CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT DO RESEARCHERS AND EDUCATORS SAY ABOUT READING ALOUD, FOR L1 AND L2 READERS?

3.1 Introduction

This study focusses on adults and young adults, literate in their L1 and coming to Australia for shortish periods (six months to three or four years) for academic or general/vocational purposes, so it is the needs of this group of learners for both everyday and more academic reading skills which are our main interest, and the role that they perceive reading aloud to have in their learning. However, it is useful to examine what we know generally about the processes of reading and of learning to read, to see if this knowledge can shed some light on the more specific processes of the ESL teenage and adult intermediate/advanced reader.

Most teachers and writers who discuss the purposes of learning to read in our society agree that the main use for most people is silent reading for information or enjoyment. Oral reading in everyday life is much less frequent, comparatively speaking. It is true that we do on occasion read aloud to share a text with someone else who does not have direct access to it; to clarify a difficult text for ourselves; to participate in a social activity (a play-reading, or prayers or readings in a religious context); or perhaps to enjoy the sonority of particular kinds of writing (such as poetry). We may also hear a certain amount of oral reading in our lives in religious contexts or from professional actors or newsreaders. Certain groups may employ oral reading more extensively to affirm solidarity or for other purposes (Heath 1983; Horowitz 1991). Generally speaking, however, silent reading for meaning is much more frequent for most individuals.

Although there is general agreement on the relative importance of silent and oral reading in daily experience, there is considerable disagreement about the value of oral reading by learners or less skilled readers, and indeed about the relationship between reading for meaning and reading aloud. Are they the same process, or complementary parts of the same process? Does

oral reading skill reflect the reader's understanding? If so, is this a direct reflection or a partial reflection? Alternatively, does oral reading perhaps assist the reader's comprehension? Or on the contrary does it inhibit or distract from understanding? Can reading aloud fulfil other functions? And are the needs of L1 and L2 readers the same, similar or radically different? All these questions are raised, though not always fully resolved, in the literature.

The literature which has provided the background and conceptual framework for this study comes from both the research and the pedagogical domains, dealing with the uses and purposes of reading aloud in a variety of situations past and present. In particular, it focusses on reading aloud by learners and by others reading to learners, both in the first-language (L1) or mainstream classroom and in the second-language (L2) situation (including TESOL), for young as well as adult learners.

In this chapter, we will consider the following topics:

Reading aloud has been a widespread practice in many societies throughout history. If we are to understand how reading aloud has achieved the status and roles which it now has, it will be helpful to know how it has been viewed in a range of cultural and historical contexts. This chapter thus begins with a survey of what we know about reading aloud in the past, up until the twentieth century, and in a range of societies, noting its use both generally in society and particularly in educational environments (Section 3.2).

A brief account of some theoretical approaches to the study of reading and learning to read in English mainly by native speakers (Section 3.3).

An analysis of the phonological aspects which may be involved in reading for meaning (Section 3.4).

A discussion of the practice of teachers and others reading to learners, again largely with reference to L1 learners (Section 3.5).

A survey of the literature on oral reading by L1 learners, and the varied functions oral reading can have in teaching as well as assessing reading skills. Although the focus here is on L1 readers, since that is where most of the research has concentrated, there are valuable insights into the potential purposes and limitations of oral reading which may be related to the second-language classroom (Section 3.6).

A review of the recent research and pedagogical literature relating to the value of reading aloud by L2 learners at various stages of their learning. The material in this section clearly provides a direct framework for our study, dealing as it does with the differing experiences of and attitudes towards reading aloud by teachers and students learning English as a second or later language (Section 3.7).

An examination of the literature dealing with affective aspects (mainly negative) of oral reading in a range of situations (Section 3.8).

A discussion of the literature on cognitive or learning styles and strategies relevant to this study (a more positive focus) (Section 3.9).

The final section summarises the findings and draws implications for this study (Section 3.10).

3.2 Reading aloud through history and across cultures

It seems to be well-established that, in those cultures which had developed writing systems in the ancient world, there was a considerable emphasis on reading aloud rather than just silent reading. Written records of laws, commercial transactions, governmental decisions and religious teachings became important references for the regulation of society. However, written texts were slow and expensive to produce and hence few copies would have existed: moreover only a limited number of people learned to read (Diringer 1968; Gelb 1963; Kelly 1969; Ong 1982). If information was to be shared with the community as a whole, therefore, one possibility was for a skilled reader to read the text aloud to a large group or to those unable to read for themselves. The wealthy often employed special slaves for this purpose (Goody & Watt 1972).

In the religious domain particularly, reading aloud (when memorised, this is termed 'recitation') came to play an important role in ceremonies of worship and in religious education, for example in ancient Egypt, India and Mesopotamia, in Judaism and later in Islam (Horowitz 1991; Pollak 1982). Even today in some traditional education environments we can observe such practices as the reading aloud of texts to commit them to memory (in certain cases, even without understanding the words: Amie 1989; Kanelli 1994-95; Scribner & Cole 1981), and an emphasis on oral learning generally, including debate and argumentation.

Kelly, who has perused almost 1200 primary texts, claims that '[t]he ancients were suspicious of any "silent" use of language, be it musing, praying, or even reading' (Kelly 1969: 97). That silent reading was unusual and worthy of note in early times is evidenced by St. Augustine's description of St. Ambrose: 'When he read, his eyes were drawn down the page and his mind was sifting the material, but his voice and tongue were silent [...] I saw him reading silently, and to my knowledge, he never read any other way' (Augustine, *Confessiones*, trans. Rouse, cited in Kelly 1969: 152).

It may be as Saenger (1991) suggests that the eighth century marked a greater role for silent reading, although, apart from the in-text clues he notes, societal conditions in general do not seem to have altered enough to be conducive to a widespread change of that sort. Education was still not available to more than a very few, books were expensive and rare, at least until the mid- to late sixteenth century when the printing press was well-established (Kelly 1969: 259), and religious authorities were for many centuries very loath to permit lay people to read or interpret the Bible on their own.

Kelly's research into the European tradition suggests a somewhat later date than the eighth century for the rise of silent reading: '[u]ntil the twentieth century there is hardly a mention of silent reading. We do not know when it became common, let alone usual' (Kelly 1969: 152), and this seems to apply equally to mother-tongue and foreign-language learning and use. During the Middle Ages, elite, literate audiences enjoyed - perhaps preferred - public reading aloud in groups to private silent reading (Coleman 1996). Scripture was also studied out loud, not only in the situation where one person read to a group (during meals in monasteries and convents, or during religious services) but also by individuals: Bede commented that it

occupied both the mind and the tongue (Kelly 1969: 97). At the same time, rhetoric continued to play an important part in education (Kelly 1969: 152; Reynolds 1996).

By the later sixteenth century, there was quite an array of textbooks for native-language and foreign-language learning, and many of these feature dialogues, which again may have been intended for reading aloud (Howatt 1984; Kelly 1969). Howatt notes (1984: 14-18) that several such English manuals written for the French refugees then arriving in England seemed designed to foster both basic literacy and everyday conversation, perhaps for self-study in the home, and going so far as to include comments on pronunciation and even 'semi-phonetic' versions of the conversations. In the same period, the Englishman Hart developed a reformed spelling system and a 'phonic reading' system for teaching children to read. Once more, in both these cases, the strong impression is that reading aloud was expected.

The educators Comenius in the seventeenth century and Morhof in the eighteenth century both emphasised starting foreign language study with oral comprehension, and then proceeding in an orderly sequence to reading aloud, then speaking, and finally writing (Kelly 1969: 215-216), so we know for certain that reading aloud in L2 learning had some support at this time, in Europe at least. Two Frenchmen seem to have been exceptions to this, however. One was Jouvancy, who directed that students reading new work should do so '*submissa voce*', which Kelly (1969: 152) interprets from the context to mean 'silently'. The second was Marcel, who advocated the teaching of 'impression' (i.e. what are now commonly called the 'receptive' skills: listening and reading to comprehend) before 'expression', the 'productive' skills of speaking and writing (Howatt 1984: 152-156). Indeed, for him reading should precede listening, as it provided a more immediate and useful achievement for the learner in the early stages. He quite specifically rejected oral reading as part of the reading process: 'we have here nothing to do with the uttering of sounds previously known on perceiving the written words which represent them' (Howatt 1984: 155). However, the ideas of these two educators do not seem to have found general favour with their contemporaries, and were lost sight of until relatively recently.

By the eighteenth century, educa ion for girls was becoming more generally available, and reading aloud still featured prominently. One writer of this period made no mention of silent reading, but recommended that ladies' boarding schools should have 'pr oper Masters present at least three days per week; in order to teach them not only to read with an accurate pronunciation, and to acquire a r atural, easy, and graceful Variation of the voice, suitable to the Nature and Importance of the Subject, but to write their own Language grammatically' (Buchanan 1762, in Howatt 1984: 81).

Compulsory education for all gradually became more popular in many countries throughout the nineteenth century, including America and Australia, partly as a means of controlling children and developing community stability, and partly because literacy was seen as a useful skill for the individual and the family (Finkelstein 1976; Howden & Orford 1992).

It has been argued that it was only during the nineteenth century that silent reading become commonplace: partly because of the steady though still gradual increase in literacy over this period (Cipolla 1969), and hence the decrease in the number of those who would need to listen to a text read aloud; partly because the variety of written material expanded considerably, with 'literary' texts losing favour to newspapers and other periodicals, and non-fiction books for self-improvement, which called for more selective skimming approaches rather than word-by-word sequential reading (Pugh 1978: 12-13); and also perhaps partly because libraries such as the British Museum would have been unbearably noisy and distracting if all readers had continued to read aloud (Chaytor 1945: 19).

Despite the increasingly widespread role of reading in everyday life, however, reading as a school subject had relatively low status (Pugh 1978: 9), and was still largely taught and assessed by the oral reading of the learner. To qualify for the 'Payment by Results', a teacher in England last century only had to prepare the pupils to be able to read aloud a few single words and a short passage of continuous text (Arnold 1982: 17). According to Cheek and Cheek (1980, cited in Taylor & Connor 1982: 441): 'oral reading was the most important aspect of reading. Proper enunciation and pronunciation of words were the mark of an educated person.' As it was possible to read aloud without much or any understanding, levels of functional reading, in schools at least, were often not high (Brooks 1982).

In addition, during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the growing interest in oral rather than written language and hence also in phonetics exercised a considerable influence over language teaching and the teaching of reading (Howatt 1984: 169ff). For instance, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Reform Movement in foreign language teaching across Europe emphasised correct pronunciation by the learners before they encountered written texts, and deplored the inaccurate representation of pronunciation in the orthographies of most European languages, which they sought to replace with 'scientifically accurate notation', at least in teaching texts. Thus the connection between speech and reading was perhaps even more strongly highlighted. In the USA, choral reading was widely used until the 1920s at least, even in classes for adult literacy (Cook 1977: 8, 33).

In the twentieth century, various trends have arisen and fallen away in mainstream and second-language teaching, some of which we will examine in more detail in later sections of this chapter. In general, it seems that, while reading aloud has been a virtually permanent and respected feature of classroom reading instruction for both native speakers and second-language learners, its preeminence has been challenged on several occasions during this century by approaches favouring silent reading and a comprehension emphasis. In the first quarter of this century in the USA, for instance, Huey (1908), O'Brien (1921), Smith (1925), Stone (1922), Thorndike (1917) and Watkins (1922) were among the many who strongly urged a move away from oral to silent L1 reading instruction, in the light of research into such factors as reading speeds, eye movements during reading, and the extent of stuttering among young readers. In the 1940s, too, there were calls for 'nonoral' reading programs and assessment (e.g. Buswell 1945, 1959; Gilbert 1940); and the teacher manuals for certain series of basal readers in the 1950s and 1960s also stressed that silent reading should precede oral reading (Chall 1967: 99ff; Horowitz 1991: 142).

However, as Chall (1967: 282-285) notes, just because some theorists stress silent reading for comprehension does not necessarily mean that classroom practitioners will hear what they say, or follow their advice, so actual practice need not be in line with theoretical recommendation. Reading aloud does not seem to have disappeared during this time, and indeed appears to return with equal vigour each time a challenge has been mounted against its dominance.

Teachers in the UK generally did not emphasise silent reading to the same extent, though comprehension became an increasing focus. However, one Englishman who was influenced by the work of O'Brien and others above was West, working in India and later in Europe in the first half of the century, mainly with L2 learners. He strongly advocated silent reading - and different forms of reading for differing purposes - and developed a very successful series of readers (and questions to guide reading comprehension) to support this (Howatt 1984: 245-250; Pugh 1978: 20; West 1927).

Most of the above refers to the English, Western European and Anglo-American traditions. Similar traditions combining oracy and literacy in religion and education have continued among the Jewish people for over 6000 years (Horowitz (1991: 145-146), and in a broad range of Islamic societies (Scribner & Cole 1981; Street 1984; Wagner 1993). Much less information is readily available about practices in other societies in recent centuries. However, some insights can be gained from travellers' accounts, and from descriptions of the instructional practices in so-called 'ethnic schools'. One such 'traveller's tale' is that of Kanelli (1994-95), who recently visited India and observed rural schools - all of differing ethos, but where English reading lessons were always based around oral reading. Pope (1982) describes oral reading, including choral reading, as having extensive usage in the Chinese education system, while Yu et al. (1993) describe a similar situation with regard to ESL teaching in Hong Kong primary schools.

An 'ethnic school' is the term popularly applied to a school in a country of migrant destination (such as Australia or the USA), where the curriculum includes the development of language skills in the languages of both the country of origin and the receiving country, but usually in an instructional style closer to that of the country of origin (sometimes called 'traditional'). One study of ethnic schools is that of Reidler-Berger (1985) who looked at initial reading acquisition in both English and the students' first languages in two New York ethnic schools, one in the Armenian tradition and the other based on a Greek tradition. She observed amongst other things that oral reading activities predominated over other strategies in both these environments, and that a number of more-recently developed strategies used in other New York schools at that time were not a feature of these two schools. We may perhaps hazard a guess that these practices reflect the traditions of the countries concerned, and that, as in the English/American

traditions, reading aloud has a well-established positive status in India, China, Armenia and Greece, at least.

Discussions with colleagues and overseas students have confirmed that reading aloud is also widely used in both mother-tongue and foreign-language teaching in many other countries, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Laos, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Poland and Turkey. These represent a range of language families and script types, not all of them alphabetic like English; so the close relationship between sounds and symbols in English is clearly not the only reason why oral reading has seemed such a 'natural thing to do'. Further, there is evidence that the same sorts of errors made by learners in English are made in oral reading in languages such as Chinese which are much less direct in the way they relate to speech: for example, symbol reversals, not noticing small details, confusing same forms with different pronunciations, and same forms with different meanings (Hope 1982). Interestingly, while individual reading aloud seems to predominate in most of these countries, choral reading is mentioned as more prominent in the education system of certain countries: Greece, Turkey and Indonesia (personal communications).

We can already see emerging from the aforegoing some tendencies which help to explain why reading for meaning and reading aloud can be so tightly entangled in the memories and thinking processes of both teachers and students.

3.3 Learning to read in English (L1): Overview

When we consider written language, we observe a considerably less natural and universal phenomenon than spoken language. Written language appeared much later in human history than speech, and not at all in many cultures, nor do all native speakers become 'native writers'. Moreover, different languages have evolved conceptually very divergent ways of transferring spoken language to a more permanent written form. Some, like Chinese, use symbols which represent speech at a morphemic level; others, such as Japanese, use a syllabic script; whereas the written form of English is mainly alphabetic, its symbols relating systematically (though not neatly one-to-one) to the phonemes of spoken English. Morphemes and syllables are much more immediately accessible to awareness than

phonemes - the phoneme's physical reality is notoriously elusive - so the task of learning a writing system based on the phoneme (perhaps more accurately the morphophoneme) poses particular cognitive difficulties for the individual.

To learn to read English, therefore, L1 speakers face a very demanding task. They must be able to detect and to some extent manipulate the phonemic segments of English, and then relate these to the individual symbols of the graphemic system in order to 'decode' what is written. In addition, readers need a knowledge of the syntax of the language, and an ever-increasing lexis as they encounter new texts; and many would argue that, if they are to comprehend at anything beyond a basic or literal level, they also need to develop culturally appropriate text-schemas and world knowledge to enable them to interpret what they meet in print, to select what is relevant to them personally, and to integrate it critically into their own understanding (Carrell & Eisterhold 1988; Widdowson 1983).

A range of theories to some extent compete with one another to try to explain both the process of skilled or mature reading in English and the process of learning to read. Although they all agree more or less on the factors to be considered, they differ in the emphasis or priority they place on each of these. One approach, sometimes termed the 'decoding' (USA) or 'skills' (UK) approach, has a strong emphasis on the cognitive demands on the individual learner: for this orientation, the learner's main task is to crack the orthographic cipher - the way in which English spelling maps written words onto spoken ones - and hence reading instruction must focus systematically on this word-recognition task from the start. Once this is mastered, other skills and awarenesses can be built up towards full reading competence (Adams 1990; Gough 1972; Gough, Juel & Griffith 1992; LaBerge & Samuels 1974). Such a view of the learning-to-read process can be termed a 'bottom-up' view, as it begins with a focus on the smallest components (phonemes and their realisation as graphemes and words) and builds up to more composite levels of language (Danks & Hill 1981).

A contrasting approach is the 'whole language' (USA) or 'strategy' (UK) view of learning to read, a more 'top-down' approach which insists that written language should not be presented to students too soon broken down into component parts, such as phonemes and graphemes, but that on the contrary these are more easily accessed by the learner from a holistic context,

and in a social learning environment. In this approach, it is often maintained that, in a supportive context, learning to read can be as natural a process as learning to speak (Bettelheim & Zelan 1981; Goodman 1976a, 1976b; Holdaway 1979; Huey 1908). In the 1970s, where this approach had a primary focus on the individual learner, it was sometimes termed a 'psycholinguistic approach'; more recently, a social or context perspective has been added, influenced, for example, by the work of the social constructivist Vygotsky (1934/1962) and Rumelhart's (1980) schema theory.

The above has of course oversimplified the matter to a degree by presenting somewhat extreme forms of these approaches - although to read the literature is often to encounter somewhat polarised descriptions of each group by the opposite camp. Proponents of the socially-mediated 'whole language' approach have viewed the decoding focus as a limited, indeed impoverished, view of literacy (e.g. Goodman 1979, 1981; Smith, F. 1982). 'Decoders', on the other hand, with their consciousness of the difficult task faced by the learner and the risk of failure of so many, frequently consider whole language supporters to be casual at best and at worst abdicating their responsibility to the learners - especially those whose backgrounds have not provided them with much exposure to conventional literacy activities (Gough 1972; Liberman & Liberman 1992; Stanovich 1986).

Fortunately, in recent years it has been better recognised that both skilled reading and learning to read require the interaction between top-down and bottom-up elements, and instructional practices in most classrooms now include activities to foster this interactive approach (Adams 1990; Danks & Hill 1981; Durkin 1983; Stanovich 1980). This applies also to adult literacy learners as well as children, and to second-language classes, whether the students are already literate in another language or are achieving initial literacy in English: they all need to be able to see the way literacy is linked to the rest of their lives, and the roles that different texts play in our society, as well as how the marks on the page relate to spoken language and create a decodable system of communication. We will return to this in the later section on L2 reading.

Many activities have been developed to help neophyte readers make these systematic connections and evolve their awareness of the purposes of literacy. For many if not most learners, of course, explicit instruction plays a crucial role in ensuring the development of phonemic awareness and in

making phoneme-grapheme links explicit (e.g. Adams 1990; Byrne 1992; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley 1989; Gough et al. 1992) - although, as discussed above, just when this should occur in instruction is a debated point. In addition, countless studies have asserted the importance in L1 reading development of the early (home or preschool) language-using environment in general as laying a valuable foundation for learning to read, including such factors as the literacy level of the parents (e.g. Dapiran 1982; Robinson 1982; Rubio 1986; Symons et al. 1996; Wells 1981); the level of print exposure of the children (e.g. Cunningham & Stanovich 1991; Freeman & Wasserman 1986; Juliebo 1985; Paratore et al 1995; Stanovich 1992; Stanovich & Cunningham 1991); and storytelling and other interactions that foster vocabulary growth and listening comprehension (e.g. Chall & Snow 1982; Chandler et al. 1983; Mason 1992; Snow 1993; Tunmer & Hoover 1992; Wells 1980).

Learners can of course learn to read without having experienced all these kinds of preparation prior to formal instruction; indeed, a number of researchers remind educators that they need to be aware of and to build on the variety of early experiences with which children do enter school, and to see the positive value of culturally or socially different practices which may not immediately seem literacy-related in conventional ways (Heath 1980, 1983, 1992; Kerka 1991; Smith et al. 1982). The fact remains, however, that learners need a wide range of 'literacy-framing' experiences - in or out of formal education - if the explicit teaching of reading and writing skills is to make sense to them.

If reading for meaning is the major purpose in most everyday reading, and if the long-term goal of instruction is to facilitate this skill in the reader, then one might expect to see research devoted to the teaching of silent reading to beginner readers. In fact, however, no reference was found in the experimental literature to learners being taught to read silently from the start. On the other hand, quite a lot of the pedagogical literature, especially in the 'whole language' or 'strategy' perspective but also in the first half of this century, does emphasise silent reading for meaning on the part of the learners (Buswell 1945, 1959; Gibson & Levin 1976; Harris & Sipay 1975; Holdaway 1979; Huey 1908; Latham & Sloan 1979; Mendak 1986; Pugh 1978; Smith, F. 1978, 1982; Spache & Spache 1973) - and we have already noted an educational trend of this type especially in the USA in the earlier part of this century. These writers present strong philosophical, educational and

motivational arguments - often working back from the way a mature reader appears to read - but not much in the way of controlled experiments proving the superiority of such a method over a more traditional approach. This is not to say that these writers are wrong; indeed, many educators are convinced from their own classroom experience that such a shift in practice does in fact result in improved learning at many levels for their students. It would however lend further weight to their assertions if there were also clear-cut experimental evidence in their favour.

Thus, in spite of the long-term emphasis on reading for meaning as the goal, most reading development programs feature reading aloud - some emphasising reading aloud **to** the learners and others with greater emphasis on reading aloud **by** the learners There are a number of factors influencing these differing tendencies, which will be examined in the following section.

3.4 Phonological aspects in (mainly) English L1 reading

As we have noted, the alphabetic written system of English is based on a relationship between sounds and symbols. It is not surprising therefore that an awareness of the phonemes of English and of the way these are realised by the graphemic system has been identified by many researchers as essential for developing fluent reading-for-meaning skills in English, at least for L1 learners (Bryant & Bradley 1985; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley 1989, 1990; Ehri 1992). It is not quite clear whether this phonological awareness mostly precedes or develops concurrently with reading skills (Adams 1990; Gathercole & Baddeley 1993; Stanovich 1992; Tunmer & Hoover 1992); this uncertainty applies even to 'normal' learners, as well as to other groups such as hearing-impaired learners and ESL learners, who, unlike most L1 children learning to read, may not have a strong foundation in the spoken form of English to which they can relate the written form, and who therefore learn the language to a considerable extent through reading, rather than the reverse (Wallace 1992). We shall return to this issue shortly.

In addition to phonological awareness (and such components as semantic, syntactic, orthographic and/or context processors, depending on the model), many models of first-language reading include a phonological memory or processor (Adams 1990; Gough 1972; Juel & Holmes 1981; LaBerge & Samuels 1974; Samuels 1987) (exceptions are the more top-down models

such as Rumelhart (1977) where there is no overt reference to 'bottom-up' processing of sound-symbol relationships). The precise role of the phonological component varies from model to model, but in general terms it stores, rehearses (briefly and subvocally) and allows retrieval of verbal and visual material in a phonologically coded form. It therefore appears to play a central role in early reading in the long-term learning of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, according to these models.

Some writers believe the phonological processor is inevitably involved in every act of reading from beginner to skilled level (Adams 1990; Ehri 1992; Juel & Holmes 1981; Perfetti 1992 Salasoo 1986; Van Orden et al. 1988, 1990). Others see it as an alternative route to meaning, more important at the early stages of learning to read or with unfamiliar words, but less utilised in most mature reading where a direct form of orthographic processing is preferred - at least for individual words (Gathercole & Baddeley 1993; Goodman 1976a; Horowitz 1991; Seidenberg 1992) - although Gathercole and Baddeley also hypothesise that its storing of prosodic or order information may assist in the comprehension of long and syntactically complex structures. Yet other researchers are uncertain whether pronunciation precedes or follows comprehension during oral reading (Danks et al. 1979, 1983).

A number of cognitive psychologists believe that reading comprehension is a function of decoding skill and listening comprehension: this has been termed 'the simple view of reading' (Gough & Tunmer 1986; Hoover & Gough 1990; Horowitz & Samuels 1985; Perfetti 1991). Others argue that silent reading, oral reading and listening may require different 'comprehension competences' (Mosenthal 1976; Weintraub 1972). Less strongly, a 'listening-in' or 'aural' stage has been posited by some as an intermediate stage between oral and silent reading for both L1 and L2 learners (Goodman 1976b; Neville & Pugh 1974, 1976).

Several studies (Kadota 1987; Lyczak 1979; Postovsky 1974) imply that a period of subvocalisation during listening is advantageous to L2 beginners before they are required to produce language (either speaking or oral reading), and that this assists communicative competence generally as well as reading comprehension skills. Some also assert that subvocalisation accompanies all silent reading - not only at the beginner stages - and that this may play a vital role in comprehension (Conrad 1972; Edfeldt 1960; Kadota 1987; Perfetti 1985). Haber & Haber's (1982) study involving the

silent reading of tongue-twisters suggests that articulatory disturbances slow down both oral and silent reading of such texts, which implies the presence of silent speech in silent reading even in mature readers. Similarly from their work with both native-speakers and advanced ESL speakers/readers, Appel & Lantolf (1994) contend that private speech mediates both the comprehension and the recall of written text.

Although this point of view tends to be associated with a more cognitive line of research, to some extent it also suggests a parallel between reading and other aspects of language development in Vygotskyan terms (Taylor & Connor 1982). According to Vygotsky, external speech in communication with others gradually evolves into inner private speech which facilitates thinking. The process is aided by interaction with others, especially adults who mediate the learning via language, and particularly if account is taken of the learner's 'zone of proximal development' - the next step s/he is ready to take in a given domain (Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994; Vygotsky 1978).

There are some dissenting voices - for instance, Gibson & Levin (1975) believe that inner speech disappears in skilled silent reading. Similarly, Klapp et al. (1973), working on words with varying numbers of syllables, found that there was no delay due to the number of syllables when a word had merely to be recognised but not pronounced; this they felt argued against subvocal articulation in reading. However, much research does suggest some degree of inner speech or subvocalisation, at least at certain stages of learning to read - and many mature readers report a kind of 'voice in the head' accompanying their silent reading (personal communications).

If reading comprehension is partly related to listening comprehension, and if there is indeed an element of subvocalisation as we read, then oral reading may have a crucial role to play in reading development. As noted earlier, this may take either of two main forms: reading aloud to or by the learners. Given that the former normally precedes the latter in a learner's experience, we will look first at findings on the practice of reading aloud to learners.

3.5 Mature readers reading aloud to learners

A widespread practice - in many cultures, past and present, as well as our own, as we have seen earlier - is for more mature readers to read aloud to and with less skilled readers. The mature readers may be parents or other family members (Akita & Muto 1996; Spreadbury 1992; Toomey 1992; Wells 1983); peers (Reay et al 1984); older school children (Juel 1996); college students (Campbell et al. 1989); other community members (Weinstein-Shr 1988); taped readers (Blum et al. 1995; Daly et al. 1975); and of course teachers.

The learner-readers may range from young children learning to read their first language (Daly et al. 1975), to less skilled older readers (Pitts 1986) and students learning a second language (Bayley 1995; Blum et al. 1995; Glynn & Glynn 1986; Howell & Hebert 1995; Paratore 1992; Quintero & Velarde 1990; Thornburg 1993). Interestingly, in a number of these projects, in particular those connected with projects of the Family or Intergenerational Literacy type, the adult readers have experienced benefits to their own reading confidence and skills just as the younger learners have done (Cairney et al. 1995; Glynn & Glynn 1986; Juel 1996; Quintero & Velarde 1990; Thornburg 1993), not to mention a realisation by families that their direct participation in their children's education is valued by the professional educators.

Many teachers in junior primary classrooms and beyond engage their learners in Shared Book or Big Book readings, where the teacher reads aloud and the students can follow the text visually as well as aurally, can participate in the reading, and can begin to recognise explicitly the relationship between the symbols on the page and the words and ideas they represent (Combs 1987; Eldredge et al. 1996; Holdaway 1979; Morrow et al. 1995). Older students, too, benefit from hearing more complex materials, such as textbooks, brought to life by expressive oral reading while they follow the text with their eyes (Artley 1975; Horowitz 1991; Klein 1989). Sensitive social issues can also be raised through the teacher reading aloud relevant passages to stimulate class discussion (Sullivan 1987).

The effectiveness is increased if the reading aloud is accompanied by questioning, commenting, contextualising and other collaborative techniques (Bus et al. 1995; Hader et al. 1996; Hayden 1987; Kertoy 1994; Lennox 1993; Toomey 1991, 1993) by the students taking part in the reading

as they become familiar with it through repeated readings (Holdaway 1979); or as noted above by even more explicit connecting of features of the text and the meanings these provide. The combination of the cognitive with the affective - the engagement of mind and feelings, which is so often the atmosphere generated at home or in class by these sessions - seems to be one of the most powerful aspects of the activity (Spreadbury 1992).

The above studies have found that such reading aloud promotes the learners' interest, their motivation to become more independent, their vocabulary and syntactic development, their knowledge about the writing system and the fact that meaning can be retrieved from text. Its importance goes even further, however, by exposing learners to the characteristics and 'feel' of written language. While the development of oral skills provides a valuable start to the process of language use, and an underpinning to written text, it is argued that oral language alone, with its more restricted lexis and a syntax which differs systematically in several ways from that typical of written language (Halliday 1978, 1985), can not provide beginning readers with experience of the decontextualised and self-contained language of written texts. Reading aloud a variety of types of written text to learners, and the discussion arising out of this, may therefore be a vital way to prepare them for this type of language, which is particularly crucial in the academic contexts of school and beyond (Doirion 1994; Holmes & Allison 1985; McClain-Ruelle 1988; Mason 1992).

However, the value of reading aloud to learners, though it can be helpful particularly with average and less-skilled readers (Fletcher & Pumfrey 1988; Lynch 1988; Neville & Pugh 1974 1976; Swalm 1971-72), has not gone unquestioned. There has been some debate about whether in fact such reading aloud is effective in preparing learners for more independent skilled reading (Dunning et al. 1994; Lonigan 1994; Scarborough & Dobrich 1994a, 1994b). Meyer et al. (1994) also challenge the belief that reading aloud to children automatically improves their reading ability; they caution that simply reading aloud, without engaging the learners themselves actively with the text, may even delay or impair the development of reading skills, not least by taking time away from other important activities.

In addition, many studies have suggested that the preferred listening rate for both adults and children is quite fast, and significantly related to the listener's own speech rate and maximal oral reading rate (Lass & Cain 1972;

Lass & Fultz 1976). If the reading is too fast (much faster than the learner's own reading rate) - as is often the case with taped materials for young beginner readers - then the learner can not follow along and comprehension suffers (McMahon 1983; Neville 1975). On the other hand, listening to someone else reading too slowly is equally counterproductive. Holmes (1985) found that the comprehension of (most) college-age students was less when they both listened to and followed a text silently than when they simply read silently to themselves. She hypothesises that this may be an effect of the age and reading efficiency of these older students, and possibly also an issue of differing speeds between their silent reading rate and the rate of the oral reading delivery (though in contrast a few liked this mode precisely because it did slow down their intake of new information).

Several other studies have similarly found that better readers at various ages are distracted or even irritated by having to listen to someone else read while they are reading silently (Holmes 1985; Holmes & Allison 1985; Miller & Smith 1990). This may well be because eye movements become much less efficient when listeners must follow reading at a slower rate than their own, as happens especially with the reading of a relatively unskilled classmate (Allington 1984; Gilbert 1940; Golinkoff 1975-76; Rayner & Pollatsek 1989). One pupil has expressed this in memorable fashion: 'You get lost when you gotta blimmin' watch the damn words' (Nicholson 1983: 69).

Overall, however, although it is indeed problematic to prove the immediate effects on reading skills of other people reading to the learner, and some cautionary notes are sounded, the evidence favours long-term positive direct and indirect effects, at least with more beginner readers (Chomsky 1976; Lonigan 1994; Wells 1983); this is due not least to the multiplier effects of early positive literacy-related experiences (Stanovich 1986, 1992). Reading aloud to learners appears to provide them with valuable cognitive and emotional support and motivation for engaging in literacy activities, as well as some insights into the way the writing system stores and conveys meanings. It thus has the potential to play a useful role in the second-language classroom, too, for these literacy-related reasons. Does it have other possible functions as well: for example, as a model for speaking skills?

It is often contended that mature readers-aloud may provide by their performance an actual model for beginners to emulate in their own reading aloud (if this is desired), or their speaking, or both. It is therefore of interest

to examine the relationship between spontaneous speech and reading aloud: are these similar processes or are there significant differences?

A number of studies suggest that, while individual words retain their basic sound shape in both modes, the prosodic characteristics of speech and oral reading are recognisably distinct from one another, even where the texts are deliberately written in a spoken style. As many have observed, both skilled readers-aloud and children just learning to read aloud have 'reading voices' different from their speaking voices (Arnold 1982: 14, 53). Hudson & Holbrook (1982) found that, in speech, the fundamental vocal frequency of young adult Americans, both male and female, was significantly lower while the overall pitch range was much more varied, in comparison with reading aloud. Other studies have found that the placement of stress and the position and duration of pauses are differentiated in the two modes (Barik 1977; Blaauw 1994; Howell & Kadi-Hanifi 1991).

The oral reading of even skilled native-speakers, therefore, though it may exemplify the specific skill of reading aloud, will not provide an exact model of spontaneous speech, so that we need to be cautious in thinking of it as 'speaking' in any simple conversational sense (Walker 1975, 1976). Given what we have said earlier about listening to skilled readers-aloud as an introduction to written language, perhaps we should not be surprised or disappointed that such reading is not a direct model of speaking. However, by its very nature as a more controlled and 'cleaned up' version of oral language, it may present both first- and second-language learners with accessible input for consolidating aural comprehension skills, and a 'stepping stone' which is at least on the way to a relatively coherent and elaborated form of speaking. As we have just seen above, however, the rate of delivery of the reading is a crucial factor.

We turn now to the second major way in which reading aloud is used in learning contexts: reading aloud by the learner. This as we have seen has been almost universally practised throughout history and across many literate cultures, in both L1 and L2 learning, but what in fact is its function? Is oral reading the same process as silent reading but simply an externalised form? Or is oral reading ('recoding') by the learner a different, perhaps less mature, process, but still a necessary stage to facilitate the internalisation of the reading-for-understanding process? Is it merely a helpful step for

certain learners? If useful - for all? for some? - how long should it last? The research findings are somewhat ambiguous and contradictory.

3.6 Reading aloud by the learner

3.6.1 Reading aloud viewed as closely related to reading for meaning

Oral reading is (and has been over a long time) clearly viewed by many, especially in the 'reading is decoding' approach, as closely related to silent reading for meaning: as either the same process, or an aspect of the same process, or a reflection of the process. Indeed, until quite recently the term 'reading' in a journal article title could almost have been assumed to mean 'reading aloud'. This is most clearly evidenced in the widespread use of oral reading for the purposes of testing readers in order to gauge their reading skills and difficulties, both for research purposes and in the classroom: e.g. Fuchs et al. (1988); Horowitz (1991); Parker et al. (1992); Shinn et al. (1992). Juel & Holmes (1981), for instance, studying grades 2 and 5, believe that oral and silent sentence reading represent a similar cognitive process, and that comprehension involves phonologically mediated processing prior to lexical access. They do raise the question, however, as to whether this could just be due to the emphasis on oral reading and/or phonics in elementary school instruction. In a similar experiment with fifth graders (Holmes & Allison 1985), oral reading to oneself, oral reading to an audience and silent reading seem to be equivalent overall on a range of comprehension questions (literal, inferential and application).

LaBerge & Samuels (1974) and Eagan (1975), working with elementary children, and Brossard & Cosnier (1981), with young adults, consider that pauses in oral reading are good predictors of the reader's syntactic organisation of the text, and hence of some comprehension skills. Bowey (1982) queries this: she considers that oral readers may show 'on-line **comprehending**' (few semantic or syntactic errors show they are catching the gist as they read), but that they may not in fact be able to retain the memory of what they have read long enough for this to be termed true '**comprehension**'. We have already noted that Mosenthal (1976) also concludes that oral reading and silent reading demand different 'comprehension competences'.

The Goodmans, coming from a different perspective, appear to agree that oral and silent reading are the same, in that they describe reading aloud as a step towards reading comprehension, which provides a 'window' onto the individual's reading process (Goodman 1976a; Goodman & Goodman 1977). They have developed the procedure known as 'miscue analysis', widely used in education in many countries, where not only the number of errors or 'miscues' made by the reader but also their type is carefully observed; this is claimed by its supporters to provide a detailed picture of the individual's 'theory of reading' (Hoffman 1981).

While the oral reading speed of beginning readers is nearly equal to that of their silent reading, and while miscue analysis clearly operates on the premise that what happens during oral reading is a reflection of what is happening during the process of reading for meaning, Goodman has also noted in some of his writings that oral and silent reading are different processes (1976b), which is a little confusing. Perhaps what he means is more exactly expressed by Bowey's distinction (noted above) between 'comprehending' and 'comprehension', Mosenthal's (1976) differing 'comprehension competences', or Eagan's (1975) distinction between the similar **processes** of oral and silent reading (pauses indicating syntactic chunks) and the possibly different **products** (i.e. forms of comprehension) from oral and silent reading. Certainly Goodman's model of learning to read (1976a) sees a decreasing emphasis on oral reading and a growing emphasis on silent reading for comprehension during the years of primary schooling. Other writers in the research domain express similar reservations on occasion (e.g. Bowey 1982; Horowitz & Samuels 1985), but still use reading aloud to research 'the reading process', arguing that oral reading allows the researcher to observe and to have some control over the process - e.g to ensure that each word is read in order, and that there is no rereading (Rayner & Pollatsek 1989) - though some might argue that this is not necessarily the way a skilled reader operates.

A number of studies have found that younger and/or less skilled readers understand texts better if they read them aloud rather than silently (Anderson et al. 1984, 1991; Dubey & O'Leary 1975; Eagan 1975; Elgart 1978; Fletcher & Pumfrey 1988; Hansen & Lovitt 1976; Hinchley & Levy 1988; Holmes & Allison 1985; Klein 1989; Miller & Smith 1985, 1990; Mulliken et al. 1992; Rowell 1976; Schumm & Baldwin 1989; Sippola 1988; Swalm 1971-72; Wilkinson 1988) (most of these studies looked at mainstream

elementary and primary school children). In certain studies, boys found oral reading beneficial while girls gained equally from oral and silent reading (Johnson 1982; Rowell 1976). However, as already noted, some writers ask whether the results in such studies simply reflect an instructional emphasis (Juel & Holmes 1981; Rowell 1976), or a task or text-type influence (Wilkinson 1988), rather than any necessary superiority for oral reading. Schools certainly tend to give more time for oral reading to 'low ability' and younger readers than to older readers or those operating at or above grade level (Allington 1984; Langer et al. 1990).

If there is a possible advantage for oral reading, it may be because less-skilled readers may suffer from an attentional deficit, so that the need to keep the pace and to attend to each word for decoding may keep them better focussed and cause fewer words to be lost through inattention than silent reading (Hoffman 1981, 1987; Holmes 1985; Miller & Smith 1990; Schumm & Baldwin 1989). This may help explain Riding & Cowley's (1986) finding with seven-to-eight-year-olds of a silent reading advantage for low-difficulty passages and an oral reading advantage with high-difficulty passages. (To complicate the issue further, however, Holmes (1985: 577) also notes a possible advantage for silent reading - though admittedly for a more advanced group - for just the same reason: 'the greater attention available during silent reading may make it superior'!)

In addition, there is an auditory and gestural dimension added to reading aloud which may assist either by supplementing the visual cues or by being transformed from an echoic to a more durable form of information for continued access (Crowder 1986; Greene & Crowder 1984; Horowitz 1991; Mayes 1982; Ralph et al. 1996; Swalm 1971-72). Even with college students, Salasoo (1986) found that, while oral reading rates were slower than silent rates, they allowed faster verification of information. Memory traces of text microstructure created in oral reading were accessed more quickly by these subjects during memory-based comprehension tasks than traces established by the faster processes occurring during silent reading.

As we saw above (page 38), many studies have suggested that the preferred listening rate for both adults and children is quite fast, and significantly related to the listener's own speech rate and maximal oral reading rate (Holmes 1985; Holmes & Allison 1985; Miller & Smith 1990; also Lass & Cain 1972; Lass & Fultz 1976). Similarly, when individuals are required to

read aloud at a relatively fast rate, both their accuracy and comprehension improve, and more markedly for poorer readers than for skilled readers (Ahuja 1975; Armstrong 1983; Breznitz 1987; Jones et al. 1987; Morris 1986; Reutzel & Hollingsworth 1993; VanWagenen et al. 1994). This reverses what might be the expected association. Intuitively, one would think that slow, careful oral reading would facilitate concentration and understanding by the listener, as well as understanding and accurate performance by the reader-aloud, especially with less-advanced readers, and that faster pacing would only come as a result of better-developed skills. The process can undoubtedly operate in that direction, too, but the weight of research evidence favours the encouragement of relatively fast reading.

The improvement in accuracy and understanding resulting from higher-rate oral reading may have several possible explanations. Both behaviour-analytic principles and the cognitive theory of automaticity suggest that fast-paced reading should produce more efficient comprehension (Slocum et al. 1995) (though these writers consider the experimental evidence on high-rate reading to be mixed at this stage). Moreover, by forcing their attention to embrace both word recognition and longer meaningful stretches of text, readers may activate their working memory more efficiently (O'Reilly & Walker 1990); the importance of working memory capacity and efficiency for comprehension is well-established, according to Bowey (1982), Mishra & Sahu (1992), Paris & Myers (1981), and Wittwer et al. (1987).

When reading orally at a faster pace, readers tend not only to vocalise at a faster rate, but also to make fewer and shorter pauses, and thus utter longer stretches of language (Breznitz 1990): that is, what is uttered approximates more closely to connected meaning-units of speech or of coherent text. Understanding may thus be enhanced through the auditory mode as well as the visual when what is available to the ear as well as the eye is coherent chunks of text rather than when the reader is engaged in more fragmentary 'word-calling'. In the view of these researchers, therefore, comprehension and speech will both be positively affected by a higher rate, though too high a reading speed can of course result in fluent performance, but without understanding (McKay & Neale 1991; O'Reilly & Walker 1990).

3.6.2 Reading aloud viewed as a step towards reading for meaning

A slightly different view is that, while oral and silent reading are not the same process, oral reading by learners can **constitute a link** between being read to by others and their own more mature, silent reading (Goodman 1976a; Taylor & Connor 1982). In particular, learner-readers have to bring to the text the prosodic features which assist syntactic phrasing. In speaking, pauses often fulfil a temporising or a rhetorical role, whereas those in oral reading tend to reflect syntactic analysis; punctuation is a guide, but may be passed over if it does not correspond to the syntactic chunking the reader wishes to make (Kowal et al. 1975; O'Connell et al. 1989; O'Connell & Kowal 1986). Moreover, eye-voice span during oral reading is relatively short - that is, the reader looks only a short distance ahead - though this distance is longer where the syntax is relatively predictable or where the material or topic is familiar (Cooley 1981; Schlessinger 1966; Vazquez et al. 1977). Thus, if the reading is done 'cold' and the reader does not know in advance what the text is about (which is often the situation in the classroom), decisions about appropriate chunking and hence prosody will be made on the basis of very local syntactic information, which is likely to result in errors (Kondo & Mazuka 1996).

Schreiber (1980) supports Chomsky (1976) and Samuels (1979), claiming that through repeated oral reading the student learns to supply the prosodic signals from the spoken language which are not made explicit in the written form, and hence learns to 'chunk' the syntactic structure of what is read. Beggs & Howarth's (1985) study suggests that expressive oral reading by young learners (eight to eleven years old) helps them develop inner speech; that they can be assisted in developing such reading if prosodic features like pause and stress are marked visibly on the text; and that the ability to derive the prosody from written texts is an important skill on the way towards fluent silent reading.

Some researchers suggest that reading aloud as it is usually carried out - as a public performance - may not be the most useful activity in this regard. Kragler (1995) worked with young readers (five and a half to six and a half years), and found that students allowed to mumble-read (a quieter, more private version of oral reading) during both instructional reading time and individual reading time achieved silent reading skills more quickly than students forced to read silently all the time, and that the former also learnt

to recognise more vocabulary. Holmes (1985) and Taylor & Connor (1982) also recommend this practice. Miccinati (1985) advocates choral reading as a means to the same end. Shared or paired reading, a feature of many elementary classrooms, involves teacher and learner sharing the reading (reading together or in turn) and discussing the text as they go (Arnold 1982; Campbell 1990). Dowhower (1987) too recommends an assisted 'read-along' procedure over a series of passages, as does Hoffman (1981, 1987); other ideas include play-readings (Crinson & Westgate 1986; Mullikin et al. 1992; Ross 1986) and the reading of students' own writings (Megyeri 1993; Penfield 1981).

A considerable number of studies have examined the effects of various feedback regimes on student oral reading performance. Many have observed that teachers tend to correct very quickly and fully, especially with less skilled readers (Allington 1980; Hoffman & Clements 1984; Hoffman & Kugle 1982; Pflaum et al. 1980), often providing the correct word at once or encouraging a restricted range of strategies (Martoncik & Erickson 1983; Singh 1989; Wheldall et al. 1992). Studies have however indicated that delayed feedback (giving the learner the chance to self-correct), phrase- or sentence-based feedback, and word analysis (rather than word supply), result in greater progress in oral reading skills and in reading independence and confidence for both mainstream students and learning-disabled students (Jenkins & Larson 1979; McNaughton 1981a, 1981b; Shake 1986; Singh 1990; Singh & Singh 1985).

3.6.3 Oral and silent reading viewed as distinct processes

Other researchers more openly question the relationship between oral reading and reading for meaning. Various studies have suggested that the oral and silent reading of a skilled adult are not the same process, partly on the basis of reading rate - twice as fast in silent as in oral reading for mature readers - and of eye movements (Allington 1984; Danks & Hill 1981; Durkin 1983; Horowitz 1991; Huey 1908; Pugh 1978; Rayner & Pollatsek 1989). Moreover, fluent oral reading is not necessarily accompanied by good comprehension of what has been read, either with native-speakers (Kern 1989; Leu 1982; Lloyd 1965; O'Brien 1988; Pohl & McNaughton 1985; Spache & Spache 1973; Thorndike 1917; Watson & Clay 1975), or L2 learners (Gaiga et al. 1976; Keen 1983; Malik 1990; Zhang 1988). Indeed, the reverse may also

occur, where inaccurate or dialect-influenced oral reading may disguise good comprehension (Bettelheim & Zelan 1981; Garcia 1991; Harber 1982; Potter 1987; Taylor 1983; Walker 1975).

In addition, more instructional time spent on oral reading may not necessarily result in greater reading-for-meaning progress (Arnold 1982; Hoffman 1981). The fact that patients with aphasia or other disabilities quite frequently retain the capacity to read aloud but not to produce spontaneous speech or engage in silent reading comprehension throws further into question the directness of connections between oral reading and reading for meaning (Cummings et al. 1986; Gardner & Zurif 1975; Horner & Massey 1983; Ralph et al. 1996), although one must of course be careful not to extrapolate evidence directly from 'disabled' to normal readers.

Holmes (1985) studied undergraduates' reading comprehension under four conditions, and found that, overall, oral reading to oneself and silent reading were equivalent in facilitating comprehension, and that both were superior to oral reading to an audience and listening while someone else read aloud. There were many individual differences among her subjects, however - and students in general were very aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (we will return to this in the section on affective aspects of reading). Poulton & Brown (1967) found variant results depending on where in the text the readers had to focus for comprehension. Their readers read either orally or silently, and answered ten literal comprehension questions at intervals through the text. For the first three-tenths of the passage silent reading was superior (they surmise that their oral readers had to attend more to their vocal output at this early stage of the task); for the middle section both oral and silent reading were virtually the same (oral reading became more automatic, so vocal output did not interfere with understanding); and for the last question oral reading was superior (it left a more durable memory trace).

Varied text types may also have a bearing on comprehension. Wilkinson's (1988) meta-analysis of studies between 1913 and 1986 found that silent reading advantages (mainly experienced by average and above-average readers) occurred more for narrative rather than expository texts, and for inferential rather than literal questions, but he urges caution due to the potential influence of task factors in many of these studies. Similarly, many adult readers who normally read silently for understanding report that they

quite consciously use oral reading on occasion to focus their attention, to clarify meaning or to imprint a text in their memory, particularly where numbers, detailed instructions or complex concepts are involved (personal communications; also Hoffman 1981; Horowitz 1991; Luria 1961).

In trying to determine the clearest lines of implication in all this research, the reviewer is handicapped by both the immense variation in the definitions of 'comprehension' (this issue is also raised by Holmes 1985 and Salasoo 1986), and the vast range of age-groups and situations, such that any definitive comparison of results is precluded. In any case, to generalise about all learners, or even broad categories of learner (grouped by age, sex, etc), may be a fraught endeavour. Swalm (1971-72: 115) argues that a range of approaches should be used: 'this study indicates that no one method of learning should be used with an entire class'. Taylor & Connor (1982) make a similar case, in particular arguing for the value of 'reading to oneself', especially in the early years. Holmes agrees (1985: 584):

> Perhaps students should be given a greater role in deciding the strategies most conducive to their own learning [...] If comprehension of text is the main concern, students should not be forbidden from reading aloud to themselves [...] The practice of having students read aloud to the class in content area classrooms may not be as effective as classroom practice would suggest it is [...] Concern for the oral production does seem to deter comprehension. Perhaps separate readings should be used for comprehension and for improving oral reading skills.

In short, research results are so varied that it is as yet virtually impossible to generalise about the role of reading aloud in either learning to read for meaning or mature silent reading: in the eyes of some it is central, while to others it is peripheral at best and at the worst potentially an obstacle to reading comprehension. The one clear indication therefore seems to be that pedagogy needs to take account of individual differences in learners as well as the specific purposes which a class activity is intended to fulfil. We also see here a presage of the later sections on affective aspects of reading aloud (Section 3.8) and on individual cognitive/learning styles (3.9).

We have until now mainly focussed on L1 readers and reading processes, having made the point early on that, while the situations are not entirely

comparable, there appear to be many commonalities between L1 and L2 reading and certainly many insights to be gained for L2 reading from examining the L1 research. However, there are distinctions that need to be clarified, so we will now consider more specifically the L2 reader.

3.7 Reading aloud by L2 readers

3.7.1 Research literature

There are a number of differences between L1 children learning to read English on the foundation of their oral proficiency in their one language, and the many possible situations of people of Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) learning to read in English - unless the latter are young children who are virtually bilingual in their L1 and in English and are learning to read English with their age peers. More distinguishable are children beginning to learn English in the middle years of primary school with a developing L1 literacy; or high-school-age students, with or without a strong educational background in their country of origin, for whom reading in English is now a major source of school knowledge; or adults with a strongly developed L1 literacy who have moved to Australia permanently or temporarily and need to be able to read English for everyday, vocational or academic purposes; or adults without much education in their country of origin, without L1 literacy, and with only the vaguest motivation to learn to read in English.

The most obvious differences between these groups and native speakers or young bilinguals are that the spoken English of the former group is likely to be much less extensive and secure, that they have another more dominant oral language, and that they may already be literate in another written language, whose script may or may not be similar to the English alphabetic script. Despite the differences, however - and the variation among NESB people may be just as great as between the NESB and ESB groups - most current writers on L2 reading believe that similar models are appropriate for both L1 and L2 reading, in particular the current interactive models of reading processes (Carrell, Devine & Eskey 1988; Fitzgerald 1995; Nunan 1991; Wallace 1992). Wallace argues that reading is a unitary skill involving strategies which are generalisable across languages and situations (despite differences in script etc); so once a learner can read in a first language, this

can be transferred to English (see also Cummins 1979; Cummins & Swain 1986).

Some disagree: Bernhardt (1991: 226) argues that L2 reading is 'a different phenomenon', and that it demands a reading theory distinct from L1 reading theory. Fitzgerald (1995: 182-183), less strongly, believes that it would be useful to pick out at least some 'points of adaptation' for ESL learners; her survey of research into ESL readers' cognitive processes found mixed evidence in regard to the relationship between ESL oral proficiency and ESL reading, for example. Others sound a cautious note that, while interactive approaches have a great deal to offer, ESL readers' needs for experience in 'bottom-up' processing must not be neglected (Eskey 1988; Grabe 1988; Stanovich 1980, 1992); though the regularities in the English writing system come more from visual features of the orthography and grapheme-morphophoneme correspondences than from direct connections between individual sound and symbol (Carrell & Eisterhold 1988; Wallace 1992), so that simply phonologically-based 'bottom-up' approaches will be inappropriate.

For L2 learners, the research literature almost always advocates silent reading for comprehension. For example, the intermediate-level high school and college students of German studied by Bernhardt (1983) understood German texts better when they read them silently than when they read them aloud, and also judged the orally-read texts to be harder. The students needed to reread for understanding, because they concentrated on pronunciation when reading aloud. Bernhardt asserts that silent reading is better for instruction in reading comprehension because it permits students to focus their metacognitive capacities on the message rather than on the pronunciation of words. Kern (1989: 145) makes a similar point:

> Not only can reading aloud short-circuit comprehension processes by shifting attentional resources to graphophonemic details, but it can also cause anxiety which often thwarts the reader's attempts to synthesise meaning.

Rounds (1992), too, makes a case against oral reading as a means of teaching students to read: it might be appropriate in 'bottom-up' approaches, or 'grammar translation', but it is not appropriate for teaching reading comprehension in TESOL as it makes each word equally important, and implies that a linear decoding of each symbol/word is needed.

Other research is more ambiguous in its results, implying advantages for both oral and silent reading for different readers under varying circumstances. O'Brien (1988) looked at first year high school students' ability to recall (surface) and to infer ('deeper') information from familiar and unfamiliar passages. While overall he concluded that oral reading was not related to comprehension performance, he found two results which reversed expectations: a negative relation between oral reading and recall of familiar passages, and a positive relation between oral reading and inference on unfamiliar texts. Stone & Kinzer (1985) were likewise a little surprised by their findings when they studied grade 5 Spanish-speakers (average readers in English) reading stories in English with similar/moderately similar/dissimilar language patterns to their L1. When retelling these stories, dissimilar stories scored the lowest scores, as expected; oral reading errors also increased as stories became more dissimilar; but the highest scores for literal comprehension questions were for dissimilar passages. These results recall those in section 3.6.1 above, where it was hypothesised that closer attention to difficult texts might yield advantage, and that oral reading may slow down reading for understanding and/or lead to closer attention, at least for some readers.

It has often been suggested that L2 learners' own oral reading fosters their speaking skills rather than comprehension skills. Chastain (1971, cited in Butzkamm 1985: 321) is in favour for this reason: 'Early in the beginning course, a great deal of time should be spent in reading aloud'. Kern (1989: 145) also favours this practice:

> Given that phonological encoding of L2 texts generally requires a considerable amount of mental energy, the common instructional practice of reading aloud in class should be reserved for pronunciation practice, without demands or expectations of thorough comprehension.

Zimmerman (1983) and Griffin (1992) report that teachers they have surveyed believe that reading aloud benefits their learners' oral skills. Rounds (1992: 790) - who is against reading aloud as an aspect of 'reading' - sees a role for this practice in teaching pronunciation: 'students are freed from the immediate pressure of simultaneously making meaning and expressing themselves'.

Wagner (1991) disagrees: he observed a number of L2 teaching situations and reports that oral reading was 'the most frequent activity in the classroom'; teachers gave 'phonetic training' as the main reason for its use, but did not provide the students with a prior model, which Wagner believes defeats the purpose. Buzkamm (1985: 320-321) shares this view:

> Unfortunately, reading aloud is a popular activity for most teachers and usually required too early both within a lesson cycle and within the course program. We have found that oral reading has a detrimental effect on the learner's development of oral proficiency.

He also notes that pronunciation and intonation deteriorate, and 'the flat faltering and uneven speech by the pupils during reading aloud spills over into other oral exercises'. As we saw in section 3.5, the oral reading of even skilled native speakers differs from their speaking, so that reading aloud will not directly mirror speaking

Learners themselves tend to be in favour of error correction in the classroom to assist their speaking and pronunciation development - and there is some evidence that they often prefer more teacher correction than teachers wish to provide (Allwright 1975; Cathcart & Olsen 1976; Little & Sanders 1990; Mccargar 1993; Nunan 1989; Ricard 1986; Willing 1988). The two most preferred classroom techniques for the students surveyed by Willing (1988) were: 'practise the pronunciation and sounds' and 'teacher to correct all errors' (for teachers these had a much lower status). The research of Mccargar (1993) and Little & Sanders (1990) found the same preference, again from students across many language backgrounds (including American college students beginning to learn foreign languages). Although Willing did not ask the students he surveyed about their attitudes towards reading aloud, this practice provides an opportunity *par excellence* for such error correction (Ricard 1986). Willing notes (1988: 118):

> Much communicative methodological theory comes from the foreign-language teaching context, where it is crucially important to 'get them talking'. In an ESL context it may be advisable to reconsider the socio-cultural consequences of poor syntax and bad accent in addition to the communicative barriers which these create. Learners themselves seem to perceive the status implications of poor English, and correctly see that in the real world mistakes are a more serious matter than they often are in English class. In any case, learners' high rating of error correction, whether soundly based or not, constitutes in itself a reason for reconsidering the issue.

On the other hand, there are dangers: numerous personal communications from L2 learners over the years make it clear that for some, at least, the loss of face and embarrassment felt during error correction on oral reading have had strongly negative effects in terms of confidence and learning. As Hubbard et al. (1983: 139) observe: 'Over-correction may well occur during oral practice because the teacher has an ever-present opportunity to "improve" pupils' responses'. McNaughton (1988) reminds us that errors and error correction can have both positive and inhibiting effects on oral reading, depending on the learning environment and the reading purposes fostered by the particular classroom and teacher, and this of course applies to all instructional contexts, whether L1 or L2. Recalling the findings about effective feedback regimes with L1 readers, we may also incline towards Aljaafreh & Lantolf's (1994) view that more positive outcomes may ensue if the teacher keeps in mind the Vygotskyan notions of dialogic mediation in the learner's zone of proximal development, and, while giving feedback, avoids giving so much 'other-repair' that the learner's 'self-repair' is inhibited.

Furthermore, as the studies of Kamm (1990) and Devine (1984, 1988) show, if the different purposes of reading aloud for pronunciation and reading for understanding are not made very explicit, students can become set in the notion that pronunciation rather than meaning is the aim of reading.

Other writers suggest a further range of functions for reading aloud in the L2 class. Wagner (1991: 299, 301) describes several class management reasons: to start a class, to settle the learners, to warm up, to focus learners' attention, and to refresh memories of a text: 'there is no doubt that reading aloud is used so frequently because it is suitable for classroom organisation'. Zimmerman (1983) notes that her Australian teacher informants give these additional reasons for using oral reading: to check students' 'reading abilities' (left undefined) and understanding of what is being read; to give learners the feeling they are 'reading' and cater for their expectations of a 'reading lesson'; and to record and analyse errors. Her point is that teachers should have a clear rationale for their choice of classroom practices. Griffin (1992), too, reports positive teacher attitudes to reading aloud, based on a 1992 survey of 90 ESL teachers in the USA, of whom 80% (n=72) regularly used oral reading in their classes Apart from fostering reading skills, they believed that it helped them to understand their students' 'cognitive processing of written information' (p. 785) and that 'reading aloud helps

keep all students involved in the class' (p.786). Nervousness can be alleviated by using reading aloud only on a voluntary basis. Teachers of more advanced students did however feel that reading aloud interfered with these students' reading speed and comprehension. Rounds (1992) notes the use of oral reading in students proofreading their own papers, as they can often hear errors more easily than see them.

The research literature is not the only pertinent source of information on the TESOL profession's views and practices with regard to reading aloud. The following section surveys what is revealed by handbooks written for TESOL teacher education, and by coursebooks and teacher manuals designed for classroom use, as these may be important influences on teachers' attitudes and practice (probably more directly so than research literature).

3.7.2 Pedagogical literature

An examination of teacher education materials published in the TESOL field over the past forty years - general handbooks on TESOL methodology, teacher-training materials, and teacher manuals to accompany published courses for classroom use - reveals a diversity of views about the role of oral reading in learning a second language, particularly English. This is sometimes related to the period in which the material was written and general thinking at that time, though it can also sometimes be more idiosyncratic to the writer. The views range along two major dimensions: whether reading aloud should have any place at all in the TESOL learning process or should be rejected as not useful or indeed counter-productive; and, if it does have a place, whether this primarily relates to reading-for-meaning skills or to speaking skills.

Early TESOL teacher handbooks tended to include reading aloud in their standard suggestions for teaching reading, partly as a traditional aspect of the language class, partly due to the structuralist-influenced emphasis at the time on oral language, and the introduction of all language orally before it was seen in print. This often meant that reading was used merely to reinforce speech (e.g. Derrick 1966; Finocchiaro 1958, 1964; Finocchiaro & Brumfit 1983; Pittman 1967). There are also suggestions that the teacher read aloud to the students as a model of expressive reading, and that oral reading is useful for developing pronunciation.

Some handbooks recommend the use of oral reading in the early stages of learning to read, to reinforce the symbol-sound links (Knapp 1980; Rivers & Temperley 1978), but do not mention it for the later stages.

Many textbooks simply use reading aloud without question (mainly to consolidate what has been learnt orally); these often follow a structural approach to language development: for example: (from Australia) Commonwealth Department of Education (1974); Commonwealth Department of Education and Science (1965, 1969); da Vanzo & Freer (1969); Hennig (1972); Fowler (1969); and from the UK: Alexander (1974, 1967); Coles & Lord (1975); Harrison, Morgan & Percil (1974); O'Neill (1970); O'Neill, Kingsbury, & Yeadon (1971); O'Neill & Kingsbury (1972). Alexander (1967: viii-ix) is fairly typical of this view: 'Nothing should be read before it has been spoken' and '[students] are required to reproduce orally a passage of English they are familiar with'.

Since the late 1970s, when the communicative approach became influential, fluency has tended to supplant accuracy, and the focus in reading has been largely on comprehension. Oral reading is often not mentioned at all in relation to reading by writers of this persuasion (e.g. Brumfit 1984; Brumfit & Johnson 1979; Ferguson 1972; Gower & Walters 1983; Harmer 1983; Haycraft 1978; Krashen & Terrell 1983; Nunan 1989, 1991, 1995; Ur 1996; Widdowson 1978, 1983).

On the other hand, many of these writers do in fact mention oral reading by the students - often just in passing - in the context of speaking skills generally, and specifically pronunciation, especially rhythm and intonation. The readings in these cases are almost all short - a few words or a 'turn' in a dialogue at most. Perhaps because these activities are not perceived to be in the context of reading for meaning, but have a different role, the writers do not appear to link them with other oral reading uses (e.g. Nunan 1995). Some also recommend reading aloud by the teacher as a form of teacher talk for introducing new material or recycling previously-met language, again without any cross-referencing to other forms of oral reading: e.g. Ur (1996).

Texts with more general purposes - following a skills or communicative approach, where the reading focus is ostensibly comprehension - rarely mention oral reading directly, but it may be implied: for example:

Courtenay et al. (1984); Hartley & Viney (1978); Nunan & Lockwood (1992); Swan & Walter (1984); White (1979). Corbel (1985: 11) is typical:

> Many adult learners need the visual reinforcement of the written word, and this is an appropriate stage of the lesson to allow them to read the dialogue if they wish to [orally or silently? Ed.] [...] At stages of the lesson that focus on accuracy, learners expect and benefit from correction by the teacher, as long as it is quick and non-threatening.

Texts focussed on developing communicative (mainly oral) skills often include dialogues on tape or in the student book, and although oral reading of these may not be intended by the writers, many teachers and students tend to use them in this way: e.g. Boardman (1979); Doff & Jones (1980); Hicks et al. (1979); Jones (1977, 1979). Even more likely to be read aloud are the materials in relatively 'structured' approaches to communication (scripted dialogues): e.g. Beaver:on & Carstensen (1985a, 1985b); Doyle (1993); Watcyn-Jones (1980). In contrast, Economou (1985), Jones, Moar & Ginsberg (1985), Slade & Norris (1986) - all Australian texts designed to foster listening and conversational practice - do not include scripts, or the scripts are true transcripts and not easily read aloud, so oral reading in class is less likely to result.

Individual writers provide further views on the role of reading aloud for the ESL learner. One fairly early group of writers quite explicitly links students' oral reading with speech and pronunciation work rather than reading for meaning: e.g. Bright & McGregor (1970); Broughton et al. (1980); Rivers & Temperley (1978); Stone (1974). Others indicate the value of hearing skilled readers (such as the teacher, or tapes) read aloud, both to motivate and to model: for example, Aird (1983); Blum et al. (1995); Mikulecky (1990); Paulston & Bruder (1976); Povey (1979); Stevick (1982); and Stone (1974).

Some writers treat reading aloud more cautiously as they recognise that it may be a quite separate skill from both reading for meaning and speaking (Beaumont 1983; Celce-Murcia & McIntosh 1979; Harris 1969; Heaton 1975; Stone 1974). Others again reject oral reading as a useful aspect of reading, for reasons ranging from simple dismissal (Broughton et al. 1980; Paulston & Bruder 1976; Wallace 1992) to more argued explanations, such as its infrequency in everyday life, its difficulty and the anxiety it arouses, and the

fact that it does not enhance comprehension skills (Bygate 1987; Doff 1988; Grellet 1981; Heaton 1975; Hill & Dobbyn 1979; Mikulecky 1990; Stone 1974).

In a number of handbooks there appears to be some inconsistency between the espoused views (rejecting reading aloud) and the practices portrayed (which often include versions of oral reading): e.g. Doff (1988); Hill & Dobbyn (1979); Hubbard et al. (1983); Stevick (1986).

A remarkable thing about all these handbooks is that none of them tackles the question of oral reading comprehensively. They either assume its value, or deny its value, or throw the question to the teacher-reader - or all of these in different places in the same text - which often suggests that they are arguing against an opposing view, but without ever spelling this out, much less providing a balanced for-and-against picture. A few do, admittedly, remind the reader that reading aloud (like so much in teaching) is not an all-or-nothing issue but a question of needs and purposes (Bright & McGregor 1970; Stone 1974; Wallace 1992; Zimmerman 1983). Overall, however, very little space is given to **discussing** reading aloud - why and how to do it or not to do it - compared with other techniques such as cloze procedure, group work, games or drills. It is as though the status of reading aloud is a foregone conclusion, of which the reader needs simply to be reminded, and real discussion can be dispensed with.

The other notable fact is that, unlike their counterparts writing about oral reading in the first-language classroom, virtually all the TESOL writers who utilise reading aloud - whether consciously or unconsciously - do so not as an adjunct to reading for meaning but to develop or consolidate aspects of speaking, especially sounds, rhythm and intonation. In this they link up with the research literature, which, as we have seen, also favours this function for oral reading.

However, probably because the pieces of text used for these purposes tend to be short (usually no more than a sentence), and the 'reading' aspect is incidental to the 'speaking' aspect, these handbooks do not appear to think of the task set as 'reading aloud', or at least do not use the term in this connection. Having in many cases dismissed reading aloud as a valid activity, they might, on the other hand, use the term 'read' in different places to mean 'read for meaning' or 'read aloud': that is, there is often a slippage of meaning between these two. The careful reader will not find

this ambiguous, but it seems a risky practice especially where there is the possibility that teacher-readers may not have thought through this issue. And if teacher education handbooks - whose purpose is to explain pedagogical practices to the professional - present reading aloud so ambiguously, it is not surprising to find the same kind of potential confusion in the instructions for teachers which accompany various published texts for classroom use.

At this point we are clearly on the border between cognitive and affective issues. Indeed, few aspects of learning can be purely cognitive: however valuable in principle particular activities or materials are, if the teacher uses them inappropriately or the learners set their minds against them for any reason, they will not enhance learning. We may until this point have seemed to be treating oral reading, comprehension and so on as if they were essentially cognitive processes, though hinting at other dimensions; but we now turn to a more direct consideration of the affective aspects of reading aloud.

3.8 Affective aspects of reading aloud (largely negative)

There are occasional references in the research journal literature to learners who enjoy reading aloud: an 8-year-old exhibiting elective mutism in the classroom who was prepared to participate verbally via oral reading (Bauermeister & Jemail 1975); a 9-year-old with learning difficulties who was persuaded to complete other school tasks by the promise of individual reading aloud sessions (Heider 1979); a marginally-literate man who, when he read for enjoyment (as opposed to work-related reading), preferred to read aloud rather than silently (Denny 1990). There are also a number of assertions from researchers and teachers that oral reading fosters reading enjoyment, that it confirms to learners that they can read, and that learners like to read aloud (Durkin 1983; Falardy 1990; teachers cited by Taylor & Connor 1982). It is also clear from the personal accounts of acquaintances that some do enjoy reading aloud for a variety of reasons, including their own or their family's enjoyment. The accounts of negative experiences, however, considerably outweigh these positive associations, in personal communications as well as in the research literature.

Arnold (1982: 6-16) reporting on the UK study *Extending Beginning Reading* observed: '"hearing children read" provide[d] the core of teaching reading, and reading schemes the content' (this related to seven- to nine-year-olds). Teachers believed the children liked to read aloud, but two-thirds of the children said they preferred to read quietly to themselves (p.6); and in fact children in some classes with the least time spent on oral reading did best on the tests at the end of the study, so there was no direct relationship between time spent reading orally and reading progress (p.15). One eight-year-old boy was asked whether he thought he ought to learn to read, and answered 'yes'; when asked why, his reply was: 'Then I can stop' (p.17).

A New Zealand study with students in first year high school (Pohl & McNaughton 1985) noted that a majority of students in both 'high progress' and 'low progress' reading groups preferred silent reading to oral reading but for different reasons: the poorer readers, to avoid the negative results of oral reading (nervousness, mockery, and the impossibility of hiding their ignorance of unknown words), and the better readers because of the benefits of silent reading (they could read at their own speed, reread, and skim the boring bits). Brozo (1990), Horowitz (1991) and Meek (1983a, 1983b) have also documented the often intense dislike and humiliation experienced by adolescents having to read aloud in front of the class, and the many coping strategies to which these students may resort, including avoiding eye contact with the teacher, feigning academic engagement with a text, and disruptive behaviours (e.g. 'This is boring').

Teachers do not always seem to register the dislike felt by many of their students to reading aloud in front of others. Heathington & Alexander's (1984) research with elementary school teachers found that, despite claiming that attitude towards reading was considered to be more important than all other aspects of instruction except comprehension, the teachers in fact spent very little time in class developing positive attitudes, and a third did not make even informal assessments of their learners' attitudes. Where they did deliberately seek to foster a valuing of reading, the methods mentioned most often were skill development, the use of interesting and relevant materials, and oral reading (which the teachers thought of as 'sharing'). In contrast, the activities least liked by the pupils in these classes were book reviews, reading uninteresting books, and oral reading in front of the class. Another study (Wesson & Deno 1989) found that teachers working with primary-aged remedial readers routinely planned for the students to spend

half their time in the resource room simply reading aloud individually to the teacher; Palardy (1990), also in the USA, asserts that most elementary school teachers follow a particular teaching sequence of six steps, including oral reading.

It is possible that, for all these teachers, reading aloud in their own schooling was a positive experience, and so they are less likely to register adverse opinions or alternative practices. According to Gupta & Saravanan (1995), trainee teachers who judged their own learning experiences of reading aloud to be adequate were resistant to any suggestions of change in their use of this technique in their teaching. Perhaps some bad memories disappear - at least temporarily. My interviews with a considerable number of teachers and teacher education colleagues about their current practices and their memories of schooling revealed that many consider reading aloud by learners to be useful, indeed essential. However, the interviews often later elicited surprised and highly negative recall of disliking or being embarrassed about reading aloud in class, sometimes of very specific events, suggesting that many suppress or rationalise such memories until they are unexpectedly activated (various personal communications). On the other hand, clear recollections of these negative experiences - their own and other people's - can last a long time and directly affect a teacher's attitudes to the use of oral reading in their own teaching (Bean 1993; Leino 1975).

Students frequently report or show anxiety or frustration when they have to read aloud, especially when they are being tested, but often just because of the public or social nature of the act (Beidel 1988; Bensoussan & Zeidner 1989; Davis 1975; Davis & Ekwall 1976; Gottlieb 1982; Huey 1908; Jenkins 1986; Walker & Orr 1976; Wilson 1987, 1991). These negative emotions have been variously measured via raised heart-rate, raised blood pressure, polygraph readings, stuttering, number of errors, poor recall of material just prior to one's own reading, as well as self-report. Imai et al. (1992) noted that second- and third-graders' attention lapsed in reading lessons more among boys than girls, and progressively more in 'low' groups; in particular, there was a sharp drop in attention by all the group whenever an oral reading error occurred. Other studies have compared the comprehension and 'engagement with text' of students reading aloud in two situations: to others to convey meaning (the 'social' condition) and to themselves ('non-social'). Vipond et al. (1987), for example, found more accurate reading but less engagement among their social than their non-

social readers. Similarly, Holmes (1985) and Holmes & Allison (1985) found lowered comprehension when their students read aloud to others (as opposed to reading silently or reading aloud just to themselves), and the negative comments by many of the students - about their audience-anxiety and the need to focus on aspects of expression rather than meaning - are also revealing.

A number of strategies have been proposed to reduce the anxiety related to oral reading - some of which may seem a little extreme. One is to avoid oral reading altogether - not an infrequent suggestion in the literature (e.g. Baudin 1993; Kern 1988; Leino 1975), including as we have seen TESOL teacher handbooks (sometimes explicitly, sometimes by silence). If oral reading is believed to be a valuable exercise, however, total avoidance is not an option. Other suggestions include biofeedback relaxation training (Carter & Russell 1985; Gracenin & Cook 1977) - though the effect of this does not always continue or generalise beyond the experiment; stroking a pet animal to increase relaxation (Wilson 1991); desensitisation/visualisation techniques (Bradley & Thalgott 1987); and giving readers feedback on the fluent chunks in their reading (Srinivas 1982) (his subjects were stutterers, but the technique could be more broadly applicable).

A number of writers propose variations on the idea of assisted reading, including repeated reading (Bradley & Thalgott 1987; Carr & Brown 1990; Dowhower 1987; Gonzales & Elijah 1975); choral reading (Miccinati 1985); paired reading (Wood 1983); imitative reading (Wood 1983); and mumble-reading (Kragler 1995; Wood 1983). Certainly it seems important to reflect carefully on the role of oral reading and the balance with other reading activities (amongst many others, Anon. 1991; Beach 1993; Durkin 1983; Horowitz 1991; Mendak 1986; Santa et al. 1987; Taylor & Connor 1982; Van-Etten 1978).

Some earlier work (Davis 1975; Davis & Ekwall 1976) - at a time when decoding and hence oral reading occupied a more central role than today - suggested restricting passages for instructional purposes to those which permitted no more than 10% of oral reading errors if undue frustration was to be avoided - though it is hard to see how this could be managed, given the heterogeneous nature of most classrooms. Interestingly, the same writers suggested that, as far as comprehension was concerned, learners could tolerate more than 50% errors before they reached similar frustration

levels. One cannot help wondering about the instructional approach that this contrast between frustration thresholds implies.

In fact, there does seem to have been somewhat of a trend in recent years away from 'Round Robin' routines - where everyone in the class has a turn at reading a few sentences (and being corrected) - at least in first-language classrooms (Beach 1993; Eldredge et al. 1996; True 1979). On the other hand, Reutzel et al. (1993, 1994) do still feel the need to argue against the continuing use of this approach, so perhaps Millward's (1977) ironic title, 'Round Robin is not an endangered species', is in fact still close to the mark.

Indeed, slightly more recent research appears to underline this - and hints at a potentially dangerous situation. Bromley & Mahlios (1985) tested fifth-graders on oral reading and also assessed their views of the reading process. The 'good' readers focussed on meaning as the point of the reading process, while the 'poor' readers viewed decoding/recoding as the main purpose. Similar results were found by Brown & Baker (1984), Fleisher (1990), Paris & Myers (1981), Pitts (1983), and Powell & McNaughton (1985), in studying a range of students. One inexperienced reader has called it 'saying the words right' (Meek 1983b: 151); many scholars, more scathingly, refer to 'barking at print' (Warner 1971: 8) or 'word-calling'.

The low-literate adult learners in Fagan (1988) and Hudelson (1983) likewise saw reading as a decoding task and writing as a copying, spelling and handwriting task. Kamm's (1990) adult ESL learners in America believed that pronunciation, not understanding, was the purpose for reading, based on their previous experiences in Laos and Vietnam; while Devine (1984, 1988), investigating the comprehension, oral reading skills and reading orientation of ESL adult students, also found a connection between a meaning-centred model of reading and better comprehension of the text.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that learners - especially perhaps the less-skilled - do not necessarily guess the longer-term, use-in-the-outside-world purposes of classroom practices, and thus often interpret these as ends in themselves. There is evidence that a considerable number see the aim of their reading and writing as to demonstrate to teachers what they know or can get right, rather than as tools for learning and enjoyment (Evans 1993; Fishman 1992; Langer 1986; Meek 1983a, 1983b). Many therefore need quite explicit assistance to move beyond a decoding/recoding view of reading to a

meaning-oriented view if they are to see what the act of reading is all about. 'Learning to read is very different from reading to learn' (Maeroff, cited in Savignon 1983: 54). Too much time or emphasis on any single activity in the classroom, especially where its link to everyday use is opaque - as oral reading frequently is - could well be counterproductive to this purpose (Durkin 1983; Hale & Edwards 1980; Heap 1980; Strang 1968).

In addition, we know that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is crucial to successful learning of any complex skill - quite as important as the cognitive or the basic skills aspects (Robeck & Wallace 1990; Thompson 1987). If learners are not convinced of the value of reading to them, they may appear to learn by jumping through the hoops we set up for them but even if they can read, they frequently choose not to do so later (Bettelheim & Zelan 1981; Brown 1979; Meek 1983a, 1983b; Pugh 1978; Thompson 1987).

The above has painted a generally very negative picture of reading aloud as perceived by students. It should however be noted that it is typical of these studies (as of much research) that they are seeking generalisations about experiences and attitudes. This is clearly necessary when one is trying to describe common tendencies, or to provide guidelines to help the class teacher develop a program to suit most of the students most of the time, and avoid those practices found to be generally ineffective. However, by their very generalising, such studies often fail to capture the subtlety of individual difference and can thereby lead to the loss of insights which may be potentially valuable even to the group. It is notable that almost the only positive-affect references to oral reading found in the research literature came from individual case studies (see the start of this section). This issue of individual differences, particularly in the perspective of cognitive and learning styles, is the focus of the following section.

3.9 Reading aloud, personality types, and learning styles and strategies

It is a truism that learners are different, and that teachers should take into account individual and group differences as they plan and conduct sessions with their classes, select assessment tasks, and so on. Putting flesh on the bones of this concept of difference is not so easy, though - not least because teachers too differ from one another. There are obvious differences

amongst learners such as age, sex, ethnic background, prior learning, reason for learning, motivation - all of which educators try to attend to in their work with their students. However, other and often hidden dimensions of the individual have been posited as playing an important part in learning behaviour, such as cognitive style and learning style (learning style seems to include a relatively strong affective as well as cognitive dimension). These terms refer to what many believe are relative constants in the personality: individuals respond in fairly consistent ways to the various situations they meet, depending on the components of their particular style.

This assumption does not pass without contestation, of course; for example, Ellis (1994: 508) asserts that the construct of learning style:

> is ill-defined, apparently overlapping with other individual differences of both an affective and a cognitive nature. It is unlikely that much progress will be made until researchers know what it is they want to measure.

And if we must exercise care in using these psychological constructs even with individuals in the societies from which the concepts developed, we must be even more circumspect in applying them to individuals from other cultural backgrounds. Much more research and evaluation will be required before we can use them with confidence.

Despite the uncertainty about the theoretical status of these concepts, many educators have nevertheless found them valuable in at least fleshing out the notion of individual difference and providing a stimulus to observation and reflection (e.g. Willing 1988: 5-10).

Such concepts as Extrovert/Introvert, Reflectiveness/Impulsiveness, Locus of Control, and Field Dependence/Field Independence, have been quite widely examined for the role they may have in predisposing students to learn certain subjects, or in certain ways, or from particular teachers. The Extrovert/Introvert dimension has been mentioned earlier in this study (Chapter 2; also Appendix 4). Reflectiveness/Impulsiveness describes preferences for caution vs. risk-taking in learning situations. Locus of control is linked to an individual's sense of whether they are able to direct their own life to a large extent (internal locus), or whether they are at the mercy of forces beyond their control (external locus); an internal locus of control is usually seen as more mature and productive, though there can be negative effects where people blame themselves whenever things do not go

well. Field Dependence/Independence refers to people's tendency to experience and interpret their environment in global vs. analytic terms.

Attempts have been made to find links between certain personality types or learning styles on the one hand, and attitudes to and performance in L1 reading (including oral reading) on the other. Rasinski (1983) notes that Field Dependents (FDs) value interpersonal relations and structure in their learning, whereas FIs are more cognitively oriented - and that FIs are more proficient readers than FDs. Blaha & Chomin (1982) similarly found that Field Independent (FI) students tended not to consider reading aloud a difficult or anxiety-arousing task, nor did those with Internal Locus of Control (LC) for success events. On the other hand, Brown et al. (1979) found a relationship between Reading Anxiety and Internal LC for negative outcomes, providing the other side of the coin: in this study, students who felt responsible for their own failure were stressed by oral reading.

As far as performance is concerned, one study with 7-8-year-olds found that boy Extroverts and girl Introverts performed better on a range of reading tasks including oral reading than their opposite numbers (Riding & Cowley 1986). The Blaha & Chomin study mentioned above also found that students with lower verbal academic aptitude scores (thus perhaps less Extrovert?) preferred silent to oral reading. A further study (Hood & Kendall 1975) found that, among a group of second-graders, Reflective-type learners made fewer errors and more self-corrections overall (though not significantly so) than Impulsives, and the errors they did make tended to be graphically similar to the cue words. In general educational terms, a degree of adaptive risk-taking seems to be positively associated with classroom learning behaviour and hence academic (including literacy) achievement (Purcell-Gates & Dahl 1989, 1991; Turnbull 1993); one could therefore hazard a guess that risk-takers or 'independent explorers' (Purcell-Gates' term) might have more positive attitudes to and better performance on oral reading.

Numerous approaches have been taken over the years to measure learning styles in ways helpful to understanding and improving the L2 learning context for both students and teachers. Some early work on 'The Good Language Learner' (Naiman et al. 1978; Rubin 1975; Rubin & Thompson 1982; Stern 1980) sought to describe the characteristics common to successful language learners - the implication being that, unless the learner had or

could develop these characteristics, language learning would not succeed. Work like this operated from the premise that there are 'helpful' and 'not helpful' traits for learning, including language learning: that some styles are supportive and productive in learning contexts, whereas others hinder learning.

A rather different philosophy informs much of the more recent work in this domain, however: the view that style differences are not intrinsically 'good' or 'less useful', but can be harnessed to learning provided the teacher and learner are aware of them and exploit any strengths while at the same time complementing any gaps. Under this perception, both Reflective and Impulsive learners might be equally effective learners but in contrasting ways: Reflectives are more cautious and thorough but also more open to input, while Impulsives experiment a lot, often making errors, but thereby provide themselves with a great deal of feedback. Teachers operating from such a perception might find the notion of style differences helpful in explaining a spontaneous preference or antipathy for a given activity by a learner, but would not necessarily seek to 'improve' their students' styles.

One widely-known system suggests that students may hold differing preferences for learning visually, auditorily and kinaesthetically (or some combination of these). Stevick (1989: 142) suggests that a positive association with the auditory and/or the kinaesthetic aspects of reading aloud may account for this preference among some learners. A further implication is that varied, multisensory activities and materials need to be provided to ensure that all students can experience learning through their most comfortable mode(s) (e.g. Shade 1989). Gardner's (1983) notion of 'multiple intelligences' is also relevant here.

Some approaches to the issue of learning (and also teaching) style are more complex in terms of the personality traits they include, the measuring instruments they employ and the insights they claim to provide. The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, for example, developed over decades from the work of Carl Jung, is widely used not only in education circles but also in management and relationship counselling (Bengari 1991; Briggs-Myers & Myers 1980; Myers-Briggs 1976). It uses a questionnaire format, which 'types' the individual along four dimensions: Introvert/Extrovert (with a slightly more 'American' social bias to this than in Jung's original scale, it

should be noted), Sensing/Intuiting, Feeling/Thinking, and Judging/Perceiving, giving sixteen possible 'types'.

As we have already noted, most people are combinations of these tendencies, and there is no suggestion that any particular type is better than any other, either in an absolute sense or for learning/teaching; on the contrary, the implication is that all types have strengths, and that differences are recognised as complementing one another. The questionnaire and descriptions of the types may be found in Appendix 4. In addition to the cross-cultural issues mentioned earlier, the language of the questionnaire is fairly abstract, so it is clearly not suitable for Non-English-Speaking-Background students at lower than an Intermediate level, and in fact is much more frequently used with teachers interested in reflecting on their teaching style than with students at least in the TESOL field. Moreover, as it is based on self-report (like many such instruments), it indicates views and values rather than (necessarily) actual behaviour.

One study looking at links between language-learning and personality/learning style in these terms (Moody 1988) found that, among American college students enrolled in foreign language classes (in a situation where all BA students must take at least one year of a language), all sixteen types were represented, but there was a strong preference for Intuition, and to a lesser extent for Introversion, Thinking and Perceiving. The tendency towards Intuition is explained as being related to a liking for manipulating words, meanings and symbols which is characteristic of Intuitives, though one could interpret this in the given population as due less to specifically language-learning than to a choice of the generalist humanities degree.

Another study (Ehrman & Oxford 1989) examined the interaction between personality type, sex, career choice and language learning strategies, with an older age-group, including students of languages, language teachers (many of whom had come into this career more or less accidentally) and 'professional language trainers' (teacher trainers). The overall picture again favoured Intuitives, and to some extent Thinkers and Judgers, with Introverts and Extroverts fairly evenly divided. There were considerable between-group differences, however: students tended strongly towards Thinking, and a little less to Intuiting and Judging; while the professional language trainers were extremely strongly Introverted, very Intuiting and Thinking; and the teachers were largely Extroverted and very strongly

Sensing (the researchers comment that they are closer to the general population than the other groups). (It will be recalled that the teachers in the present study were also largely Sensers, though mixed on the Introvert/ Extrovert dimension.) There were also differences between these groups, and between men and women, in the amount and type of strategy usage: e.g. professional language trainers used a greater variety of strategies, perhaps not surprisingly; teachers and students were very close on most variables; and women reported more strategy use than males, though this could also be related to the MBTI type, as this differed between the sexes in this sample. Personality type also played a role in preferred strategy.

David Kolb's Learning Style Inventory is another model which has been applied to professional performance and management style (Kolb 1976, 1984a, 1984b). It measures four aspects of the individual's approach - preferences for Concrete Experience vs. Abstract Generalisation, and Reflective Observation vs. Active Experimentation - which when combined provide an overall 'type': Converger, Accommodator, Diverger, or Assimilator. The questionnaire and descriptions of these concepts are in Appendix 5. As with the Myers-Briggs, no one type is preferable, though Kolb has found in his work with different professional groups that there is often a clustering of a given profession in a certain quadrant or type because of the demands of the work and the training leading up to it: e.g. many engineers are Convergers (1984b: 86), while educators are often Accommodators (1984b: 128, 165), with preferences for concrete experience and active experimentation. Kolb's educators may have been teachers of younger age-groups (hence the importance for them of concrete experience), while the teachers in our study were largely Convergers, with a strength in abstract conceptualisation; both groups however share a focus on active experimentation.

The very abstract nature of the terms used in the Kolb survey precludes this from use with most school students, at least, and with most learners from a Non-English-Speaking Background. That its framework is considered to be potentially valuable for wider application, however, may be gauged by the fact that a variant of this approach, called 4MAT, has been developed for and widely used in schools (McCarthy 1990); and that the extensive survey conducted in 1984 by the Australian Adult Migrant English Service, of its clients' learning styles (more than 500 students were surveyed), also developed a questionnaire based to a considerable extent on Kolb's factors

(Willing 1988: 67-70). While the AMES survey found that learners clustered into four groupings, it found no significant correlations between any of the biographical variables and any of the learning preferences.

For neither Kolb nor Willing, though, is that the end of the story. While Kolb believes that individuals do deal with many situations, both routine and new, by falling back on familiar ways, he has also found that people adapt to the context in which they spend some time - whether it be a new country, an organisation, a profession or a course of study (Kolb 1984: 196). For Willing, too, the outcome of the survey was a major raising of consciousness among both teachers and learners, and the publication of materials (*Teaching How to Learn*, 1989) designed to systematically expand the learning approaches of students (and teachers).

The concept of learning **strategy** is a useful one, although it will not be explored in depth in this study. Various writers have defined this in slightly differing ways to suit their purposes. For Willing (1988: 6), a learning strategy is the 'basic unit of learning [...] a specific mental procedure for gathering, processing, associating, categorising, rehearsing and retrieving information or patterned skills'. Other writers also include metacognitive and affective strategies in their models (O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Wenden 1987); as well as social strategies (Ellis & Sinclair 1989), and strategies for memory and compensation (overcoming limitations) (Oxford 1990). The concept of strategies may provide us with a more flexible and dynamic way of looking at learner preferences and behaviours than learning styles, which are sometimes interpreted as relatively fixed and unchangeable, as well as theoretically 'fuzzy' (Ellis 1994). If students' overall styles can be analysed as coherent packages of strategies, they can learn new skills or strategies to extend their original repertoires, if the value of this adaptation becomes clear to them.

In line with this philosophy, a recent important development in the TESOL field especially has been the introduction of materials devised to help learners become more conscious of their learning styles and (initially) preferred strategies, both to affirm the value of these and then to enable students, through reflection, exercises and discussion with each other, to expand their 'how to learn' repertoire (Ellis & Sinclair 1989; O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990; Willing 1989). An additional aim of these materials is to help learners develop greater autonomy and to take more

responsibility for their own learning. Willing also notes the role that the notion 'learning strategy' can play in the teacher's methodology, by helping him or her to focus always on the **learner's** cognitive etc processes.

Ellis & Sinclair (1989) list reading aloud as one of their cognitive skills for 'speaking', specifically pronunciation, stress and rhythm (pp. 112-114, 153 teacher's book; p. 79 student's book) - and also warn students against reading aloud when they are 'reading' ('for meaning' is seemingly implied). Oxford (1990) does not mention reading aloud as such among her suggested strategies, though under Speaking, the description of the cognitive strategy 'practicing' ('repeating' and 'formally practicing with sounds and writing systems' - p. 324) seems to refer to this. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) also refer somewhat obliquely to reading aloud in the 'speaking' task of reading a difficult text and then retelling it to help others understand (p. 173) and later more directly (p. 181), but it is not clearly linked to any of their listed strategies in their model. Perhaps it can be glimpsed as an option under the cognitive skill of 'auditory representation', or even as providing opportunities for the exercise of the metacognitive strategies of 'selective attention', 'self-monitoring' or 'self-management'.

As was mentioned above, the AMES survey did not ask students specifically whether they liked or used 'reading aloud' as a strategy in their learning, although they were asked about 'reading' (which had only a moderate value for most), and it is not certain how this would have been interpreted by those surveyed (nor do Willing's 'teaching how to learn' materials specify reading aloud). The two most valued classroom techniques for the students surveyed, however, were 'practise the pronunciation and sounds' and 'teacher to correct all errors', and, again as we noted earlier, reading aloud offers one possibility for this.

Stevick (1989) examines the different approaches taken by several successful learners to the task of learning languages. Certain of these (though by no means all) specifically mention their use of oral reading as a deliberate and sometimes quite central practice in their learning, especially for developing a feel for the language generally, for pronunciation and for memory. Stevick acknowledges the generally negative image of oral reading - 'a technique that might be disastrous for some works well for others' - but his interviews reveal that if we are interested in exploring in a truly deep way what helps people learn languages, we must investigate individuals as well

as broad groups. As he comments: 'Beware of building a system of teaching around one type of learner' (1989: 150).

3.10 Summary and Implications for this study

From this survey of the research and pedagogical literature on oral reading with L1 and L2 readers of varying ages and proficiencies, the findings are somewhat mixed and ambiguous. There seem to be no fully clear-cut certainties of either a theoretical or an educational kind: on every question asked, the answers are still mixed and/or tentative. The role of reading aloud by the learner as an adjunct to comprehension seems especially inconclusive at this stage, for L1 and even more so for L2 learners; 'individual differences' (left largely unspecified in the literature) seem to be the only way at this stage to account for the variation in research outcomes. Positive and negative attitudes towards reading aloud are similarly highly variable, and again individual differences are invoked, although in this case some attempts have been made to specify more narrowly what these differences might be in terms of cognitive or learning styles. It was for this reason that one of the aims of the present study was to investigate further the possible effects of learning style data on experiences of and attitudes to reading aloud.

Certain tendencies or partial conclusions do begin to emerge in some areas. For example, there is overall agreement that listening to skilled readers read aloud is valuable to both L1 and L2 learner-readers, whereas listening to poor readers is unhelpful and even irritating. Similarly, the research and the educational literatures both seem to converge on the view that for L2 learners, reading aloud is particularly valuable for the development of speaking skills, especially pronunciation, with some more peripheral advantages as well. A range of less-obvious approaches to oral reading (e.g. mumble-reading, subvocalisation, paired and shared reading) are mentioned in the literature, but not all have been thoroughly investigated. Again, this study sought to examine the views of teachers and adult students on several of these issues.

In addition, the issue of teacher awareness or otherwise of their pedagogical choices and their reasons for these choices comes through many of the writings on reading aloud: because of its long-term association with

classrooms generally and language learning in particular, oral reading runs a special risk of becoming a routine activity chosen without much reflection on either its possibilities or its drawbacks. This was a further dimension of interest to the researcher in the current project.

Thus, in spite of the caveats and the cautions raised by the research and educational literature, reading aloud is a strategy whose current valency and potential use for individual learners deserves to be examined carefully. The current interest in 'learner strategy training' and in teacher cognition provides a particularly timely rationale for such an examination, and this study has thus investigated a little further some of the questions for which we have up till now glimpsed only partial answers.