

Some Recent Approaches to EFL Reading Instruction

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It may very well be that the language acquisition skill most thoroughly studied so far in this century in relation to native speakers of a language is reading. Likewise, the type of material most commonly available to the second/foreign language teacher is in the form of reading. Unfortunately there seems to have been a gap in scientific study of the reading skill as it applies to the non-native speaker, especially one in the intermediate stage between phoneme/morpheme/phrase recognition and fluency development. The purpose of this article is to outline some of the problem areas in the teaching of reading of a second/foreign language, especially at the intermediate level and to set up some hypotheses concerning the methods of developing the second-language reading skill. The discussion, then, will include first a general survey of the state of second-language teaching programs with some comments on norms for the evaluation of student progress. The second part of the discussion will contain some more specific theories concerning materials, teaching methods, and motivation. The general direction of the argument throughout is that a better understanding of the personalistic insights of modern psychology can lead to a far more effective treatment of the reading skill in the second-language curriculum. While the viewpoint of the writer is that of the English-language teacher in Korea, the principles, *mutatis mutandis*, would apply to other second/foreign language teaching situations.

If there is to be any realistic evaluation of the success of a reading program, it is necessary to set up goals which can be scientifically observed. Much of the evaluation of the reading skill has been intuitive, based on factors not directly relating to the reading skills, e.g. grammar, deductive ability, etc. Often the reading instructor is discouraged to find that at the end of a specified period, a student seems to have regressed when he is judged according to the norms commonly used. The teacher asks himself if he has helped that student at all. He fears that his teaching has rather interfered with the development of the student's reading ability. Much of the discouragement undoubtedly stems from the inability of the teacher to define his goals adequately. In fact, it requires a considerable degree of humility for the classroom teacher today to admit humbly the same fact that experts in the field of first-language acquisition have propounded for years: that we know very little about reading and the student's strategies in reading comprehension. Edward L. Thorndike (1917) once remarked:

...reading is a very elaborate procedure, involving a weighing of each of many elements in a sentence, their organization in the proper relation one to another, the selection of certain of the connotations and rejection of the others, and the cooperation of many forces to determine final response.

Thorndike's evaluation of the complexity of the reading process should be at once a relief and a challenge to the reading teacher. He can take solace in the fact that reading is far too involved a procedure to be learned in a short period of time or to be lightly evaluated. At the same time, he must feel himself impelled to identify the numerous individual skills required and the methods suitable for the development of these skills. It is interesting to note that Thorndike made his remark more than half a century ago. One wonders if second language teachers were listening. A contemporary of Thorndike, E.B. Huey (1968: 6) commented in the same vein:

And so to completely analyze what we do when we read would almost be the acme of a psychologist's achievements, for it would be to describe very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind as well as to unravel the tangled story of the most remarkable specific performance that civilization has learned in all its history.

A great deal of psycholinguistic research has followed upon these remarks of Thorndike and Huey, but reading, even that of a native speaker, still remains a great, profound, and confusing mystery. The major reason for this confusion about reading comprehension is closely related to the mystery of the functioning of the human brain. After years of scientific investigation, it is still impossible to explain adequately the process or functioning of the brain during the process of reading based upon the sample data available. Roger Farr (1970:3-4) surveyed the measuring of reading comprehension over fifty years and still raised the basic question: what is reading comprehension and how should it be measured? Teachers of reading skills in a second/foreign language must be even more humble and ask similar questions: How are reading skills transferred from L_1 to L_2 ? What new skills are required of L_2 learners? How can processes of the human brain be isolated so that the L_2 learner's skills can be most effectively developed? Finally, how can we know when the student's reading skills are improving?

If we want to have more effective and relevant instruction in second/foreign language reading comprehension, it is important to have fruitful research about the psychological process involved in reading, even though we may not be able to describe the human brain's functioning in complete detail. Indeed, this is and will always be a limitation in the study of reading. Nevertheless, the more we know about the linguistic, psycholinguistic, biological and neurological processes, the more we will be able to influence their operations. Many reading specialists believe that reading comprehension can best be described and understood through enumeration of lists of comprehension skills. Most of the research, therefore, has had a definite skills-based bias. Scientists and educators have

proposed a great many skills as units of the learning process. Simons (1971) listed them:

- reading in thought units
- grasping and assimilating relevant details
- thinking about words
- fusing new and old ideas
- seeing relationships between words and thoughts
- remembering what is read
- finding the topic sentence
- making generalizations
- drawing inferences
- identifying key words and phrases
- predicting outcomes
- distinguishing fact from opinion
- identifying main ideas and thesis statements
- semantic grasp of lexical items

A more detailed survey of the field might well include another hundred or so similar encapsulations of reading goals. The above listing, however, is sufficient for us to see that there is a close relationship between general mental abilities and those skills specific to reading. For example, the reading skill of making generalizations is a skill common to most cognitive processes. Therefore in reading classes, teachers must generally keep in mind that they should include the thinking skills, despite the paucity of concrete data relating to the thinking process. The implications for the second/foreign language teacher are obviously even more far-reaching.

The Measurement Approaches

Perhaps one of the most helpful ways to reach an understanding of the present situation in second/foreign language reading instruction is through an analysis of the various common instruments used by the reading instructor in evaluating the development of his students. While a paper of this scope does not permit a thorough survey of all the hundreds of available instruments, there are three common types: the comprehension-question type, the multiple-choice reading completion type, and the cloze. The first of these, the comprehension-question type, may have the longest tradition. It is illustrated by the following example taken from a highly regarded reading test published in the United States:

Read the paragraph and answer the questions:

Barbara stopped short. Her face paled with fright as the tiger came closer. She was alone in the forest and too far from any cabin to make herself heard. With a trembling hand she grasped the knife at her belt and stood ready. But what was that she heard in the bushes beside her? She turned to find a man hiding there, facing the tiger with a powerful gun held

firmly in his right hand.

Q : What do you think happened next?

(1) the tiger killed Barbara (2) the man shot the tiger (3) the tiger ran away (4) the man shot Barbara

Q : What words tell how Barbara felt?

(1) lonesome (2) tired (3) frightened (4) gay

Q : Where was the man crouching?

(1) in the cabin (2) beside the tiger (3) in a tree (4) in the bushes (Nelson, 1962)

Despite the apparent simplicity of the format, the example requires of the student fairly involved cogitation. The first question expects of the student the ability to predict. The second question requires the ability to generalize, not only in factual areas, but also in the more subtle areas of tone and emotion. The third question, being factual in nature, seems to be the simplest, yet it, too, requires of the student a certain ability to visualize. While the teacher's material accompanying this particular test does make it clear that these skills were indeed intended to be tested by the preparers of the test, it is certainly questionable whether these skills were included in the syllabi of all the courses for which the test might have been used as a measure of achievement. These implications are obvious to anyone who considers seriously the nature of the questions. However, there are further inquiries which must be made about the above test. When considering this and similar tests it is imperative to clarify which of the following skills are actually being tested:

- a student's memory
- a student's ability to comprehend the questions and alternative choices in the test
- a student's test-taking skills
- a student's knowledge of the content of the passage (for example: how many of the questions might be answered without reading the passage?)
- a student's motivation and attitude
- a student's personality
- a student's vocabulary.

A final pressing problem is distinguishing between testing of skills which have been definitely taught and testing of skills which may only incidentally have been acquired by the student without the teacher's conscious aid. All of this leads to the question of whether the test is actually related to the reading comprehension class at all.

In an effort to overcome the objection that tests similar to the above placed too much emphasis on understanding of questions rather than ability to comprehend a passage, a newer type of test item has gained popularity during the past two decades. These items, which require the student to select accurate completions for a passage instead of answers to questions about the passage, are illustrated by the examples which follow.

- Item: The German composer Beethoven ranks as a genius in the world of music. He lived only fifty-seven years; and, for the last thirteen years of his life, he was deaf. It is remarkable that he composed many of his finest works after his
A death. B deafness began. C childhood. D marriage.
- Item: There has been some speculation about the effects that a four-day workweek would have upon industry. There are some industries that would certainly benefit—those associated with
A food. B leisure. C clothing. D steel.
- Item: One happy combination that will surely lead to success is a high ultimate goal plus concrete immediate goals. Successful persons are ones who know not only what level of achievement they want to have attained ten years hence, but also
A what difficulties they will have to overcome on the way.
B how much money they want the position to pay.
C whether they have the required abilities to succeed.
D what they want to accomplish in the next two days.¹

Although these items may seem in many ways similar to the more traditional items already discussed, careful observation reveals a subtle difference. In each of these items the student is asked to predict the outcome of a passage while he is reading it. Reading specialists have long posited such ability as an essential ingredient in the development of the reading skill. Prediction ability was also tested in the first question of the traditional comprehension-question type test above, but the nature of the prediction differs greatly here. In the traditional test, the prediction related to the situation described, more or less fully, in the passage. In this completion-type test the prediction ability required is internal to the passage. It much more faithfully duplicates the type of prediction constantly at work in the mind of the native speaker reading naturally. It has been discovered that maintaining internal consistency in reading passages allows for even more complete testing of the ancillary skills already enumerated. Furthermore, this type of testing has been found to have value as a learning device. A major reading program in use widely in English speaking countries aims to develop the student's skills specifically by challenging him with progressively more difficult passage completion exercises. Thus this type of testing item has apparently bridged the gap somewhat between the reading test and the reading class. (Thurstone, 1978)

In recent years, a newer approach to passage completion has become popular among reading and language teachers. It is known as the Cloze Procedure and, interestingly, is one area where the foreign/second language teacher has not lagged behind the teacher of reading to native speakers in adopting a technique. On a Cloze Test every *n*th word of the passage is deleted and a student takes the test by filling in the blanks where the

¹ Thelma Gwin Thurstone, ed. 1978 'Placement Test-Form A,' Items 8, 18, 32, *Reading for Understanding* 3, Science Research Associates, Chicago.

words were deleted. The test then evaluates the student's feel for the text as well as his ability to predict. The following is a typical example:

Directions: (1) Read the whole passage through. (2) then, go back and fill in the blanks with the words you think are missing. (3) Use only one word for each blank. (4) Contractions like "don't," "he's," "you're," and "we'll" can be used to fill in a blank. (5) Try to fill in every blank.

I did not have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Revel in the days when he was still struggling with the first principles of the English language. Like everyone else, of course, I (1) heard of him, and had smiled (2) his difficulties with the idiosyncracies of (3) tongue, as reported in the newspapers (4) the time. You will recall, for (5), his remarks in excited and broken English (6) the absurdities of the word "fast." (7) horse was fast when he was (8) to a hitching post. The same (9) was also fast under exactly diametric circumstances (10) he was running away. A woman (11) fast if she smoked cigarettes. A (12) was fast if it didn't fade. (13) fast was to go without food. Et cetera. (14) a language!

Today, M. Ravel speaks English (15) only the faintest of French accents, (16) what he has to say is (17) salted with Gallic gestures and mannerisms. (18) other evening, after listening with polite incredulity (19) an account of my own present difficulties (20) the French language, he shrugged his (21).

"Perhaps. But when you have mastered (22), you will understand. Like everything (23) French, our language is always logical, (24) see. But this English! Ah! I (25) it; but I do not understand (26)." "Logical" is the last adjective I (27) use in describing the French language. (28) I had no chance to say (29).

"Listen!" said Mr. Ravel. "Last winter I (30) a very bad cold. A friend (31) to me, 'Jules, your voice is (32) husky' Husky? As an adjective I (33) not know the word. As a noun (34) is an Eskimo. What does this (35), my voice is husky? I consulted (36) dictionary. 'Husky,' adjective...Ah! To be (37)! 'Powerful, strong, burly.' Like an Eskimo. Logical (38). Very neat!...Then, to myself, I frown suddenly. Husky? (39) is my voice my friend was (40) of. And that-most positively-is (41) husky! It is not strong. It (42) not powerful. With my cold, it (43) so weak I can hardly use (44). Is this some American humor my (45) employs? I look in the dictionary (46). Ah! I discover a second meaning: 'dry, harsh, hoarse.' So! (47) see what my friend means. He (48) my voice is husky. He means (49) voice is hoarse." Mr. Ravel shook his (50). (Brown, 1956:115)

The Cloze Test has been considered a more accurate measure of the student's reading ability since it appears to be measuring fewer of the extraneous functions of language while correlating well with traditional reading tests. Specifically, it does not contain any questions and, therefore, it does not measure the student's skill in understanding questions unless that is the precise skill being tested (in which case, of course, questions are included as a natural part of the basic Cloze passage). Teacher-made questions do not impose limits upon the student's reading comprehension by establishing

categories for the student's understanding. The student's perusal of the passage is not determined by the need to answer some possibly unnatural question; rather the student is left to his own devices: his knowledge of structure, syntax, content and context all come into play. This internalized approach to reading has been considered of far more lasting value than more artificial methods. Thus the Cloze Test, too, seems an even greater improvement upon the passage completion test when it is considered as a teaching tool as well as an evaluation instrument.

To conclude this overview of the present situation in the teaching of reading in the second/foreign language classroom, it is appropriate to recall with Spache that we still need to ask...1) exactly what thinking processes operate in comprehension, 2) how may the reader's facility in each of these processes be improved in instruction? (Spache, 1963:61-81)

As a result of our lack of knowledge about the specific process and techniques for teaching reading in the second/foreign language classroom, our methods seem to be superficial. It still must be admitted that the student is all too often merely presented with a passage and expected to answer a series of questions about the passage. (And, yes, in some cases just to translate the passage.) By some incomplete causality, it is assumed that, if the student can answer correctly, he has comprehended adequately. Attack skills are still not a factor in the reading classroom.

Personalistic Approaches

Given the current situation in reading education, there are a number of insights which personalistic directions in psychology have added to our understanding of reading in general and which need to be integrated into a second/foreign language theory of reading instruction. The purpose of this final part of this article is to relate a few of these insights to more concrete methods and techniques available to the second/foreign language teacher.

Kenneth Goodman, the eminent psycholinguist, has codified several important understandings in this regard. First, he establishes the psycholinguistic perspective:

Psycholinguistics is the scientific study of the relationships between language and thought. Through psycholinguistics we see a writer as a producer. The writer is an encoder who has a message in his mind and who creates, in print, something tangible and observable to represent his message. We see the reader as a user of language, able to use the writer's product, to draw on his own experience, concepts, and language ability to comprehend. (Goodman, 1974:63)

Goodman has also supplied us with a new personalistic/psycholinguistic perspective with which to view the process of reading:

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, 1967:108)

Goodman's definition, then, presents reading to us as an active process. The reader forms a preliminary expectation about the materials, then selects the most productive cues necessary to confirm or to reject that expectation. This reinforces the intuitive recognition of the importance of prediction in the reading process which we found in even the most traditional materials. This more modern concept of prediction ability is internalized, not only in the passage, but in the reader's syntactic and semantic knowledge as well as in his store of information about the content of the passage. The reader expects and tests, he confirms or rejects uncertainties. Skill in reading depends upon the efficient interaction between linguistic understandings and knowledge of the world. The most efficient reader, then, is one who brings with him a complex of experience which includes at least a general familiarity with the content of the passage before him. Without at least a limited amount of knowledge, it will be indeed difficult for him to begin. The more accurate the reader's first guesses, the more quickly and automatically he will be able to bring his linguistic knowledge into play. Broadened experience and increased conceptual development, then, is indeed a goal of the reading instructor.

Related to the reader's fund of experience is his capacity for remembering. The amount of information he can retain in his short-term memory and medium-term memory are the limits of his ability to receive and process. No one can remember all of what he reads. The efficient reader tends to select only the necessary and vital information from the printed page. He is intuitively aware of syntactic and semantic sequential redundancy and does not burden his memory with more than essential information. The well-known example of Smith clarifies the concept of syntactic redundancy:

After dinner let's all go to the _____. (Smith, 1971:202) This group of words is almost certain to be followed by a noun or noun phrase rather than a verb or other part of speech. This syntactic perception considerably narrows the field of possibilities in the reader's mind for the following position. Likewise, semantic constraints further add to the number of redundant cues in the above sentence. The possible alternatives are reduced to those places which might be frequented by a group in the evening and which are properly suggested for group decision. Thus it would be highly unlikely that the sentence would conclude with the words *phone booth* or *confessional*. *Theatre* or *park* are far more likely. A sentence with slightly fewer redundancy cues would be: He told me that he would meet me at the _____.

Additional psycholinguistic insights, derived through the approaches of personalistic psychology, relate to the level at which the writer and reader meet in communication. So far we have discussed the so-called literal level or base power of the reader, i.e. the ability to remember, recognize, paraphrase, etc. Beyond this level, however, are numerous other levels of comprehension at which the efficient reader is able to operate at will.

Although in this article it would be impossible to describe them adequately, it may be beneficial to point out a few of these levels. The inferential level, immediately beyond the literal one, includes the ability to hypothesize, which has already been discussed. Beyond this is the organizational/analytical level at which the reader chooses to conclude or synthesize on the basis of the passage he has read. At the evaluative or critical level the reader disassociates himself from the viewpoint of the writer in order to judge the truth, relevance, and relationships involved in the passage. Perhaps the highest level of reading power is the creative level in which the reader integrates his present reading with all previous experience in order to form independent judgments concerning the applications of the reading material to his own life and its value for the future.

The personalistic approach to reading presents us with a very active image of the reader always combining a number of attack skills as he progresses. Gibson and Levin summarize these active strategies as follows:

1. The mature reader exhibits flexibility of attentional strategies in reading for different types of information.
2. Strategies shift with characteristics of a text, such as difficulty of concept and style.
3. They shift with feedback (rate of gain of knowledge) as the reader progresses (e.g. he slows down under some circumstances, skims under others).
4. They shift with newness of oldness of information.
5. They shift with the reader's personal interests (he likes science fiction, but doesn't like Jane Austen, or vice versa) and his educational objectives and with instruction (his teacher said to prepare for a quiz on the history text). (Gibson, 1975:471)

Non-native readers of a language, of course, appreciate the extra activity which is required of them as they approach any written text. Too often, however, the activities which come to mind are limited to dictionary skills and those related to syntactic analysis. It sometimes happens that native readers are able to develop strategies intuitively, but non-native readers urgently need to have the full range of strategies spelled out for their mastery. It has been a great disservice to such readers that second/foreign-language teachers have neglected this area of strategy so entirely for so many years. It is only in the past few years that textbooks for non-native speakers have made even a preliminary attempt to isolate and provide practice in reading strategy. In 1970, Richard Yorkey produced a study-skills book for non-English speakers which devoted considerable attention to development of reading skills by identifying certain attack strategies. The following example is a summary of Yorkey's section on pronoun reference and connectives. It is important to note that this section is not stressing syntactic analysis so much as it is emphasizing the awareness of cue words to indicate relationships within a paragraph.

Some few, of course, still believe that Shakespeare could not have written the plays attributed to him, but they have difficulty explaining the fact that many contemporaries of Shakespeare, who knew and worked with him, considered him, first, as the actual author,

and second, a very fine author indeed. Ben Jonson, for example, never doubted the authenticity of the plays. William Green also referred to Shakespeare as a very fine playwright. (These) are only two of the many contemporary references that leave little doubt that Shakespeare wrote the plays of William Shakespeare. (Yorkey, 1970:113)

It was not until 1977 that a text completely dedicated to the isolation and development of reading skills for non-native readers was published by E. Margaret Baudoin, et al., under the title *Reader's Choice: A Reading Skills Textbook for Students of English as a Second Language*. The following exercise, for example, requires students to operate on the level of inference by selecting those statements which may be inferred from the base statement:

1. Nine out of ten doctors responding to the survey said they recommend our product to their patients if they recommend anything.
 - ___ a. Nine out of ten doctors recommend the product.
 - ___ b. Of the doctors who responded to survey, nine out of ten doctors recommended the product.
 - ___ c. If they recommend anything, nine out of ten doctors responding to a survey recommend the product.
 - ___ d. Most doctors recommend the product.
 - ___ e. We don't know how many doctors recommend the product.
2. This organization may succeed marvelously at what it wants to do, but what it wants to do may not be all that important.
 - ___ a. The organization is marvelous.
 - ___ b. The organization may succeed.
 - ___ c. Although the organization may reach its goals, the goals might not be important.
 - ___ d. What the organization wants is marvelous.
 - ___ e. The author questions the goals of the organization. (Baudoin, 1977:114)

Reader's Choice sets the student upon the following course whenever he faces a text:

1. predict
2. set a goal
3. use appropriate reading strategies.

This type of exercise gives concrete form to Smith's theory that the good reader has insight into the techniques he is using and varies them as the assigned purposes differ. (Baudoin, 1977:18)

The majority of teachers still do not emphasize these differing purposes and the necessity of adaptation. In fact, it may well be said that the concept of reading strategy is the concept of adaptation operating both internally (as regards the reader's purpose) and externally (as regards the nature of the material at hand). We can only hope for more precise research in the near future into the psycholinguistic bases of this adaptation.

As it becomes more evident that reading, in a psycholinguistic perspective must no

longer be classed as a passive skill, there emerges a need to refine our understanding of the receptive aspect of the activity. This receptive form of the reading process may now be most profitably seen as feedback. (Smith, 1971:229)

The unique form of this feedback, however, may not be qualified so easily by the words positive or negative often attached to statements about feedback. Feedback in effective reading is an essential component of the process in which the reader's experience interacts with the stimuli before him. It is by way of feedback that the reader's tentative predictions are continuously modified, continuously unified until the act of reading can be said to be in itself an experience. In this context it is unproductive to characterize the predictions which are substantially modified as mistakes. It is through such later-modified predictions that the reader is able to reach understanding. The reading student, then, must be encouraged to predict, regardless of the rate of accuracy of his predictions. Especially in the second/foreign language classroom, the student feels much pressure to be correct and therefore hesitates to risk error through prediction. It is precisely this willingness to "make mistakes" that differentiates the potentially effective reader from the potentially ineffective one.

The development of a student's reading strategies also depends upon a willingness to err. As long as students read without mistakes, or miscues, there is little hope for opportunities to improve reading strategy. It is when confronted with a breakdown in communication that the student revises his own strategy. So-called mistakes also provide the teacher with much insight into the particular strategies that the student is using, into his subconscious psycholinguistic processes. There is still an enormous amount of research to be done in the area of miscue analysis. When it becomes clear how the learning reader differs in miscues from the mature reader and how the non-native reader differs from the native, the teacher's own strategies in the reading classroom can become far more effective. So far we know that, in our present state of research, it is necessary to make use of various types of experience in a rather eclectic manner. We may hope that the day of gimmicks which provide simple solutions to complicated problems is indeed over.

When the teacher opens up his mind and develops a flexible approach, however, he allows the student to make progress in a number of ways. He comes much closer to his student's needs when he views miscues, not as errors, but rather as windows on the reading process in general and most specifically on the reading strategies of a particular reader dealing with a particular text. Beneath the observable "error," we can find the underlying process that produced it. The reading teacher can better help his individual students by understanding their miscues, analyzing them, and then guiding the student to develop his own strategy to deal more completely with the reading process. Thus miscues are not merely errors. They show more about the learner's strengths than about his weaknesses. (Goodman, 1973:174)

They are the best possible indications that a student is experimenting with various

strategies and improving his technique. The very presence of miscues indicates that the learner is allowing the printed stimuli to interact with his linguistic competence. This trial and error technique seems to be essential if the student is to develop a responsibility of his own in the task of improving strategies of deriving meaning from print in an on-going and yet effective manner.

This concept of strategy development through miscue analysis brings us to the question of whether the strategies can be taught *per se*. Some researchers and teachers have attempted to teach these strategies but with varying success. Frank Smith has written a critique of these attempts in an almost satirical fashion under the title, "Twelve Easy Ways to Make Learning to Read Difficult and One Difficult Way to Make It Easy." The following are a few of his more telling observations concerning the nature of poor teaching, which he presents in the form of guidelines for those who aspire to become poor teachers:

- Aim for early mastery of the rules of teaching. (Smith feels that the rules must be absorbed internally before being consciously codified for the reader. Trial and error is better than rule learning.)
- Discourage guessing. (Smith feels that too much emphasis on careful reading eliminates all the benefits students derive from improved strategies based on miscue analysis.)
- Provide immediate feedback. (Smith feels that in general reading provides its own feedback and that teacher feedback is too often disruptive.)
- Take the opportunity during reading instruction to improve spelling and written expression and also insist on the best possible spoken English.
- If the method you are using is unsatisfactory, try another. Always be alert for new materials and techniques. (Smith worries that the present boom in available materials and methods will divert attention from the basic needs of the learner. The method should not be the center of the teacher's attention, but rather the progress of the student in developing his own strategies. (Smith, 1973:183-196)

The consistent strain in the items which Smith lists is an attitude on the part of the teacher that he knows a certain secret which he will divulge to his students. Instead Smith asserts that it is the students who have both the questions and the potential to develop the strategies which will bring them to the answers. One learns to read by reading, not by mastering some code of rules; one learns to read by accepting the chance of being wrong, not by insisting on perfect predictions. Students should be given enough time and opportunity to test their reading strategies. Since reading provides its own feedback, it is by the continued act that one can check the correctness of his strategies. Smith concludes: "The only way to make learning to read easy is to make reading easy. Learning to read is a complex and delicate task in which almost all the rules, all the cues, and all the feedback can be obtained only through the process of reading itself. (Smith, 1973:195)

Teacher's Personalistic Role

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to formulate the above considerations concerning

the nature of reading and the psycholinguistic perspectives of reading development into a model for the teacher's role in the reading classroom. Since in reading class it is essential that the reading work be done by the student, we might follow the suggestions of Earl Stevick and utilize a paradigm of second/foreign language classroom activity which minimizes teacher intervention, forcing the students to use and develop their new language skills. (Stevick, 1976:86-87)

Indeed, it may be in the second/foreign language classroom that reading techniques will be developed for the native readers, since the role of teacher as participant, facilitator, and referee has been far more developed in non-native situations. As has been abundantly demonstrated in regard to other second-language skills, in a reading class, the teacher needs to function as teacher only when the class is attempting to resolve a language problem, for it is only in this situation that the teacher is automatically presumed to possess a more effective knowledge than the students. It is the teacher's role to provide necessary feedback, relevant data and, most importantly, encouragement for the student as he explores and upgrades his reading abilities. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide a learning environment with three qualities. First, it must be non-threatening. Students must feel the personal freedom to risk guessing and erring without fear of looking foolish. Second, learning activities must be free of all artificiality. There must be an obvious relation between the purpose of the class and the life of the students. Finally, the environment must foster the student's independence. The student should have the physical and psychological latitude to set his own goals and use his own strategies.

In regard to the native speaker's reading development, Gibson made the following observation which may be of special interest to the second/foreign-language reading teacher:

We are left with the modest claim that children learn to read and that there are a host of methods and materials which teachers may exploit in any way they see fit. For our purposes, we would be most pleased to see teachers be aware of the nature of reading and choose those methods and materials that make sense to them rather than be tyrannized by some prescription about how reading must be taught. (Gibson, 1975:331-332)

Few have been more tyrannized by methods than foreign-language teachers and few have been more successful in throwing over those which claim to be panaceas. In the personalistic perspective, then, the teacher's role is based on attitudes and directions, rather than on prescriptions. A few of the most important might be enumerated thus:

1. The teacher should be willing to study the reading process including the individual strategies by which each student reaches his level of communication.
2. The teacher should regard mistakes as opportunities for the student himself to discover an improved strategy.
3. The teacher should provide the student with an opportunity to seek help in evaluating his strategies.

4. The teacher should allow the student to approach reading as an enjoyable and profitable activity.
5. The teacher should be constantly supportive and encouraging.

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