agonizing detail, all the expensive things they will never possess. This may make what a typical person possesses seem insufficient, even if the person is one of the tens of millions of Americans living, by the standards of history, in unprecedented comfort and freedom.

COLLAPSE ANXIETY Deep-seated in the

minds of many is a fear that the West cannot sustain its current elevated living standards and liberty. We fear the economy will collapse, or natural resources will run out. We fear that the West's military bulwark will be neutralized by some genetically engineered bio-horror; that terrorism or environmental calamity will overwhelm societies based on openness and plenty. Some amount of never-ending anxiety may be rational, keeping us on guard. Perhaps anxiety is even hard-wired into us by evolution, as the most fretful of our ancestors (the ones always warily scanning the horizon) were the ones who survived and passed their attitudes down to us. Collapse anxiety is essential to understanding why Americans do not seem more pleased with the bounty that most of us enjoy—and this anxiety was in our minds well before Sept. 11, 2001, when the physical collapse of the twin towers made tangible an inner fear.

ABUNDANCE DENIAL It seems almost a matter of human nature that most people reject the idea they are prosperous. Surveys show the majority of Americans think only the very rich are well-off; that no matter how much they make, most Americans believe twice as much income is required to "live well." One reason Americans deny they are well-off is that this connotes being the beneficiary of favoritism: since through history so much affluence was obtained via inheritance, a rigged system, or various forms of quasi-larceny. Today most people obtain what they possess fairly. Yet Americans seem programmed to deny that they are well-off, which only detracts from our ability to appreciate what's going well in our lives.

THE UNSETTLED CHARACTER OF PROGRESS We'd like to think progress causes problems to be solved in a final sense, and sometimes that happens. Polio, for example, is a solved problem, thanks to vaccines. The supply of coal, an issue that once kept Winston Churchill awake at night, is a solved problem. But often as not, problems exist in a chain of cause-and-effect: For each one solved, a new one crops up. Wireless phones solve the problem of easy communication but also mean you can't escape office calls and must move about in dread of lunatics who speed in SUVs while yakking into cell phones. Use of coal, plentiful and cheap, may contribute to global warming. The sense that new problems always arise to replace the old makes many people reluctant to believe life is really getting better.

THE CHOICE PENALTY During the postwar era, Western life has undergone a transition from people being so constrained by social forces that they felt trapped, to the current situation of millions having so many options that choice itself becomes overwhelming. Whom to marry, where to live, what to do—most people now make these choices on their own and freely, but then suffer an endless self-doubt that did not exist in eras when most people's choices were made for them. The choice penalty may be particularly hard on women, who once had relatively little control over the paths of their lives, and now in most cases have complete choice: so much so that choice itself becomes a cause of anxiety.

FROM MATERIAL WANT TO MEANING WANT Ever larger numbers of people enjoy reasonable standards of living, but may feel an inner pang on the question of whether their lives have purpose. Predicting a transition from "material want" to "meaning want" is not to say that people will cease caring about material things; it is a prediction that millions will expect both pleasant living standards *and* a broad sense that their lives have purpose. This is a conundrum as the sense of meaning is much more difficult to acquire than material possessions.

THE VIRTUE OF GRATITUDE Psychological research suggests at least one important item of advice regarding the progress paradox: we should be more grateful. This matters not as a point of moralizing but as an issue of self-interest. "Gratitude research is beginning to suggest that feelings of thankfulness have tremendous positive value in helping people cope with daily problems, especially stress, and to achieve a positive sense of the self," says Robert Emmons, a professor of psychology the University of California at Davis. People who describe themselves as feeling grateful to others, and grateful either to God or to nature for the gift of life, tend to have higher vitality and more optimism, suffer less stress, and experience fewer episodes of clinical depression than the population as a whole.

If there was ever doubt, modern American life proves that money cannot buy happiness. This is not necessarily cause for pessimism about what the country's future may hold. In recent decades, life has become better in numerous areas where problems were supposedly unsolvable—pollution, crime and discrimination, to name three. We have the power to address other supposedly unsolvable problems too—among them global warming and global poverty. But the ever better life that seems likely for our children may not make us any happier unless we change ourselves, as happiness comes only from within. ▪

67

165

FLE 126-04 Reading Skills 2
QUIZ #5
Part 1-Answer the following questions based on the attached text.
(each 0,5 pts.)

1.   A) What does the word "underground" mean in the title? B) Which phrase refers back to this word in the first paragraph? **SC2, D1A, L8, ST1**

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2.   Is "surprise" (L.1) used in a positive or negative sense? Explain your reasons.
SC5, SC2, D5A

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3.   Paraphrase the second sentence "I've actually come to enjoy it." **L5, SC5, L7**

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4.   What does "so" refer to? (L.7)**D3**

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5.   A)What does ambivalent mean?(L.8)Which clues help you guess the meaning of this word? B) Why is he ambivalent?**D9, ST1, L1**

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6.   What is the main idea conveyed in the second paragraph?**D12,D7,L3**

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7.   **Which words can replace a)crumbling (L.13) and b)paralyze (L.14).ST1, D1A, D5**---
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8.   **Can you infer from the text why the security of passengers is reduced? Explain how it occurs. SC7, SC8SC3**

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9.   **What kind of "papers" are being talked about in line 16? Explain. SC7, ST1**

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10.   **What does "indictment" mean? How do you arrive at that meaning from the context?ST1, D1D, D9**

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11.   **Paraphrase the first sentence of the 3rd paragraph. L5, ST1,**

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12.   **Considering subway is economical for passengers, how much do you have to pay to go to Brooklyn or Queens? D3, ST4**

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13.   **In the 3rd paragraph, A) Find a word related to "hauling". B) Find another word related to "moving". (L.36) D1A, D1B, , ST1, L1**

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14.   Who can be the "patrons"? (L.44) Explain or describe.SC6, SC3, ST1, SC7

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15.   Paraphrase the sentence "Your fellow riders are a jostling microcosm of a teeming cosmopolis." (L.44) Use your own words. L5, D1A,

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16.   Describe how romance can start and develop as "straphangers". ST1, SC6

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17.   What message does the 5th paragraph tell us? Explain in your own words. D12, D16,ST9

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18.   If you wanted to give headings to paragraphs, what would you prefer for the paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. Use your creativity and common sense. D16, D6, D10, D15

2:
3:
4:
<u>Vocabulary:</u> **ST1, D1A,B,C,D,E, L1**

19.   Pound (L.43)
20.   Scrawl (L.20):
21.   Sympathetic(L.23):
22.   Get around (L.5):
23.   Stratum (L.46):
24.   Epitomize (L.59):
25.   infrastructure (L.13):

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Shashi Tharoor

One of the biggest surprise of my life in America is the New York City subway. I've actually come to enjoy it. When I first moved here in 1989, well-meaning friends warned me away from the already octogenarian underground railroad, notorious among both residents and visitors as the least pleasant and most dangerous means of getting around this City That Never Sleeps. Yet it was also the fastest and the most economical means of doing so.

With that dilemma, I began my life as a New Yorker-and I've remained ambivalent ever since. The subway is the thing we love to hate. Schedules are unreliable. Trains come when they come, or not at all. Breakdowns are so frequent that women have been known to give birth, stuck in some tunnel. Staff are few- and their announcements incomprehensible. The infrastructure is ancient and crumbling. From time to time, burst water pipes flood stations, paralyzing traffic. The city's homeless live on the platforms, sleeping on benches (or in the trains themselves) and heightening passengers' insecurity. Every few months the papers report the familiar horror of yet another innocent randomly- pushed under the wheels of an oncoming train. Muggings, rapes and murders are not common, but they happen. Add to this the often dirty cars and graffiti-scrawled stations, the hellish heat in summer and the arctic freeze of winter, and you have quite an indictment. A writer at The Washington Post called the New York subway "a near-unworkable mixture of the ancient, the old, the outmoded and the inefficient." And he was being sympathetic.

Why, then, do New Yorkers swear by it? One reason is economic: $1.50 to travel any distance, anywhere in the city. Compare that with a $12 cab fare from, say, the United Nations to Columbia University, on the other side of Manhattan. Traveling to New York's so-called outer boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn or the Bronx - anything entailing a bridge from Manhattan - can easily cost three times as much. The subway is also fast. A ride from midtown Manhattan to Flushing Meadows, the site of the U.S. Open tennis tournament, can take as little as 25 minutes; the same trip is upwards of an hour by car, and then you still have to find parking. Small wonder that even millionaires (which is to say, anyone who owns a two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan) carry a Metrocard, the card with a plastic strip that has replaced the metal tokens of old. And considering just how much moving and hauling the subway does each day, you can't help but be impressed. For the subway is an enduring marvel of mass-transit engineering: trains make 6,800 trips each day over 731 miles of rail, carrying 3.7 million people.

The subway, I find, is also oddly liberating. It takes you not only to your destination, but along the way to another world. As you wait for your train, you can listen to (sometimes) talented musicians from around the globe, some merely pounding on drums, others trying out bona fide repertoires for whatever patrons will put into their hats. Your fellow riders are a jostling microcosm of a teeming cosmopolis: men, women and children from every stratum of society, of every imaginable color, sporting all kinds of dress (or undress) and chattering in most of the languages of the planet. Romances among subway riders are not unknown; marriages have been reported between people who met as straphangers.

Of course, there is no first class. On one trip recently, I noted a Wall Street banker heading home in his pin-striped suit next to a dreadlocked Rastafarian in torn blue jeans, as a Bangladeshi waiter disapprovingly eyed a miniskirted Hispanic secretary across from him struggling with her lipstick. Above them, a public-service ad in Spanish showed cartoon characters learning the importance of AIDS prevention. If the United Nations is where the world shakes hands, the New York subway is where the world rubs shoulders.

Ambivalent I may still be. But I've come to believe something else about the subway - that it epitomizes, as nothing else can, the city's soul. New York journalist Jim Dwyer captures something of this urban Zeitgeist in his book "Subway Lives." "The subways have become the great public commons of the city, where acts of the heart and warped adventures are played out every day," he writes. "Only in the dim warrens of the subway, cursed accomplice of daily existence, can the full spectrum of city life - with all the bewildering diversity of its pathologies and its glories - be glimpsed, felt, and at times even understood."

A homage? Of a sort. I'm not quite so poetic, but I do know that the subway is as essential to the character of-New York, to its soul and sense of itself, as the Empire State Building or Central Park. That's something many well-heeled tourists don't realize. You haven't been to New York if you've never taken the subway.

FLE 126-04 READING SKILLS 2
QUIZ # 6
Part A
Answer the following questions based on the text "Our just (burp) desserts".

1.   **How do you know that "desserts" must be a play-on-words or have another meaning (in addition to sweet food)? D1A, D10,**

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.   **In the fast food industry, top-priority is given to L1, L9, SC7**

_____

_____

3.   **"Maintaining financial health" is related to what other expression in the first paragraph? D1A, D14**

_____

_____

4.   **Is there a difference between what restaurant owners AND customers understand from the concept of "portion control? Explain. D13, D8B**

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.   **What does a "height-to-weight-index" tell us? (p.3)**
SC2, ST 12S,

_____

_____

6.   **Rewrite (paraphrase) "which way the bathroom scales are tipping". (p.5) Keep the meaning. SC8,L5**

_____

_____

7.   **What is unusual about the use of "contain" in par. 6? L8 ST1**

_____

_____

8.   What clues are there to understand the meaning of "going solo"? (p.6). Explain. ST1, D1A,ST4

_____

_____

9.   How do we know that "spill" does not have its usual meaning? L8

_____

_____

10.   What does "sveltenes" mean considering the context?(p.7) D1C, ST1, SC8

_____

_____

11.   Deal-a-meal cards usually become so .... that you could sell them in a yard sale. (p.7) L1, ST1, D5A, SC3

_____

_____

12.   What is the relation between "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" in p.7? Explain what you understand. SC2, SC5, ST9, L7

_____

_____

13.   How does the last sentence of p.7 help us understand the meaning of "run through"? Explain. ST1, D5

_____

_____

_____

14.   What clues are there to the meaning of "polish off"? (p.8) ST1, D5, L1

_____

_____

15.   Denial of what? Acceptance of what? (p.10) D8, D3,

_____

_____

16.   What does "adorn" mean in par.10? ST1, D5, L1

_____

_____

17.   The American Obesity Association (p.11) looks like the name of an association which tries to

but
ST 12, SC7, D14, D11

18.   What does "frivolous" mean? How do you know?

ST1, D2

19.   What is the act of free will in p.12 and p.13?
D14, D3, D1A
Par.12:
Par.13:

20.   How do you know that "file" does not mean "dosyalamak" in Turkish?
ST1, L1

Our Just (Burp!) Desserts
By HENRY FOUNTAIN

IN the fast-food industry, cleanliness may be next to godliness, but portion control is not far behind. To maintain financial health, a restaurant has to know precisely how much food it is giving to each customer. So McDonald's chicken nuggets, for example, are bits of meat, pressed and formed into shapes of standard weight, rather than actual pieces of chicken. Left alone, nature is just too variable for the bottom line.

Restaurants may understand the concept of portion control, but clearly, many of their customers do not. For as two reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pointed out last week, Americans are getting fatter and fatter. Say what you want about the impact of high-fat diets and lack of exercise, but the basic facts remain: Americans eat too much, and they're not doing much about it.

The reports, based on health surveys conducted in 1999 and 2000, showed that nearly two-thirds of adults 20 to 74 years old are classified as overweight (using a common height-to-weight index) -- as are about one in six young people ages 6 to 19. The surveys also found that about 3 in 10 adults are obese, and about 1 in 20 extremely so.

All these figures represent significant increases from earlier studies, the most recent covering 1988 to 1994. The prevalence of obesity among adults, for instance, increased by nearly eight percentage points from the earlier period.

But you don't need a statistician to tell which way the bathroom scales are tipping.

Consider the seat situation. A chair width of about 18 inches used to be enough to contain the average adult; now auditoriums, stadiums, even subway cars are installing new seats that are several inches wider. A movie theater chain that took out the armrests between pairs of seats so that lovebirds could snuggle now finds the seats filled with obese people going solo with a super-size popcorn and Pepsi. And Southwest Airlines recently reasserted its right to charge passengers for a second seat if they spill out of the one they purchased.

Americans like to talk the talk of svelteness, but they walk the walk of obesity. Diets and exercise equipment are obsessions, but they can be run through as quickly as a platter of buffalo wings on a football Sunday. Abdomenizer and Deal-a-Meal infomercials fill the airwaves, but a few months later, the Abdomenizers are hidden in the backs of closets and the Deal-a-Meal cards are the stuff of yard sales.

Low-fat foods have become a popular product category in supermarkets, but for many people, eating them does not result in weight loss. After all, there may be only a few grams of fat in a serving of low-fat cookies, but not if your idea of a serving is polishing off half a box while watching "Survivor."

It is also easy to convince yourself you're not eating too much when the label says it's low in fat -- so nutrition labels may encourage a sense of denial. And denial, the health statistics indicate, is rampant among the overweight. The rate of obesity from the

doctor-conducted surveys of 1988 to 1994, for example, was more than 50 percent higher than the rate from a study in which subjects reported their own weight.

Still, in the same way that there are stages of grief, many overweight Americans have moved from denial to acceptance. Offensive linemen the size of heifers are no longer considered freaks. Overweight actors and actresses get starring roles on sit-coms. "Plus-size" models adorn mail-order catalogs. Support groups tell obese people to be happy in their skin.

And from quiet acceptance, a few people have gone to forceful action. The American Obesity Association, for example, criticized Southwest Airlines over its policy of requiring some obese passengers to buy an extra seat, and threatened to sue.

BUT perhaps no one has gone as far as Caesar Barber, a maintenance worker from Brooklyn who weighs 270 pounds and stands 5 feet 10 inches tall in his stocking feet (which, by the C.D.C.'s calculations, makes him obese). This summer Mr. Barber, who has had two heart attacks, filed a class-action lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court, claiming that McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and Kentucky Fried Chicken put his health at risk by not disclosing what was in their food or warning him about the dangers of overconsumption.

The food industry dismisses Mr. Barber's lawsuit as frivolous. But some legal experts liken his action to the early lawsuits filed by smokers against the tobacco industry. It took numerous cases and many years, they say, for courts and juries to finally accept that a cigarette company might be held responsible for what, until then, had been seen as an act of free will.

The concept of free will is something Mr. Barber has apparently only recently discovered.

Why not eat somewhere else, an ABC television interviewer asked him shortly after the lawsuit was filed. "For the last couple of years I have," Mr. Barber replied. "But before that, I used to eat McDonald's, Burger King. I ate the fat that they had."

"They never explained to me what I was eating," he said.

CC CODES THAT DESCRIBE THE SKILLS IN READING
A- Discourse Competence:
1) Identifying inter-sentential relations and lexical cohesion (Grellet, 1983)
      a) Recognizing the semantic relationship between topically related words in different sentences
      b) Recognizing words with similar meaning
      c) Recognizing words with opposite meaning
      d) Recognizing sentences that support the same line of reasoning (synonym)
      e) Recognizing sentences that support the opposite line of reasoning (antonym)
      f) Recognizing the super-ordinate and hyponym words
2) Deducing the meaning of sentences with the help of cohesive devices
3) Recognizing pronoun references;
4) Recognizing the function/ role of discourse markers
5) Recognizing intra-sentential relations
6) Following the line of reasoning of the writer
      (a) Recognizing words carrying negative meaning
      (b) Recognizing words carrying positive meaning
7) Recognizing the overall message of the text
8) Differentiating the main ideas from the supportive details
9) Comparing ideas mentioned in different parts of the text
      a) To interpret the meaning of the text as a whole (macro level)
      b) To decide on the truth value of a statement (micro level)
10) Putting together smaller pieces of information spread over text to make inferences, e.g.: clues at the word or sentence level (too much t*ext dependence problem)*
11) Recognize the topic of a text and give a name or title to the text
12) Differentiating facts from opinions
13) Identifying the main ideas of paragraphs
14) Arriving at the right answers by the integration of the different paragraphs of a text together (like putting all the pieces together to solve a puzzle)
15) Understanding and defining concepts which are not clearly/explicitly defined through analysis of the any features or examples given in the context
16) Understanding rhetorical organization its effects on the way information is presented
17) Recognizing the inter-paragraph relations through reference and understanding how one specific paragraph fits into the whole text (the role/function of each paragraph in the making up the whole text)
18) Synthesizing the text-based information across sentences and paragraphs and drawing inferences to reach a conclusion not openly mentioned

B- Sociolinguistic Competence:
1. Understanding and awareness of the social context of the text:
    a. The source of text
    b. The topic and genre of text
    c. The status of writer
    d. The purpose of the text
    e. The targeted audience
2. Identifying the appropriate meaning of a statement/sentence in a specific context/setting
3. Understanding the meaning of culturally based information (information with cultural references)
4. Recognizing the writer's purpose in selecting certain words, examples but not others
5. Deducing the writer's attitude and tone from the text based clues such as word selection, choice of grammatical forms and background knowledge
6. Recognizing prejudice and bias versus objectivity
7. Understanding the cultural implications of words, phrases and sentences in their specific context
8. Inferring the communicative value of statements (illocutionary forces)

C- Strategic Competence:
1. Guessing the meaning and use of unknown vocabulary from contextual clues
2. Finding the main idea of a paragraph before getting into smaller details
3. Understanding what a question demands before reading the text
4. Using logical reasoning upon encountering comprehension failure
5. Benefiting from the title and the non-linguistic text features such pictures, charts and diagrams
6. Recognizing the unknown words that cant be guessed from context
7. Using deductive reasoning over the text
8. Using inductive reasoning over the text
9. Recognizing contradictory and supportive ideas
10. Locating where an idea is mentioned in the whole text
11. Monitoring comprehension failure and recognizing inconsistencies
12. Activating and using background and general world knowledge

D- Linguistic competence:
1) Identifying the right meaning of a word in context using lexical knowledge
2) Understanding grammar structures such as tense and parts of speech
3) Correctly expressing what is understood from a text
4) Recognizing and using morphological clues and word formation rules
5) Paraphrasing a statement using one's own words
6) Understanding how punctuation marks change or add to the meaning of words, phrases and sentences
7) Understanding idiomatic expressions and everyday language
8) Recognizing the literary and figurative meanings of words and sentences
9) Understanding relations within a sentence between subordinate and main clauses

Types of questions that can be used in a Reading Test for Communicative Purposes

(Adapted from Canale and Swain1983; and based on chapters in both Nuttall (1988) and Grellet, 1983) and John Munby's (1978) *"Communicative Syllabus Design"*

A- Linguistic competence:

1. Grammar structures and how they influence meaning
2. Words; literal meaning and figurative meaning
3. Conjunctions
4. Tenses
5. Newly coined phrases
6. Affixes and word roots
7. Adverbs
8. Negative markers
9. Paraphrasing/restatement

B-Socio-linguistic Competence:

1. Activating and using background knowledge and knowledge of the target culture
2. Figuring out writer's assumptions and experiences
3. Communicative functions of a certain structure (illocutionary force)
4. Understanding intended meanings correctly
5. Going beyond the literal meaning of sentences/phrases/words
6. Identifying facts from opinions to reach at an appropriate meaning for a given context
7. Making inferences based on the contextual factors involved.

8.   Identifying the writer's intention and the tone of the text (irony, satire, anger, persuasion, etc.)(Grellet, 1983)

C-Discourse Competence:

1.   Identifying the main ideas of paragraphs and longer texts

2.   Recognizing topic sentences of paragraphs

3.   Finding the main ideas implied in a text, not clearly stated.

4.   Reorganizing scrambled parts of a text to make a meaningful/coherent whole

5.   Understanding why 'X' caused 'Y' and the nature of the relationship between the two.

6.   Understanding the analogies and comparisons in a text.

7.   Understanding the communicative value of sentences.

8.   Identifying the writer's strateg(y)(ies) to convey the message

D-Strategic Competence

1.   Using the right reading techniques for a given task

2.   Predicting what is coming next and pondering upon the content

3.   Paraphrasing the complex sentences

4.   Visualizing information

5.   Guessing word meanings from context; identifying synonyms and antonyms

6.   Adapting reading strategy according to the task

7.   Visualizing unfamiliar information for better comprehension

8.   Making use of non-text information like pictures and graphs

9.   Being able read between the lines and make inferences

10.   Realizing whether the writer shares the same assumptions with you or not

11.   Making use of rhetorical organization to make better sense of the whole text.

12.   Recognizing the various devices used to create textual cohesion, as well as reference and link-words.