

**READING 1: TESTING
COMPREHENSION SKILLS**

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LESSON:

- Warm Up Exercise
- Some easy steps to develop good reading skills 3.1
- How should one read? Ways of reading (3.2.1+3.2.2) 3.2
- Formal and Informal Reading: Find out the difference. 3.3
(3.3.1+3.3.2)
- Reading maps, air/train schedules. (3.4.1+3.4.2)
- Activity: Reading an Unseen Passage 3.5
- Summing up: What have You learnt?

ANTICIPATED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Assessing the qualities necessary to be a good language learner.
- Understanding that language learning is a lifelong process and that it takes both time and patience.
- Using grammar to give meaningful messages in real-life situations in order to understand the language well, since a good reader will also pay attention to the rules of grammar while reading.
- Understanding how the style of reading adopted is altered to suit your purpose.
- Knowing what constitutes spoken or written communication and to understand, by reading through the situation in which one is placed, whether the reading is formal or informal.
- Reading a picture, cartoon strip, map, pie-chart or diagram as you would read a text.
- Testing what you have learnt by applying it to an unseen passage.



Let us quickly ponder over some interesting points that should be kept in mind while reading

- Can reading be fun?
- Is it a good idea to read again if you don't understand the first time?
- Are errors an inevitable part of the language learning process?
- Is meaning only conveyed by the words that we use?

Some answers to these questions are discussed below. Feel free to elaborate on some of these points further.

- Reading can be fun if you make it a regular feature of your daily routine. You could start with as simple an exercise as reading the newspaper.
- Yes. It is always good to read more than once if one doesn't understand the first time. Yes. Most experts believe that errors are a natural and inevitable part of the language learning process.
- No. Part of the message is also conveyed through tone, volume, posture, eye contact and facial expression.

**SOME EASY STEPS TO ENSURE GOOD
READING SKILLS! (3.1)**

Time:10mins

Let us begin with a **True and False** exercise. In case the answer is not given or not definite choose the option **Not Given**. Read the following extract before beginning this exercise. It contains clues to the answers.

They [young children] are often unconcerned about who is laughing at them and why. That is why young children pick up new languages easily. Adolescents and male adults have been found to be more self-conscious than their female counterparts.

Our views about errors have undergone a 360-degree change. Earlier, it was believed that errors should not be allowed. However, most experts on language learning today believe that errors are a natural and inevitable part of the language learning progress. In the early stages, the only way to avoid errors is to not use language at all. This, of course, is not at all advisable.

Research shows that we can predict the errors that learners make at each stage of learning a language. Learners can take comfort from the fact that some of the errors they make can be seen as showing progress in their language development.

Learning a language is a process which needs time and patience. A new language needs continuous engagement with it, instead of shying away from it. We must also repeat certain words and phrases till they are completely taken in and absorbed as part of our understanding. One should not hesitate to ask for clarifications when required. Avoid speaking with hesitation or with gestures to explain some point. Remember not to miss any opportunity to use the language. Last but not the least, it helps to maintain your progress record by maintaining a diary.

Taken from English at the Workplace, eds. Mukti Sanyal, Sudesh Sawhney, Shormishtha Panja, Promodini Varma, 2006. Rpt. Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd, 2008.

Exercise 3.1

1. Young Children learn language faster than adults.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
2. Errors are nowadays seen as positive signs of progress in language development.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
3. If you are a good language learner, your sentences should be error free.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
4. It is important to practise the new language and not feel shy or embarrassed about using it.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
5. Language learning takes time, effort and patience.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
6. You should repeat word and phrases until they are learnt.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
7. You should ask for clarification when you do not understand something.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
8. You should maintain a diary about your progress.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
9. When you are not sure about what to say, you should keep quiet and avoid making a mistake.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given
10. One should speak with a lot of hesitation and use gestures often as well as the mother tongue.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Not Given

Answers 3.1

1. **True.** Yes, young children learn language faster than adults because they are less self-conscious and are not concerned about who is laughing at them and why. So, they can pick up languages faster than adults.

2. **True.** Most experts on language learning today believe that errors are a natural and inevitable part of the language learning progress. Also, research has shown that we can predict the errors that learners make at each stage of learning. Thus it is seen as a stage in language learning. Also, as mentioned in the extract above learners can take comfort from the fact that some of the errors they make can be seen as evidence (proof) of their progress in learning the language.

3. **False.** As argued above, errors are a natural and inevitable part of language learning. Note the difference between language learner and language user. The latter does not commit errors as he uses the language after learning it.

4. **True.** As mentioned above, learning a language is a process which needs time and patience. Thus, a new language needs continuous engagement with it, instead of shying away from it.

5. **True.** As mentioned in the extract above, learning a language is a process which needs time and patience.

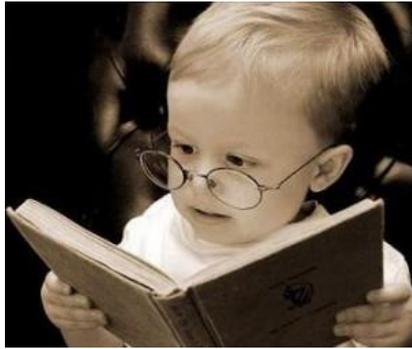
6. **True.** It is stated in the extract that we must repeat certain words and phrases till they are completely taken in and absorbed as part of our understanding - in other words, to internalise the language that helps using it naturally as one's own native language.

7. **True.** One should not hesitate to ask for clarifications when required. This is essential so that we avoid speaking with hesitation or take recourse to gestures to explain some point.

8. **True.** Yes it is stated in the passage that it helps to keep your progress record by maintaining a diary.

9. **False.** As stated in the passage, one should remember not to avoid opportunities of using the language.

10. **False.** We should avoid speaking with hesitation or with gestures to explain some point.



Picture 17

<http://jpsblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/10-tip-reading-books-knowlegde-seo-dota-read-300x254.jpg> Accessed on 11/02/2011 at 2:29 pm.



Picture 18

http://www.reprodart.com/kunst/matthias_stomer/young_man_reading_candle_light_hi.jpg Accessed on 11/02/2011 at 2:30 pm.



Picture 19

http://www.clipartguide.com/named_clipart_images/0511-0903-1003-0820_Asian_Elementary_Student_Reading_a_Book_clipart_image.jpg
Accessed on 11/02/2011 at 2:31 pm.

WAYS OF READING:
HOW SHOULD ONE READ? (3.2)

Time: 20mins



Reading can be done in several ways depending on the content of the passage and the purpose of reading.

- Skimming
- Scanning
- Intensive Reading
- Extensive Reading
- Reading between the lines
- Inferential Reading

1. Skimming is done when you identify the main ideas of a text, at a quick pace. It is done when you have lots of material to read in a limited amount of time. For e.g, when you want to see if an article may be of interest in your research.

2. Scanning involves looking through a page quickly seeking specific words and phrases. Scanning is also used when you first find a resource to examine closely whether it will answer your questions. For e.g, when you read the newspaper, you may not read it word-by-word, instead you may scan the text.

3. Reading quickly in order to get the gist of the content. For e.g, reading some written material the first time.

4. Studying with care and in depth to remember or memorize the content. For e.g, reading for a project.

5. Going through rapidly to locate some specific information. For e.g, trying to understand the real meaning of what someone says.

6. The kind of reading which involves the forming of a conclusion from premises (a previous statement from which another is inferred) For e.g, reading with reference to context

Now let's try to understand these different kind of readings, before we begin the exercise. At the end of each passage some inferences drawn or supposed to be drawn are given. On the basis of the study of the paragraph given in Exercise 3.2.2, point out whether the inference is-

- (a) Definitely true (b) Definitely false
(c) Probably true (d) Probably false (e) Can't say

To help you in this work Exercise 3.2.1 has been done for you.
Let's begin!

Exercise 3.2.1

Speaking is a very popular form of communication, both for personal and official purposes. Spoken interaction has its own advantages since the communication carried out by this method is interactive. It gives the speakers the opportunity to assess each other's interpretations and reactions since they communicate face-to-face. The benefit of this is that it helps them to adjust their message according to their assessment of each other's reactions. Spoken language is also more diverse than other methods of communication since the variation in intonation, stress, and related attributes of speech can convey infinite subtleties of meaning. The added advantage being that face-to-face interaction also helps since it combines verbal and gestural modes of communication. Finally, spoken interaction is for most people easy and economical: it does not require any materials or action other than opening your mouth to express yourself.

Adapted from an article in Romy Clark and Roz Ivanič's "The Politics of Writing" (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p.114.

First, let me clarify the six different kinds of reading to you.

- + If you were to **skim** through the passage given above, you would say that spoken communication has its advantages since it is more interactive. You may also be able to conclude if the given piece is relevant for some kind of research, on benefits of spoken communication, that you might be reading it specifically for.
- + If you were to **scan** it, you would be able to list the advantages of speaking such as, that it is interactive, it allows face-to-face communication, it conveys infinite subtleties of meaning and that it combines verbal and gestural modes of communication.
- + If you were to do an **intensive reading** of the given passage, you would read it quickly to get its summary, which in a line or two would be: spoken communication scores over other kinds of communication since by allowing a face-to-face interaction it allows the speakers to assess each others' interpretations and reactions. It also conveys infinite subtleties of meaning through variations that can be freely practised by the speakers in intonation, stress and other related attributes of speech.
- + If you were to do an **extensive reading** of this passage you would do an in-depth study of it and would even be able to memorize most of it, line by line.
- + If you were to **read between the lines** you might be trying to locate some specific information and may be able to infer the hidden meaning of what is said which could possibly be, that the benefits of spoken communication are limited to this form of communication alone, since in other forms of

communication, there is no face-to-face interaction, neither is one able to assess the reactions of the speakers nor does it give the person who is communicating the flexibility of adding the subtleties of meaning through changes in intonation, stress and other related attributes of speech.

- ✚ If you were to do an **inferential reading** of the given passage, you would go one step further than the other approaches to perhaps infer that, speaking is a popular form of communication for personal and official interaction, since it has many advantages where it scores over other forms of communication.

Answers 3.2.1

1) Spoken interaction is easy and economical.

Ans. (A) **Definitely True**. It does not require any materials or action other than using your vocal chords.

2) Spoken language helps us to avoid interaction.

Ans. (B) **Definitely False**. Speaking enhances interaction.

3) Face-to-face interaction is always beneficial.

Ans. (C) **Probably True**. Sometimes writing is a better option especially if one wishes to maintain a distance between communicators or wants to avoid interaction or if one needs the opportunity to take time and care over the wording of a message. It also proves beneficial when one needs to keep evidence of the communication or wants to add weight to the message or if one wants to take the opportunity to integrate verbal and visual means of communication. But to establish close one-to-one interaction, face-to-face communication is preferred.

4) Only personal communication can be carried out by word of mouth.

Ans. (B) **Definitely False**. Even official communication can be carried out by word of mouth.

5) Face-to-face spoken communication can integrate verbal and gestural modes of communication.

Ans. (A) **Definitely True**. The verbal and gestural modes can be heard and seen.

Exercise 3.2.2

We cannot help situating ourselves in the continuum of our own life, of the family and group to which we belong. We cannot help comparing past and present: that is what family photo albums or home movies are there for. We cannot help learning from it, for that is what *experience* means. We may learn the wrong things-and plainly we often do- but if we don't learn, or have had no chance of learning, or refuse to learn from what past is relevant for our purpose, we are, in the extreme case making a huge error. 'The child who burns its fingers keeps away from fire' says the old proverb, which implies that we believe that he/she learns from experience. Historians are considered the memory bank of experience, since they rely heavily upon experience. In theory, the past constitutes or makes all the past, anything and everything that has happened to date-constitutes history .

Adapted from Eric Hobsbawm's On History. 1997. Rpt. Great Britain: Abacus, 2008. p, 32-3.

As you were guided through the previous exercise, let me help you identify the six different kinds of reading explained to you earlier in this section, here as well.

- ❖ If you were to **skim** through this passage you would say that, we learn from the past because that is what constitutes experience.
- ❖ If you were to **scan** this passage you would say that, even while living in the past we cannot help comparing the past and the present, we learn from the past since that is what makes our experience, even if we were in danger of learning wrong things we should learn, otherwise we are making a huge error. We would draw the inference that historians are considered the memory bank of experience as they rely upon experience, and finally anything and everything that has happened to date-constitutes history.
- ❖ If you were to do an **intensive reading** of this piece you would arrive at the gist of the content by saying that, even if we were to learn the wrong things we must never give up learning from the past, since that is what constitutes experience.
- ❖ If you were to do an **extensive reading** of this on the other hand you would, study it with care and may even be able to memorize it by heart since this kind of reading is done for a project, an examination, etc.
- ❖ If you were to **read between the lines** you would understand the real meaning of the writer and state that, it is essential to learn from the past, since mistakes have often been committed and learning from the past is what constitutes experience.
- ❖ If you were to do an **inferential reading** of this passage you would infer that, learning from the past is very essential, since even our present is in some ways connected with our past-through our range of lived experiences and the mistakes that we might have made in our past.

Now analyse these sentences as directed above.

- 1) We compare the past and the present.
- 2) Politicians are the memory bank of experience.
- 3) All that has happened to date constitutes history.
- 4) Learning the wrong things is unadvisable.
- 5) We may gain experience from that which we have learnt.

Answers
3.2.2

1) A. This is **Definitely True** because as the passage mentions, we cannot help comparing past and present: that is what family photo albums or home movies are there for. Memory of the past forever stays with us. Knowledge of the present is forever with us. Hence the human mind cannot help comparing the past and the present.

2) B. This is **Definitely False**. Politicians suffer from selective amnesia, unlike the historians who base their writings on facts and experience.

3) A. This is **Definitely True**. History is the story of anything and everything that has happened from the past till date.

4) B. This is **Definitely False** as learning wrong things is inadvisable. But knowledge of wrong things done in the past is essential to avoid committing wrong things – it is advisable to learn what is wrong in order not to repeat it.

5) A. This is **Definitely True**. What the writer means by the proverb, “the child who burns its fingers keeps away from fire” is that we rely on the child to learn from experience. Experience is a great teacher and we learn from it.

**FORMAL AND INFORMAL READING:
FIND OUT THE DIFFERENCE! (3.3)**

Time: 20
mins

The registers or levels of usage are moulded according to the situation they are used in. For instance, formal registers are inappropriate in a conversation between friends, e.g. "Sigh! I cannot make it to the alumni meet this Sunday." Similarly informal registers sound inappropriate when one is answering questions in an examination, e.g. "Ain't that a smart way to calculate profit and loss."

The kinds of registers are indicated as follows:

- ❖ Formal: indicates uses that are normally restricted to formal (esp. written) English.
- ❖ Colloq (= colloquial): indicates a use that is normally restricted to informal (esp. spoken) English.
- ❖ Sl. (= slang): indicates a use of the most informal kind, unsuited to written English and often restricted to a particular social group.

**Exercise
3.3.1**

In the activity given below classify the words given into the following categories: *formal*, *informal* and *slang*.

Ace
Airhead
Ballistic
Blabber
Bod

Chum
Concur
Cool
Erudite
Esoteric

Quid
Recommnd
Residence
Scruffy
Stuff

Answers
3.3.1

INFORMAL
Chum
Quid
Scruffy
Stuff
Blabber

FORMAL
Erudite
Concur
Esoteric
Recommend
Residence

SLANG
Airhead
Ace
Ballistic
Bod
Cool

Note: Some of these words for e.g, scruffy and stuff, depending on the situation and usage, could be used as either formal or informal words, without a strict kind of bracketing as one or the other alone.

Exercise 3.3.2

Now let me lead you through a simple exercise on the use of sentences that are **formal**, **informal** or may even be used as **slang**.

In deciding which of the three categories listed above the sentence belongs to, we have to keep in mind the situation, context and even the choice of words used.

Let's begin. Try to identify which of the sentences are **formal**, **informal** or **slang** and think why they are formal, informal or slang expressions/sentences.

1. I would be very obliged if you could kindly grant me some leave, Sir. **FORMAL**
This sentence is used in a formal situation, for instance where an employee is requesting his/her employer to grant him/her some leave.
2. You are looking so cool today. **SLANG**
This sentence is used as a slang with the commonly used slang expression "cool", where the speaker is telling the person being addressed to that he/she is looking very smart.
3. We are taking the kids to a musical concert. Wanna come along? **INFORMAL**
This sentence has been used in an day-to-day situation where the parents are taking their children out for a concert and are casually inviting the listener as well.

Now, attempt the remaining sentences on your own.

4. I beg your pardon, Sir, we must have misunderstood each other.
5. Hey, I was wondering, if you are you busy tonight?
6. Are you done?
7. Hello, how are you doing?
8. Don't worry. We have looked into the situation.
9. Hi, what's up?
10. Hey dude, what's the latest news?

Answers 3.3.2

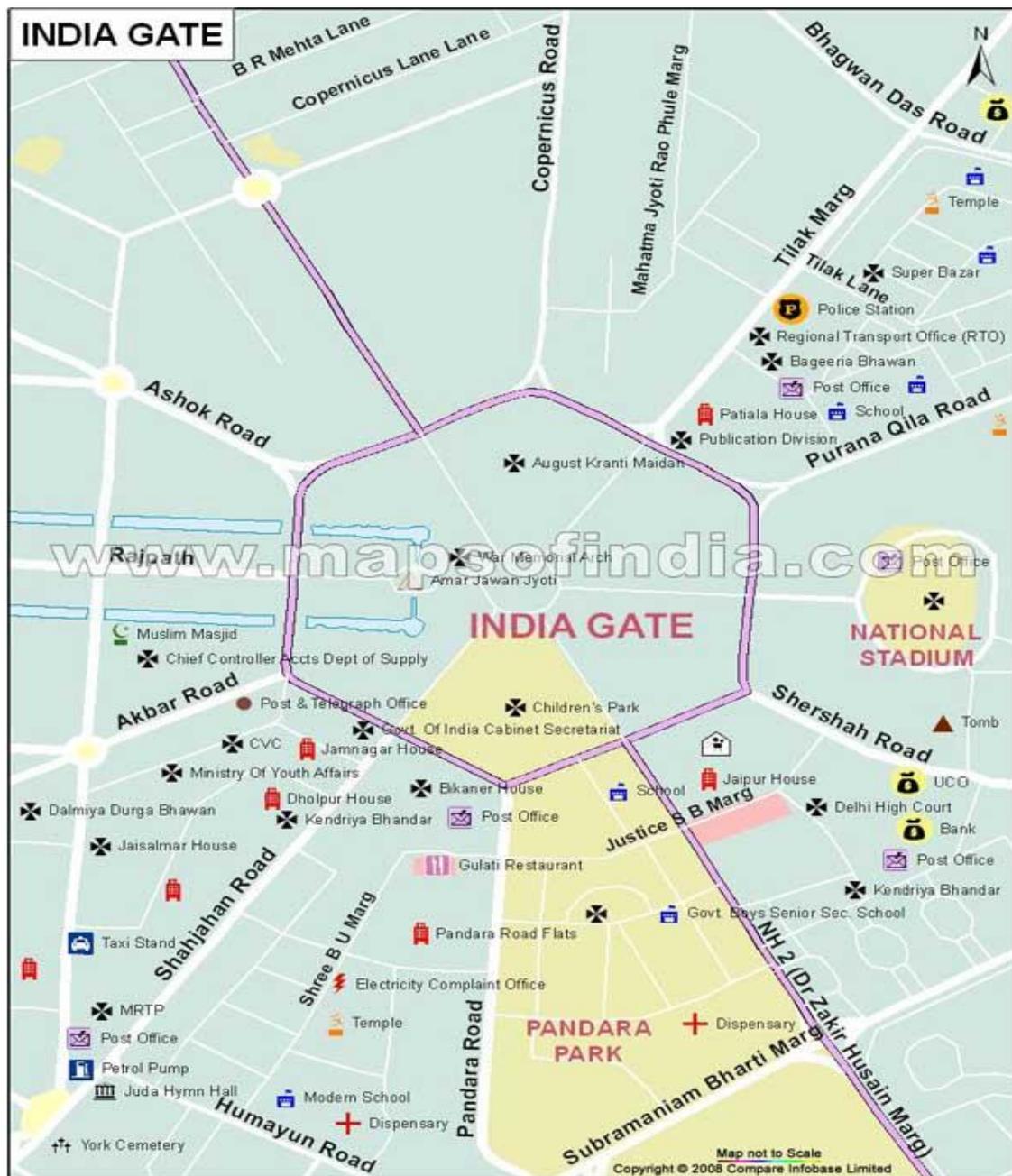
4. **FORMAL** In this situation the speaker is apologizing to his senior in a situation where they have not understood each other properly. Both the situation and the diction make the sentence sound formal. If in the same situation the expression were informal it would have sounded rude and inappropriate.
5. **INFORMAL** Here the speaker is enquiring if the other person has time to, perhaps meet up, that night. The situation and language sounds informal as between two friends.
6. **INFORMAL** Here the speaker is enquiring from the listener in a terse and informal manner whether the listener has finished his/her work. In an formal sentence it could have been "Have you finished the assigned work?"
7. **FORMAL** This is a way of greeting someone, formally.
8. **INFORMAL** Here the speaker is telling the listener to be calm as the situation has been taken care of. It sounds more appropriate if used in this manner in an informal way. "Investigated" in place of "looked into" could have sounded more formal.
9. **INFORMAL** This is a way of greeting someone, informally.
10. **SLANG** This sentence is a slang since it makes use of the slang expression dude which means a male friend or a guy.

READING MAPS
AND AIR/TRAIN TABLES (3.4)

Time: 5 mins

Exercise
3.4.1

Study the map of India Gate given below and then create a dialogue between two friends in which one is explaining the route from India Gate to Sahitya Akademi.



Picture 20

<http://www.mapsofindia.com/delhi/maps/india-gate.jpg>

Accessed on 11/02/2011 at 2:49 pm.

Answers 3.4.1

In the form of a conversation between two friends:

Asha: Shalini could you please guide me about the route I should take to go from Khan Market to the Sahitya Akademi.

Shalini: Sure, it is rather easy to understand if you follow the markers that I provide you with.

Asha: I am not familiar with the India Gate area so if you guide me to the roads it would be of great help.

Shalini: Let me guide you straight away then. From Khan Market go along Subramaniam Bharti Marg and then take a left to Pandara road.

Asha: Is that close to Pandara Park?

Shalini: That's correct. You will find it on your right as you go down Pandara road. As you reach the India Gate roundabout go around it until you reach a signboard on your left, marked Copernicus Marg. Go down that road and you will pass Kamani Auditorium on your left. Carry on straight a little further and you will reach your destination on the left.

Asha: I think that should help me reach Sahitya Akademi quite easily. Thanks.

Shalini: Oh, you are most welcome. Enjoy the drive.

Exercise
3.4.2

Time:
10 mins

Consider the following plane schedule given below and do a comparative study:

SECTOR	DEPARTURE TIME	ARRIVAL TIME	STOPS
Aurangabad-Delhi	0815	1020	—
Bangalore-Delhi	0700	0940	—
Bangalore-Hyderabad	1355	1455	—
Bangalore-Lucknow	1025	1450	—
Delhi-Aurangabad	0545	0745	—
Delhi-Bangalore	0710	0950	—

- Does the flight from Delhi to Bangalore take more time or the flight from Bangalore to Delhi?
- Which flight from Bangalore takes the least amount of time?
- Which flight from Bangalore takes the maximum time?
- Do the flights on the sector from Delhi to Aurangabad and those from Delhi to Bangalore take equal time? If not, what is the time difference?
- Does the flight from Aurangabad to Delhi take more time than the one from Delhi to Aurangabad?

Answers
3.4.2

- (a) Equal Time
- (b) Bangalore to Hyderabad
- (c) Bangalore to Delhi
- (d) No. The time difference is 40 mins and Delhi to Bangalore takes 40 mins more than Delhi to Aurangabad.
- (e) Yes. It takes 5 mins more.

READING AN UNSEEN PASSAGE (3.5)

Time:
15 mins

Exercise 3.5

Read the passage given below and answer the questions based on it.

The essential factor that conditions the vast majority of Indians is religious faith. It is one thing to understand what religious faith means and to pick out from this faith the pressing need for communal harmony. But to practice religious faith in a secular society without even having a knowledge of the meaning and background of important religious festivals is rather absurd. A secularism that is based on such ignorance or on half-understood knowledge of one's own religion is likely to die out. Indeed, the pity of this is that: a large percentage of the present Indian middle class that was born after the Gandhi-Nehru period and that inherited their legacy remained unexposed to the liberal Western principles of rationality and secularism. Thus it was expected for this class to become likely targets in the hands of communal forces. What is even more tragic is that the liberal, Westernized crust of the upper middle class, for whom secularism has always been an article of faith, is increasingly cutting itself away from it and is drifting away from the religious and cultural factors that influences the vast majority of Indians, into a progressive yet isolated world of its own.

Extract adapted from Pavan K. Varma's The Great Indian Middle Class.1998.
Rpt. New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 2007.

- (a) Does the Westernized upper middle class associate itself with religious faith and belief-systems?
- (b) Fill in the blanks: _____ has come to maturity after the end of the Gandhi-Nehru legacy and is becoming _____ in the hands of communal forces.
- (c) Why is it important to understand the meaning and background of important religious festivals?
- (d) Does religious faith guarantee communal harmony?
- (e) What kind of secularism is likely to die out?

Answers
3.5

- (a) No. Since it is wedded to secular faith, it is increasingly beginning to separate itself from the religio-cultural impulses of the majority of Indians.
- (b) The present Indian middle class ; likely targets
- (c) Yes in order to understand the true meaning of festivals of all religion to appreciate what it is to be secular.
- (d) No. Religious faith, per se, does not guarantee communal harmony; on the contrary it is likely to engender fundamentalism and communalism. To understand secularism, it is essential to understand the the meaning and background of important religious festivals.
- (e) The writer believes that, "a secularism that is based on such ignorance or on half-understood knowledge of one's own religion is likely to die out".

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT?

Here's a quick recapitulation of what we have learnt till now.

- Language learning requires both time and patience. People who really want to learn English should find the time for language-learning activities, such as reading, listening to English programmes or participating in conversations with both friends and strangers.
- Reading styles could vary from skimming and scanning the text to intensive reading, extensive reading or reading between the lines, depending on what you are reading and for what purpose.
- Reading a word or sentence can give us a clue whether the words used fit into the category of formal words, informal words or slang. Fml (formal): words and phrases used in a serious way; infml (informal): used with friends or family or people you know well; slang: casual language which might include words which are not polite. Slang is often used between members of a particular group when speaking to each other, and might stay in use for only a short time.
- Reading a text can be extended to reading and interpreting, maps or even train/plane schedules.
- By making your reading activity a regular practice you can gradually overcome the errors that you make and that are an inevitable part of the language learning practice. To check your progress maintain a diary and read poems, stories or newspapers till you gradually learn to read with fluency and speed.

Links for Images

Picture 17

<http://jpsblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/10-tip-reading-books-knowlegde-seo-dota-read-300x254.jpg>

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http://www.reprodart.com/kunst/matthias_stomer/young_man_reading_candle_ligh_hi.jpg

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