

CRITICAL READING :

A SOCIO-COGNITIVE APPROACH TO SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses selective focus in reading a text in relation to the philosophical guidelines of critical education. To pursue this question a model for critical reading is initially sketched, and the literature on selective focus in text reading is reviewed. The existing literature analyses selective focus under the framework of two perspectives: reader-based and text-based. This thesis proposes a third possibility: a social-based perspective. A socio-cognitive conception of selective focus is delineated on the basis of theories that explore the effect of social factors on literacy, language use, and higher cognitive processes.

The issues raised at the theoretical level are also investigated in an empirical study. Expert reader's insights about their own reading practices are taken into consideration. Three studies are reported. Two exploratory studies - designed to refine methodological procedures - analyse the response of two groups of four readers. The interview questionnaire that guides the main data collection is based on the results obtained in these initial investigations. The main study considers the data provided by fifteen structured interviews. The sample include readers from three type of course in higher education: initial teacher training for pos-graduate students, master degree students, and doctoral students. A qualitative analysis describes in detail how reader-based, text-based and social-based factors interact within the context of these readers' reading practices.

Considering the empirical evidence, the thesis proposes that neither the reader nor the text should be investigated without an appreciation of the social context. However, socio-cultural context is shown not only to provide a further set of variables but also to permeate the development of text-based and reader-based factors. This has important theoretical and educational implications. The final argument of this study is that classroom practices that aim to promote critical reading should give a proper emphasis to the socio-cultural aspect of selective focus.

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I GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

I.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

The present research integrates a series of ideas generated in the context of different academic practices. Braga (1982), analysed the effect of structural factors on retention of informative text by 6th grade level students. The qualitative analysis of one hundred and twenty protocols revealed that these readers recalled information not actually conveyed by the text read. It was then noticed that many of the readers' elaborations could be interpreted in terms of school values. This study indicated the need to further explore how reading is affected by social factors.

During two consecutive years - 1983 /1984 - the author worked with a group of three other Brazilian academics in official projects that aimed to improve the teaching of Portuguese in state schools. The group's proposal was particularly concerned to recover the role of 'educators' in Portuguese teachers. The actual interaction and discussion with elementary school teachers lead the author to question the complex link that exists between concrete pedagogical proposals and broad educational issues. This concern is reflected in some later works (Busnardo & Braga (1983), (1984 a) (1984 b)). Busnardo & Braga (1984 a), analysed different approaches to reading in higher education and pointed out that greater stress placed on the reader (characteristic of the literary hermeneutic tradition), or greater stress placed on the text (characteristic of the linguistic tradition) could be problematic if one aimed to promote a critical approach to reading. This work indicated the need for pedagogic proposals that are informed by theories that understand readers and texts in a more integrated way. Social theories might offer such a possibility.

This theoretical questioning motivated the elaboration of the present thesis: if the selection of information from a text is to be critical, socio-ideological factors must be taken into consideration. This thesis attempts to explore the complex interface that exist between political conceptions of schooling and conceptions of reading.

The discussion of such an interface integrates four central propositions:

- 1) selective focus is a distinct cognitive process involved in reading.
- 2) selective focus is affected by social issues.
- 3) there is an inseparable link between conceptions of schooling and conceptions of reading.
- 4) pedagogical practices that aim to promote critical reading must be informed by social-based theories.

These propositions reflect certain ideas about the reading process per se, and how this process is affected in the context of daily practices. They also explicitate certain ideals about the education of readers. An ideal type of education should lead readers to be aware of the constraints socially imposed upon their reading acts, without making them lose contact with their own identity as readers and the degrees of freedom that they may have in specific situations of reading. This thesis aims to offer some contribution to the discussion of educational issues by attempting to relate a specific conception of schooling, namely critical education to a specific pedagogic practice, namely the teaching of reading. It also seeks to contribute to the theories of reading by (a) specifying the nature of one of the processes involved in reading, i. e. selective focus and (b) analysing how this process is affected by different factors in daily reading acts. Finally, the discussion developed in the thesis aims to highlight how ideals and ideas about reading may benefit from social-based theories

I. 2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN THEMES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS.

This thesis is divided into two major parts. Part I includes three chapters which explore reading and selective focus from a theoretical perspective. Chapter 1 discusses the basic tenets of Critical Education and clarifies the link between conceptions of schooling and conceptions of reading. A critical model for reading is then

proposed. The initial philosophical discussion is then narrowed down to a specific theoretical issue, i. e. selective focus in reading. Chapter 2 argues that selective focus should be understood as a distinct process involved in reading. This chapter also reviews reader-based and text-based interpretations of selective focus in reading. The literature review indicates that reader-based and text-based approaches leave a number of issues unsolved. This limitation strengthens the need for a third perspective based on social factors. Chapter 3 discusses reading from a socio-cognitive perspective. It integrates social conceptions of literacy practices, language uses, and cognitive processes, aiming to show the social basis for selection in reading. This social conception of selective focus is then related to the model for critical reading proposed in chapter 1.

Part II aims to explore selective focus in reading from the reader's perspective. It includes four chapters. Chapter 4 argues that expert readers' insights into their daily reading activities may be a useful source of information to explore the effect of different factors on selective focus. This chapter discusses the stages of development of the procedures for data collection. It describes the findings of two exploratory studies carried out in the search for a suitable and effective research instrument. Chapter 5 describes and analyses the final data collection. Fifteen experienced readers - five PGCE students, five MA students and five PhD students - evaluated the effect of reader-based, text-based and social based factors in situations of reading to study. Chapter 6, in the light of the data provided by these readers, analyses three different ways of including social factors within models of reading. This chapter also presents some illustrative examples which indicates how selective focus may be directly or indirectly affected by socio-ideological factors, and points to a preferred model of reading. This model is based on the notions of ideology, discourse and genre. Finally, chapter 7 briefly presents the concluding remarks of this thesis and it closes the circle by relating the different approaches to selective focus to the educational issues explored in the initial chapter of this dissertation.

PART I

READING AND SELECTIVE FOCUS: A THEORETICAL ACCOUNT

CHAPTER 1

1 CRITICAL EDUCATION AND LITERACY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools are political sites involved in the construction of discourses, meanings and subjectivity. The bulk of knowledge, values, and beliefs that guide and structure classroom practices are a social construction based on specific and normative political assumptions. These assumptions determine the nature of the overt curriculum, shape the hidden curriculum, and also guide methodological choices in different subject areas (Giroux (1983)).

The present thesis accepts that discussions of literacy should not be dissociated from broad socio-ideological issues. Considering that much literacy learning occurs within the school context, it proposes that discussions of reading and writing should be linked to specific conceptions of schooling. The present study is chosen to focus on the reading process. This opening chapter aims to (a) highlight the relation between schooling and reading models, and (b) explicitate the politico-philosophical line that guides this investigation.

This author believes that schooling should be formative and not merely informative. That is, it should lead students to develop modes of critical thinking necessary to understand and transform the society in which they live. Following a Freirean tradition, she conceives education as a struggle for meaning and as a struggle over power relations (Freire(1985)). In line with Gramsci (1971) she accepts that the political aim of schooling should be to transform society to meet the collective needs of individuals. This chapter argues that the conception of critical education proposed by Giroux (1983), and further discussed by Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), offers some guidelines in the above stated direction. The authors' proposal may be seen as an attempt to explore the complex dialectical relation between the objective constraints of the social structure, and the possibilities of human agency.

Section 1.2 contextualises this view of education within the ongoing discussions about schooling (see figure 1.1). It describes

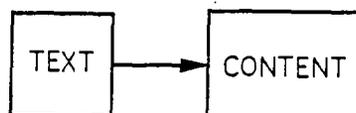
1.2. READING AND THE CONSERVATIVE, LIBERAL AND RADICAL APPROACHES TO SCHOOLING.

The current approaches to schooling can be roughly construed under the categories of conservative, liberal and radical. Of course, these ideal-typical categories do not do justice to the complexity of the ongoing debate over schooling, and leave unspecified broad theoretical boundaries. Yet, it seems reasonable to cluster the different theoretical proposals into broader categories, taking into consideration the emphasis that different perspectives give to individual or socio-structural factors.

The conservative approach to schooling is mainly preoccupied with maintaining the existing society. It accepts the dominant values and norms of society and is primarily interested in promoting, through education, social consensus, cohesion and stability. Within this perspective, transmission and reproduction are positively valued, and the pedagogic discussion tends to be diverted to procedural questions: how to find the best means to reach pre-chosen ends.

The conservative approach focuses its literacy discussion on the text and on ways to reach its 'content' or 'message' (see figure 1.2.).

Fig. 1.2 Conservative Approach to Reading



Literacy within this approach is seen as a mere skill, necessary to have access to a 'value free' set of knowledge. The text tends to be understood as a conduit of knowledge and the reader to be analysed in reductionist behavioural terms, i. e. in his/her capacity to reproduce (or not) the text content.

The liberal humanistic tradition in education appears as a counter reaction to the conservative top-down model of pedagogy, in which the

role of the learner is nullified (Dewey (1966)). Aiming at the subjective and human dimensions of knowledge, the liberal approach stresses pedagogical models that take into consideration the importance of intentionality, consciousness and interpersonal relations in the construction of meaning and classroom experience. Pedagogical practices are no longer seen as flowing from the socially constructed world of the teacher. Classroom socialization and knowledge are actively constructed through an interaction process between teacher and students, each setting limits on the other's actions.

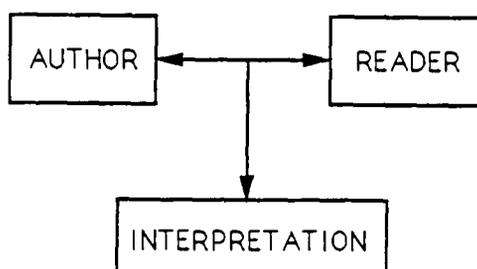
Within this perspective, as Giroux proposes, classroom reading activities tend to be informed by two ideological trends: the cognitive development trend and the romantic trend. The cognitive development trend is highly influenced by the work of Jean Piaget. It conceives reading as a problem solving process, aiming at the development of the cognitive structure. The problems raised by the text serve to enable students to think at higher levels of reasoning. In contrast, the romantic trend is not concerned with the cognitive aspect of human interaction, but with the emotional dimension of this interaction. This trend, highly influenced by theories such as those of Carl Rogers and Joel Spring, tends to stress the importance of language authenticity and spontaneity (Giroux (1983), p. 216-218).

In theoretical terms, this new conception of meaning, constructed through interpersonal relations, is reflected in 'dialogical models' of literacy. Within these models, reading is seen as a dialogue of a reader with an author through the text (Tierney, Lazansky, Rafael, and Cohen (1987)). As in any dialogical situation, the final meaning is a product that is both made possible and constrained by the participants involved. Readers are agents in the construction of textual meanings (see figure 1.3).

The liberal approaches have the merit of recovering the role of human agency. However within the liberal perspective, the objective power of social constraints tends to be underestimated. This perspective overlooks the fact that the meaning constructed in the classroom situation is also affected by the social, political and economic conditions of the broader society that directly or indirectly

creates some of the oppressive features of schooling. In other words, the liberal approach does not take into consideration the way powerful institutions and groups influence the knowledge, social relations and modes of evaluation that characterize the ideological texture of classroom life.

Fig. 1.3 Liberal Approach to Reading



Lacking awareness of objective constraints, liberal approaches end up with little or no resources to evaluate negative schooling results. As a consequence, powerlessness may be confused with passivity, and school failures attributed to the individuals involved: blame on the teacher or blame on the student (Giroux 1983 p. 55).

Radical theorists shift the focus of the educational debate from the teacher/student interaction to the oppressive features of schooling. Classroom interaction is analysed within the dynamics of class modes of discrimination, and no longer seen as a way to offer possibilities for individual development, social mobility, and political and economic power. Radical theorists' central argument is that the main function of schools is the reproduction of dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labour. Educational failures are now attributed to the repressive function of the dominant social structure, and certain educational outcomes understood in terms of capitalist production and its demands.

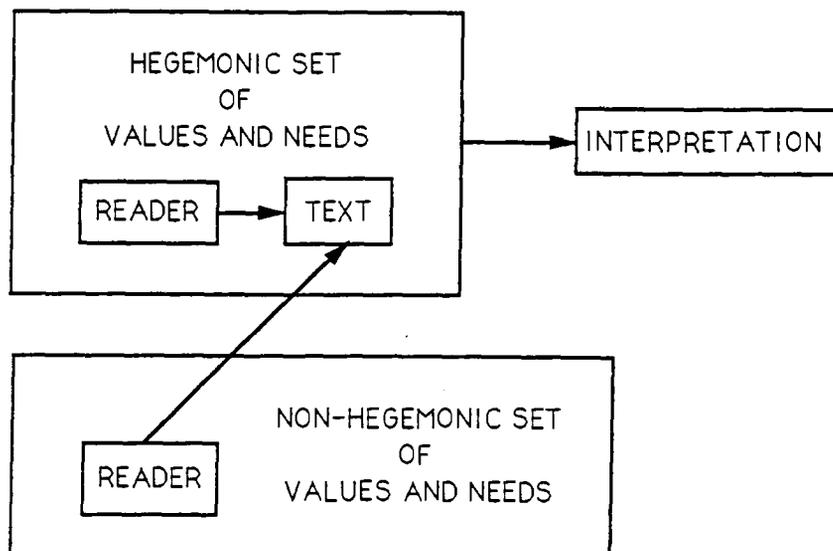
Radical theorists stress that schools are reproductive in three senses: economic cultural and political. First, the school reproduces the social and technical division of labour by providing different classes and social groups with the knowledge and skill they need to occupy their places in a stratified labour force (Bowles and Gintis (1976)). Second, a class stratified society, and the ideological and material configurations on which it rests, is mediated and maintained through cultural reproduction (Bourdieu (1977)). Culture becomes the mediating link between the ruling class interests and every-day life. Within this second sense, schools are seen as responsible for reproducing a set of linguistic and cultural competencies - a set of meanings, qualities of style, modes of thinking and dispositions - that confirm the culture of the ruling class, while simultaneously refuting the cultures of the other groups. That is, schools tend to legitimize certain forms of knowledge, ways of speaking, and ways of relating to the world that favour the type of familiarity and skills that only certain students have inherited from their family background and class relations. Students from the lower social classes are at a decisive disadvantage.

Finally, schools are viewed as part of the state apparatus that produce and legitimize the economic and ideological imperatives that support the state's hegemony (Gramsci 1971). Through the state the ruling class justifies and maintains its dominance and also manages to win consent of those over whom it rules. Gramsci conceives the state as composed of political society and civil society. Political society - apparatuses of administrative law and other coercive institutions - primarily functions through force and repression. The civil society - private and public institutions - relies on symbols, meanings and ideas to legitimate ruling classes' ideology, while limiting oppositional discourses and practices. All state apparatuses have coercive and consensual functions. Ideological control must be fought constantly, and it is the dominance of one function over the other that gives the apparatuses of political and civil society, their defining characteristic. Being a part of the state apparatuses, schools contribute to the fight for ideological control, by hindering

contradictions and conflicts that exist within and between classes. This ideological control is not merely imposed by power, but also won through consent. The consensual function of ideologies is important to understand Gramsci's conception of human agency. This is to be further discussed in the next section.

In spite of the differences between the issues being focussed on and the theoretical explanations offered, radical theorists can be united around the same broad central question: how schooling contributes to the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production and the existing social inequalities (see Dale, Esland, and MacDonald (1976)). This new preoccupation with objective and material factors formed a new trend in literacy studies. The main issue is no longer the interaction between a reader and an author, but the written text and literacy teaching as a source of ideology reproduction (see figure 1.4)

Fig. 1.4 Radical Approach to Reading



A radical approach to literacy is mainly concerned with exploring how a certain set of meanings, language modalities and styles, that favour the ruling elite, are legitimized through written texts and school literacy practices. Issues of social domination are incorporated into the discussions on literacy, and special emphasis is

placed on the way school texts are used to control and suppress students from the lower social brackets.

With the exception of the Gramscian approach, the conceptions of schooling, briefly described above, have in common a partial description of the social reality. They all present a dichotomic conception of human agency and social structure. Conservatives show priority of the object - dominant society's values - over the subject. Liberals stress the active side of classroom interaction, but disconnect the notion of human action from issues such as power relations and conflicts that exist within the broader social structure. In contrast, radicals focussing on structural constraints end up giving priority to structure over action. From the three approaches, only the radical analysis makes evident and problematic the existing relation between schooling and the broader society. Schools are not seen as neutral sites, as in the conservative and liberal perspective, but as a specific type of institution that must be understood in relation to particular social interests. However, the radical discussion does not aim at proposing a 'new school' within the existing social structure, but at revealing the necessity of a new social structure through the discussion of schooling. As a consequence, radical theorists tend to emphasize the reproductive function of classroom practices, and convey a very pessimistic conception of schooling.

1.3 CRITICAL EDUCATION

The critical education approach, as proposed by Giroux(1983), and Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) may be seen as an attempt to go beyond the radical's insights and to explore the complex relation between social constraints and individual freedom of action. It is based on a non deterministic conception of the social structure, which reflects the influence of the work developed by the Frankfurt School (see Held (1980)), and the social conception brought forward by Gramsci (1971).

As Giroux (1983) stresses, the work developed by the Frankfurt School illuminates the relation between power and culture, highlighting the link between culture and the material base of society. It also

explores the conception of history as an open ended phenomenon. The law of history is seen as not independent from human action. Social meaning is historically produced in the cracks and tensions that separate individuals and social classes from the imperatives of the dominant society. This conception of social conflicts and tensions is also emphasized in Gramsci's work. The author proposes that conflicts exist even within the dominant groups. Hegemonic groups should not be understood in block. The interests of the civil and political society, or the interests of the public and private institutions are not always in accord. Some of these interests may aggregate radical potentialities (Gramsci 1971).

Relating these theoretical notions to education, Giroux and Aronowitz propose that schools should be conceived as cultural sites, that embody conflicting political values, histories, and practices. As this conflict between values and practices occurs within unequal positions of power, a critical pedagogy must be engaged in revealing how power and knowledge link school to the inequalities produced by the larger society. Education should promote attitudes of resistance and struggle against social inequalities. This conception of education as a means to promote self liberation may be associated with the humanistic pedagogical proposals of Freire (Freire (1974, 1985, 1987a, 1987b)).

Notions of resistance and struggle demand a dialectical conception of the subject - (actors that resist and struggle) and object (social structure to be resisted and fought). In other words, resistance can only be understood in relation to specific forms of domination and oppression. So, the authors suggest that critical pedagogy should have the aim of leading students to understand how society has incorporated them ideologically into its rules and logic. Schools should provide students with skills, knowledge, models of inquiry necessary to examine:

- a. their situation as a group, situated within specific relations of domination and subordination.
- b. the feasibility of developing a discourse free from distortion of their own partially mangled cultural inheritance.

c. the possibility of appropriating the most progressive dimensions of their own cultural history, and the most radical aspects of the bourgeois culture.

d. the possibility of connecting critical knowledge to action.

Aiming to offer theoretical background for such an education line, Giroux and Aronowitz selectively combined insights from the culturalist tradition of Williams and Thompson, from Althusser's structuralist proposal, and also from Gramsci's work.

1.3.1 CRITICAL EDUCATION AND THE NEO-MARXIST TRADITION.

Discussing the neo-marxist proposals, Giroux (1983) points out that the culturalist and structuralist analysis helped to bring into prominence the issues of culture and ideology, but both issues, essential to a theory of resistance, are not satisfactorily pursued from within the culturalist and structuralist premisses. None of them succeed in overcoming the dualist conception of agency/structure.

Within the work of Williams and Thompson, human agency and experience are a fundamental basis for social and class analysis. Class is no longer defined as a reflex of the economic structure - as in the orthodox Marxist tradition - but as a set of meanings and practices that characterize different social groups. According to this perspective, the social collective field is made up of different groups, that, through their lived experiences, produce meanings. These produced meanings shape the different patterns of regularity, thoughts and ways of feeling that characterize the different social classes.

This active process of meaning production is both registered and fought within a set of dominant relations that, although favouring the ruling classes' interests, are not necessarily bound to predetermined consequences. Historical consciousness and critical intentionality is then presented as an ideal terrain on which to begin the struggle against the structure of oppression (Williams (1963, 1965, 1977) and Thompson (1966)). Such an approach, as Giroux stresses, has the benefit of recovering the historical subject, and of analysing history and culture from the experiential side of human agency. It certainly highlights the role of human agency in meaning production. However, it

also has serious limits that must be taken into consideration. First of all, the equation of class to culture hides the fact that classes are not solely defined by differences in meanings, i.e. classes are structurally determined. There are determinants outside the sphere of consciousness - such as, the workplace, the family, and the state - that have a powerful force in shaping human life. Secondly, the stress on lived experiences leads to the acceptance that experiences speak for themselves. Such a position fails to acknowledge two important issues: first, that contradictions exist not just in between classes but also within classes. Second, that people may unconsciously act against their own class interests (Giroux (1983 p. 123-128)).

The structuralist perspective focusses on the issues left aside by the culturalist tradition. Structuralism starts by interrogating how subjectivity get formed within the material practices that sustain capitalist social relations. The main emphasis is no longer on the experiential side of human agency, but on the force of underlying structures, or patterned material practices, that generate the surface appearance of cultural forms. A better understanding of social functions is to be found in the materiality of the practices as they are represented in the political and economic structures of the society. This approach rejects the anthropological notion that human beings are agents of history. The characteristic power of the structures constitute and position human behaviour, denying the efficacy of human agency.

Social classes are defined not in terms of inter-subjective modes of meanings and experiences, but in terms of their objective place in the network of ownership relations. Subjectivity is seen as an expression of political and ideological determinants that reproduce the logic of the capital and its institutions. This perspective is taken to an extreme position in Althusser's notion of ideology (Althusser (1969, 1970, 1971)).

According to Althusser, ideologies are a fundamental part of every society: they are a source of cohesion and unity. Any ideology fulfils two functional requirements:

- a. it is a medium and a product of the material practices.
- b. it refers to a specific form of relation that human subjects have with the world. This relation is structured in the subject's unconscious.

Analysing Althusser's proposal, Giroux calls attention to its relevant theoretical role in examining the ways in which the dominant institutions and practices function in the interests of the ruling-class. However, as the author points out, such a proposal ignores the notion of experience as a mode of behaviour that is constituted in the interplay of structure and consciousness. Within this perspective, human subjects are mere role bearers, completely subjugated by the structural domination and determination. This exhausts any possibility of struggle and resistance.

Summarising this discussion, both culturalist and structuralist paradigms fail to fully explore notions of struggle and resistance. These notions can only be looked into by theoretical perspectives that take into consideration:

- a. human agency in the construction of history and meaning - an issue disregarded by structuralists in general.
- b. the nature of the constraints that limit human agency - a question not addressed by culturalists.

Attempting to overcome the above mentioned theoretical gaps, Giroux (1983) sketches a proposal for critical education which attempts to link notions of structural constraints and human agency within the concept of ideology. The author's proposal is highly inspired by the work of Gramsci (1971), and Marcuse (1955). Both authors stress the dual characteristic of ideologies, i. e. ideologies may be seen as a source of social domination, but may be also seen a critical pedagogical tool to interrogate modes of domination.

1.3.2 IDEOLOGY AND PERCEPTION OF REALITY.

According to Giroux (1983), ideology - an active process involving production, consumption, and representation of meaning and behaviour - is a constitutive part of our daily life. Such a process cannot be

reduced either to consciousness, or to a system of practices, or to a mode of mystification. Being linked to the production, consumption and representation of ideas and behaviour, ideologies may both distort and illuminate the way the social reality is perceived or lived. As a set of meanings ideologies can:

- a. be coherent and contradictory.
- b. function within the sphere of the consciousness and unconsciousness.
- c. exist at all levels of critical discourse and sphere of taken for granted experience and practical behaviour (ibid p.119-167)

Giroux gives great emphasis to the pedagogical role of critique of ideology. Like Gramsci (1971), he stresses that ideology is exercised within economic and political conditions that ultimately determine its influence or effect. Nevertheless, as a pedagogical tool, ideology is a useful starting point to raise questions about the social and political interests that underlie many assumptions taken for granted by teachers and students. In this way the critique of ideology can be seen as a means to mobilize individuals, and create consciousness of social positions.

Following Gramsci's proposal, Giroux locates ideology in three distinct areas:

- a. the sphere of the unconscious and the structure of needs.
- b. the realm of common sense.
- c. the sphere of critical consciousness.

Being located in all these aspects of human behaviour and thought, ideologies produce multiple types of subjectivity and perceptions of the world and everyday life (Giroux (1983 p.146)). Within a broad ideological universe, contradictions exist both within and outside the individual. These contradictions may reflect needs, ideas, and behaviours that are repressive or emancipatory in nature, as will be discussed in each of the cases in the three areas listed above.

1.3.2.1 IDEOLOGY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS.

In the orthodox Marxist tradition, ideology is seen as distorted communication created by the bourgeois society. Althusser's approach to ideology defines it, not as a creation of human subjects, but as an indispensable source of social cohesion. Ideology is located in concrete social practices, it exists in the material apparatus and it has a material existence. Through ideology, human beings are integrated into the totality of social relations. Therefore, ideology is an essential component to any type of society. It should be understood as an unconscious drive that shapes the way in which people live their experiences and generate meanings. Althusser's definition of ideology indicates the limit of consciousness in explaining the nature of domination, while simultaneously pointing to the power of material practices on social relations. That is, through ideologies the objective structure is imprinted in the subject's unconscious structure. Although such an approach to ideology is useful to explain how the dominant ideology is reproduced within the psychic structure of the oppressed, it leaves unexplained as to what compels people to stand up and resist oppression.

Giroux's proposal attempts to overcome this theoretical restriction by taking into consideration the role of history in the nature of social formations - as explored by the Frankfurt School. He gives special emphasis to the work of Marcuse (1955). Marcuse proposes that ideology as repression is an historical construction rooted in the reified relations of every day life. Domination is rooted historically not just in the socio-economic conditions of society, but also in the sedimented history - structured needs - that constitute each person's disposition and personality. That is, the nature of the social relations, which was historically constituted, tends to be 'forgotten' and such social relations accepted as mythic permanence and unchanging reality. Ideology becomes a source of social repression when history as a habit reifies the interests of the capitalist structure.

Considering the proposals of Marcuse (1955) and Heller, (1974) Giroux emphasises that ideologies have a dual character: they can be a form of domination, but also a form of emancipation. The emancipatory

possibilities of any ideology can be attributed to two different factors. First of all, if needs are historically conditioned, they can be changed. Secondly, the unconscious grounding of ideology is rooted not just in repressive needs, but also in needs that are emancipatory in nature. Human beings are not just a reflex of structural factors - as Althusser conceives them - they are also able to produce meanings of their own - an issue extensively discussed in the work of culturalists, such as Williams and Thompson. Hence, although the unconscious structure is partially constituted by reproductive needs, it is also constituted by needs that are rooted in meaningful social relations.

1.3.2.2 IDEOLOGY AND CONSCIOUSNESS.

The notion of ideology is not exhausted through its representations in unconsciousness. Ideology is also a constitutive part of consciousness. It exists in the realm of common sense and also in the realm of critical consciousness. Common sense - an uncritical mode of discursive consciousness - may be seen as a product of daily practices. As a 'product of concrete practices', common sense type of knowledge tends to be taken for granted, without any questioning concerning its relation to the larger social practices, within which particular social practices exist. This characteristic makes common sense just a partial insight into social reality and behaviour.

Giroux points out that common sense knowledge, like unconscious needs, encloses many contradictions: it may be constituted of legitimate insights into the social reality, but it may also be based on distorting beliefs that mystify and legitimize an unequal social reality. Again referring to the work of Gramsci, Giroux emphasizes the fact that the man in the mass has a practical activity, but no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity. His theoretical conceptions may be historically in opposition to his activity. That is, his discourse may be constituted by meanings created in his concrete daily practices, but it may also be constituted by meanings inherited and uncritically absorbed from past discourses. Thus, common sense knowledge may reveal or hinder the real relations that exist between discourse's meanings and reality.

The same type of contradictions also apply to critical consciousness. Science is not divorced from ideology Gould (1981). The scientific production is subject to rules, assumptions and interests that structure the thinking process as well as the object(s) of analysis. The ideological dimension of critical reflection - and the interests it intentionally or unintentionally serves - can be revealed by analysis of the issues that are included or excluded from this reflection.

Summarizing this discussion, Giroux's (1983) analysis highlights the contradictory nature of human thought and behaviour. This contradiction reveals the tensions that exist between the human agency and the reproductive power of the dominant social structure. The author suggests that to promote resistance and struggle, educational proposals should aim to make overt the contradictions that generate tensions within the personality structure, and also within the larger society. To favour the development of radical needs, they should have as a goal the idea of searching and revealing modes of thought and behaviour that historically have served interests that limit human freedom and sustain the gap between the economic and the cultural wealth. The critique of ideology, informed by historical knowledge, is then presented as a possible way of (a) making explicit the nature of domination in the unconsciousness and consciousness areas, and (b) indicating possibilities for resistance and struggle.

1.3.3 EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF CRITIQUE OF IDEOLOGY.

The positive and negative side of ideology, discussed above, gives it a particular critical potential. Being located in the category of meaning and thought production, ideologies may make overt the important relationship that exists between power, meaning, and interests. It is important to understand not just how ideology works on and through individuals to secure their consent to the basic ethos of the dominant society, but also how it can be used to favour social transformation.

According to Giroux, the critique of ideology has a fundamental function at the level of the unconsciousness, as well as at the level of the consciousness. At the unconscious level, it favours the

analysis of everyday life aspects that structure human relations, revealing the historical interests that lie behind some of the so called 'natural' and 'basic' needs. Students bring to school different histories, which are embedded in class, gender, and race interests. Such interests shape their needs and behaviour, often in ways that they do not understand. This lack of understanding about the nature of their own needs makes students unable to critically interrogate their inner history and experiences in order to break the logic of domination. At the level of consciousness, the critique of ideology may favour a process of desmystification, which reveals the unrealized claims and distorting messages that characterise some of the students' common sense knowledge. It is also a way of making students get acquainted with the social forces that make possible or constrain scientific production in general.

This close relation that Giroux established between ideology representation and classroom material practices has the political educational aim of making the students aware of the fact that individuals and social groups or classes are both the medium and outcome of ideological discourses and practices. This awareness can only be promoted by pedagogic practices developed within three organizing principles: reproduction, production and reconstruction. Such principles incorporate the notions of social structure, human agency, and human agency within the structure. The next section discusses how the present study understands a specific pedagogic activity - i.e. reading - within the framework of these broad educational principles.

1.4 CRITICAL EDUCATION: DELINEATION OF A MODEL FOR READING.

As stated above, the way reading is taught and texts are used in concrete classroom practices cannot be dissociated from the conceptual and ideological structures provided by models of schooling. Section 1.2 has indicated a link between conceptions of schooling and different approaches to texts. Section 1.3 has presented, in a general line, the philosophical fundaments that guide the educational line favoured by the present investigation, i.e. critical education. The present section defines some guidelines to approach text within this philosophical

option. The present thesis argues that if reading is to be critical, socio-ideological issues must be taken into consideration. That is, critical reading practices must take into account questions of social antagonism, power and resistance. The lack of attention to either social power or human agency may lead to non critical reading attitudes which are being labelled in this work as 'naive' and 'passive' reading.

A naive type of reading stresses human agency without giving the necessary emphasis to the constraints imposed by the social structure on the individual reader. The extra stress on human agency may end up providing the reader with a truncated notion of power. Potentially social praxis provides innumerable ways of producing meaning or using knowledge. However, meaning production and consumption occurs within relations of power. Due to social power, some specific language and knowledge uses are favoured within certain social situations. Objective social sanctions do have the function of reifying certain types of meanings and suppress others, no matter how insightful these meanings may be. Thus a reading may be considered naive when it lacks awareness of the nature of knowledge and knowledge use that has prestige and power in specific social contexts. In real reading practices, there are numerous situations in which knowledge acquired through written materials is used in contexts in which there is evaluation and risk of social penalties. These contexts could be exemplified by specific situations such as exams, job applications, contracts, or much broader ones such as defence of rights, or political struggle in general. In such situations, a reader adopting a naive approach to texts is an easy prey to social sanctions.

A passive type of reading uncritically accepts the norms imposed by the social structure, without giving the necessary weight to personal and group interests. As the discussion of the notion of ideology (section 1.3.2) indicates, individuals may contribute to their own oppression by consenting to needs, ideas, and behaviours that are repressive in nature. Using a Freirean metaphor, the oppressed 'hosts' the oppressor, by internalising the oppressor's ideological universe (Freire (1974)). In other words, at conscious and unconscious level, readers may uncritically reify needs, values, and meanings

inherited from past discourses. These discourses may historically have worked against the reader's own interest. Thus a reading may be characterized as passive when it accepts powerful norms without any questioning. These norms may legitimize the reader's unequal social reality.

Both naive and passive attitudes to reading are avoided by a critical approach to texts. A critical reading attitude relates in a dialectical way, notions of agency and structure. It aims at more than the mere understanding of texts, or at the accumulation and reproduction of encyclopaedic knowledge. Critical reading is particularly concerned with a better understanding of society. Being informed by ideological critique, it questions not just the truths of textual information, but also the interests that lie behind the very choice of these truths. In other words, it questions whose interests such truths serve, or more specifically to whom some information is 'true'. To achieve such goals, critical reading must go beyond questions about the veracity of the 'reality' being discussed in a text, and must focus on the very nature of the realities left out from this text. Such a questioning, based on notions of social antagonism, power and resistance, may reveal ways in which the social reality may be improved.

Considering that under certain material conditions human agency may be nearly impossible, a reader adopting a critical approach to reading, may sometimes be forced to reproduce the values of the dominant structure in order to gain (or not to lose) political power to struggle. The reproduction in this case differs from the one generated by passive reading, because it is done as a conscious political move not dissociated from principles of struggle. That is, it is done due to conscious evaluations about the social gains to be obtained and the social consequences of the sanctions involved. However, the situation described above must be seen as an extreme case. In most reading situations there is some room for agency - even if limited. A critical approach to reading aims in such situations to make the best possible use of the positive options available. That is, it supports options that do not reify the existing social inequalities.

The model of reading described above is graphically represented in figure 1.5. Note that (A) and (B) refer not to social groups, but to values and needs that have (or not) hegemony within a specific social situation. These values and needs both shape and are shaped by specific uses of knowledge. These socially expected uses of knowledge are directly linked to certain interpretations. The interpretation in (A) represents interpretations that are in a privileged power position. By restricting reading questions to a set of needs and values, uses of knowledge, and interpretation within a situation, the present research aims to offer a better theoretical representation for the conflicts that occur within and in between social groups. This study regards as very unlikely the case of a reader that is always in (A) or always in (B). However it does acknowledge that, due to the unequal distribution of power, certain social groups tend to be most of the time in position (A), and others in position (B).

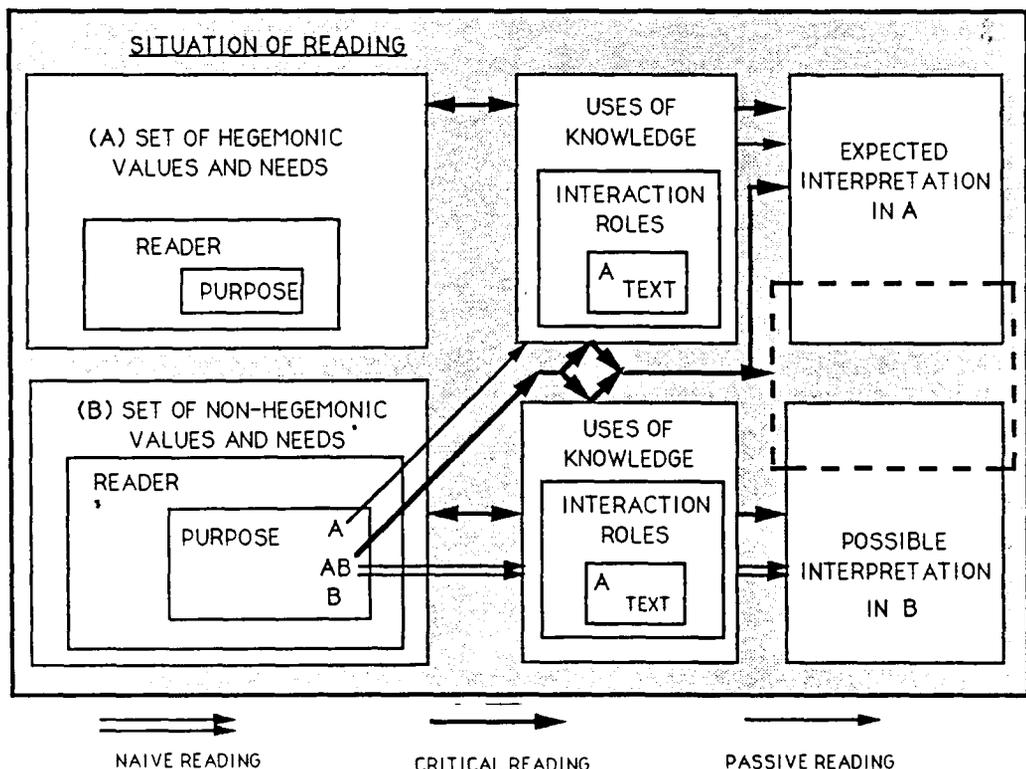


Fig. 1.5 A critical model for reading

It is important to stress that the model represented in figure 1.5 only describes situations of reading in which issues of power and struggle are involved. This model does not represent the case of a reader in (B) reading a text to fulfil highly subjective goals - such as reading for entertainment or pleasure. In such a situation no social sanction is involved. It is also not representing the case of a reader in (B) reading a text to use this knowledge in (B). In this specific case, the equality in the power position makes the notion of social sanction inapplicable.

The possible types of reading of a reader in (A) is also an issue left aside from this model. Such an exclusion was motivated by the fact that a reader in (A) is either operating within his/ her own set of values, needs and interests, or is using this knowledge in a privileged power position. In this case, issues of struggle are not involved.

Relating the different conceptions of reading described in section 1.2 to the proposed critical reading model, it is possible to say that a conservative model of reading takes into consideration only the text and the expected interpretation in (a), as represented in figure 1.6.

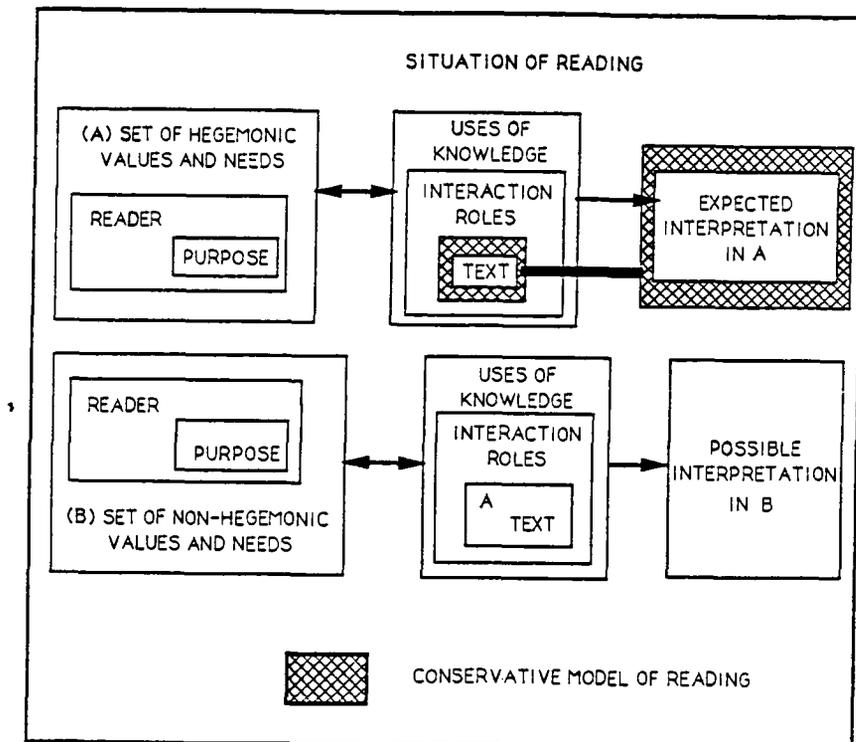


Fig. 1.6 Conservative model of reading

Liberal model of reading, goes beyond the conservative model by including the reader in situation (b) and possible interpretations (a) and (b). However, it makes no clear distinction between the power position of reader and interpretation (a), and reader and interpretation (b). See figure 1.7.

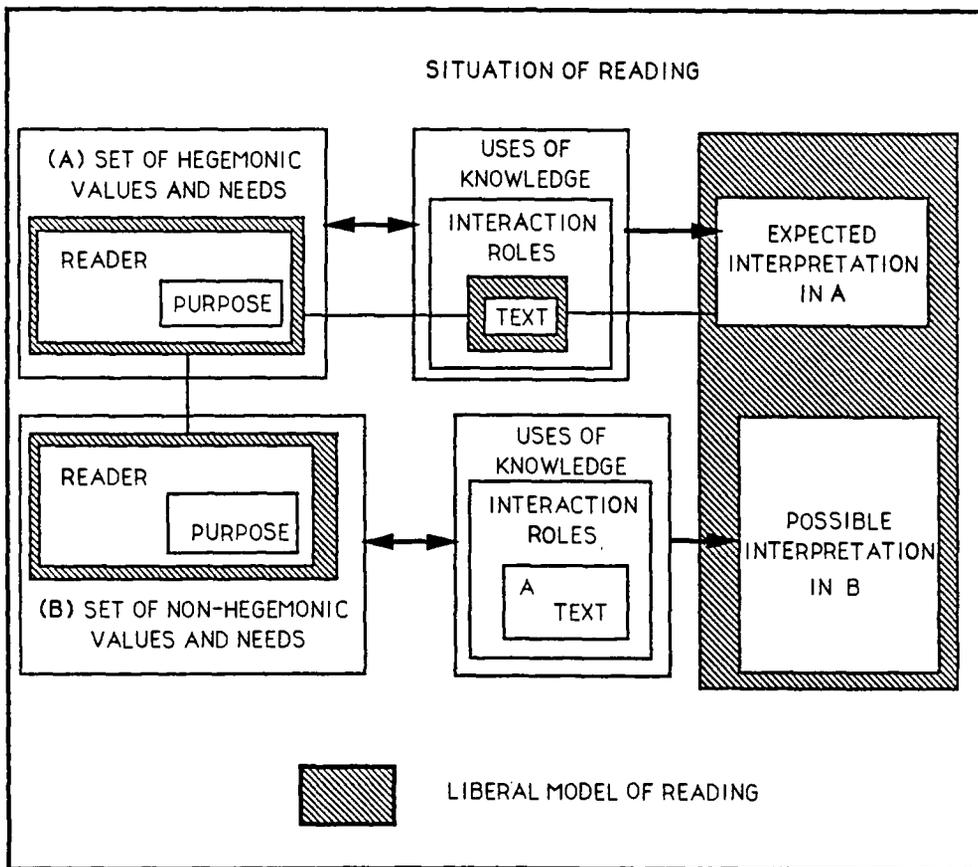


Fig. 1.7 Liberal model of reading

A radical model of reading, makes clear the social differences between (a) and (b). It stresses the role of power and class domination. However it does not explore notions of struggle and resistance. See figure 1.8.

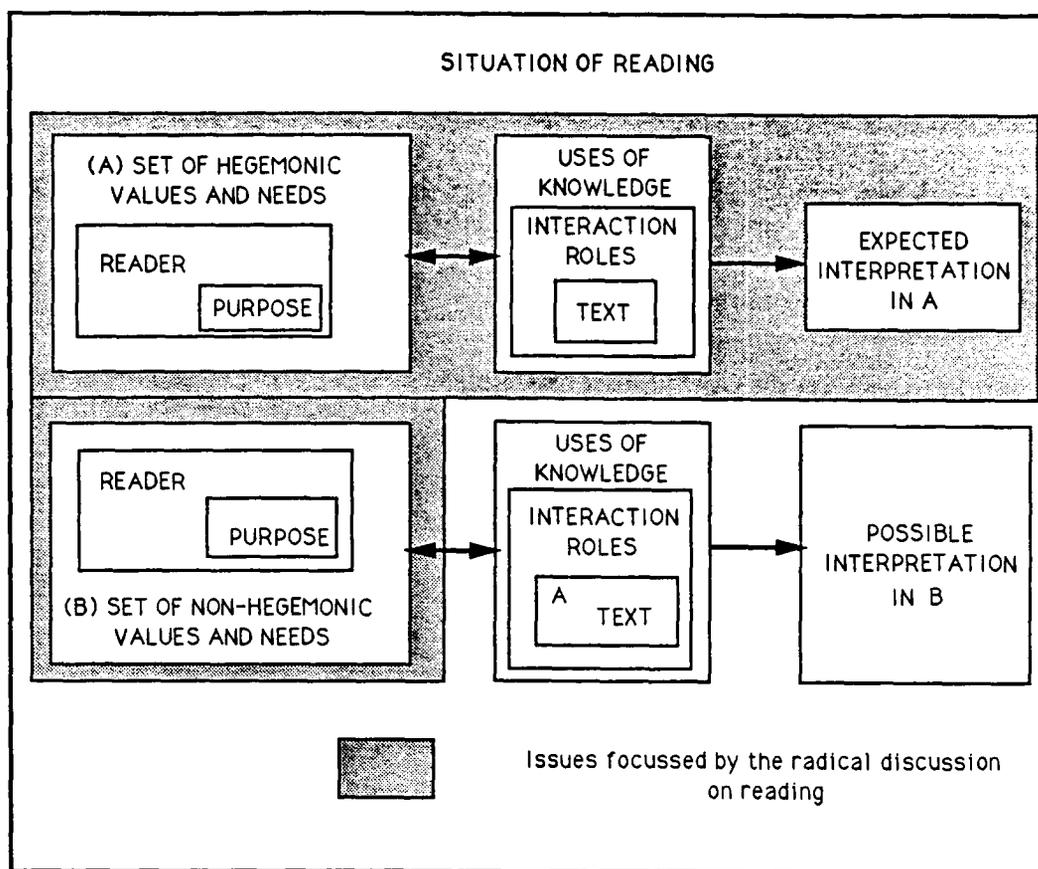


Fig. 1.8 Radical approach to reading

1.5. FROM GENERAL TO PARTICULAR QUESTIONS.

This chapter has emphasized that different philosophical approaches to schooling are directly related to different approaches to texts. Each educational model provides educators with a set of ideological principles that are guidelines to evaluate reading and readers. These guidelines drastically differ due to the stress that different educational models place on the notions of social structure and human agency. Such a stress is a product of the way of conceiving reality, and the political aim. In other words, it is based on ideas about 'what society is', and ideals of 'what society should be'.

The introduction to this work has argued that reading should not be discussed divorced from educational issues. This chapter aimed to clarify the ideological principles, and educational/political aims that guide the research reported in this thesis. Having clarified the

ideals about reading, the discussion will move to ideas about reading. Within reading, one specific issue is being focussed on: the selection of information from texts. This study investigates how different approaches interpret the selective focus adopted during reading. The aim of this investigation is to examine reading practices so as to explore the ways of promoting critical reading. The next chapter revises the existing literature, and analyses in more detail, reader-based and text-based approaches to selective focus. It argues that both approaches maintain a dichotomic conception of agency and structure. The following chapter proposes a social-based conception for selective focus. Such a conception seems to offer a richer set of possibilities to interpret reading practices. It also provides theoretical guidelines to further explore the critical reading proposal delineated on philosophical grounds.

CHAPTER 2

2 READER-BASED AND TEXT-BASED INTERPRETATIONS TO SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Experimental studies have shown that individual readers do not remember all the information presented in a text. A common finding in all prose memory research is that there is a good deal of similarity in what is remembered and what is forgotten in a text. This result tends to be explained in terms of the "importance" of information. That is, the pieces of information recalled are more important than the ones omitted or forgotten (Goetz and Armbruster (1980)). Studies have also shown that there are ability and developmental differences in the sensitivity to the importance of information (Brown and Smiley (1977), Britton and Meyer (1979), and Taylor(1986)). In all these studies it is generally accepted that reading involves selection of important information from a text.

Previous researchers have considered such a selection of information as a by product of the reading process in general. The present investigation regards it as a product of one of the processes involved in reading, i.e. selective focus. Within this study, reading is conceived as comprising three main cognitive processes: (a) recognition of the written system; (b) apprehension of the text content; and (c) selective focus. Each of these processes relies on a specific type of background knowledge and may be a source of reading problems.

Recognition of the written system is a process required at a very basic level. In order to read, a reader must have knowledge about a specific written system. Texts may be written in different systems: logographic, syllabic, or alphabetic. Each system may adopt a different set of characteres such as Latin, Arabic, Chinese. Written systems may also differ in the type of rules and conventions adopted. In short, to read, a reader must have mastered the medium through which language is represented in written form; he must have acquired basic reading skills. Lack of such a knowledge is labelled illiteracy.

The second process, apprehension of the text content, is highly dependent on linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge. Being able to read is by no means a guarantee of comprehension. To understand a text, a reader must be able to apprehend the superficial sentential string of the text, all the proposition entailed by the expressed level, and propositions that were left unsaid, i. e. the propositions that the author presupposes his/her audience to know. Due to the different types of knowledge required and cognitive processes involved, the apprehension of the text content may be sub-divided into three distinct sub-processes.

The first sub-process is apprehension of the literal meaning. To apprehend the literal meaning the reader must be able to recognize the information explicitly stated in the text. Vocabulary and syntax knowledge is essential to this sub-process. The second and third sub-processes involve deeper level of inferences. The second sub-process is also highly dependent on language knowledge. It encompasses all inferences elaborated on the basis of text's superficial strings. It relies heavily on the knowledge of semantic and logical relations, as well as knowledge of stylistic resources such as metaphor, irony, etc. Finally, in the third sub-process, apprehension of unsaid propositions, depends on knowledge of the discursive topic. Novices reading specialised texts tend to have great difficulty, or are even unable to process a text at this third sub-processing level. Being far from the expected audience they are unable to recover from their world knowledge the information the author is presupposing as 'given'. By describing content apprehension in terms of three sub-levels it is possible to highlight the fact that the reader's inability to apprehend text content - i. e. misunderstandings - may be traced back to different causes.

However, the two processes generally described above - recognition of the written system and content apprehension - are not sufficient to explain reading interpretation, as the experimental results show. The final output of any normal reading is never a reproduction of all propositions explicitly/implicitly presented, or presupposed by the text. It represents, in fact, a selected set of propositions that the

reader chooses as important or relevant. That is, the content of a text as a whole - even when properly understood - is not treated by readers as alike in importance. During reading some propositions receive more weight and others are considered peripheral, secondary or irrelevant. This process, being labelled here as 'selective focus', is the one that the present research is aiming to investigate. Its main interest is to explore the nature of the criteria that lead readers to select some propositions in the text as relevant.

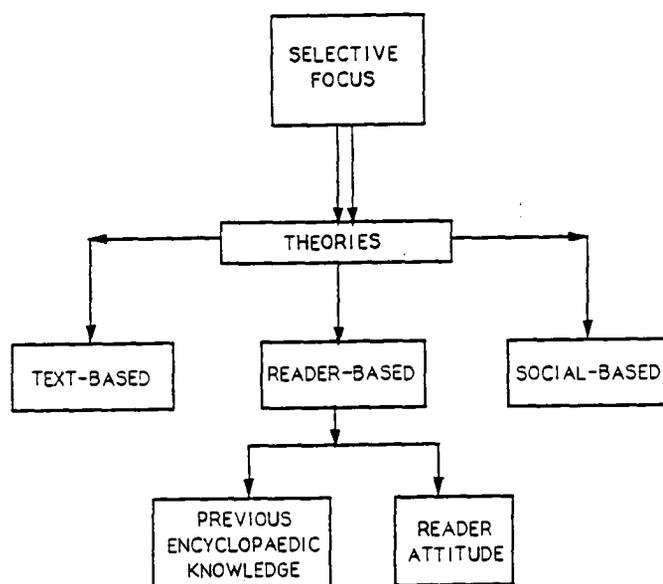
This chapter reviews how the current literature has explained selective focus. The existing studies have mainly discussed this process within two broad theoretical perspectives : reader-based and text-based. Reader-based perspectives interpret the selective focus adopted during reading in terms of the cognitive structure that readers bring to the text. The importance of an information unit is determined by the reader's knowledge, personal interest, perspective and goals. In contrast, text-based perspectives understand that the importance of an information unit is determined by the structure or organisation of the information in the text. During reading, readers make use of their knowledge about the convention of text construction. Thus, what is remembered from a text is determined by the structural characteristic of the text itself. (Roller (1985), Ohlhausen and Roller (1985), Birkmire (1985)).

This literature review only takes into consideration investigations that have explored the comprehension of written text and employed tasks that reveal how readers select information from texts. Four experimental tasks are considered as fulfilling such a requirement: underlining, recall, importance rating and summary. These criteria drastically limited the literature available, especially in relation to reader-based factors. Even though much has been said about how the readers' previous content knowledge, perspective and motivation affect reading and learning in general, very few studies consider data on written language comprehension and/or address themselves specifically to selective focus.

The central argument of this chapter is that both reader-based and text-based criteria are not sufficient to interpret selective focus in

reading. The review of the existing literature aims to support the view that reader-based and text-based approaches leave a number of issues unresolved. This strengthens the possibility of a third perspective to explore this issue. Such a perspective is based on social factors. The discussion is divided into three main sections. Section 2.2 analyses reader-based approaches to selective focus (see figure 2.1). It explores how the reader's personal universe affects the way he/she attributes importance to textual information. Three different trends are being discussed : reader's previous content knowledge (section 2.2.1), reader's perspective (section 2.2.2), and reader's attitude (section 2.2.3). Figure 2.1 shows the reader-based factors being considered. The notion of 'reader's perspective' have not been included in this figure mainly because the present study considers it as an instance of social-based factor and not as a reader-based factor - an issue argued in section 2.2.2.

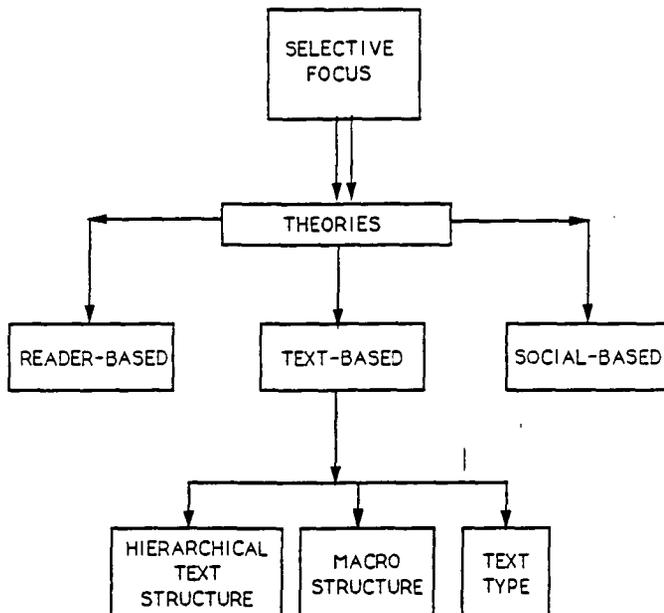
Fig. 2.1 Reader-based approaches to selective focus



Section 2.3 focusses on how the text organization leads a reader to choose certain information units. Three different text-based

explanations are being analysed (see figure 2.2). One understands that the internal organization of the text depends upon specific rhetorical relations that organize the text's information in a hierarchical way (section 2.3.1). The other, conceives the structure of a text as highly determined by referential coherence, and rules of semantic reduction (section 2.3.2). The third conception explores the notion of conventional text types (section 2.3.3).

Fig. 2.2 Text-based approaches to selective focus



Finally, section 2.4 relates sections 2.2 and 2.3 aiming to highlight the theoretical insights and limitations of text-based and reader-based perspectives.

2.2 THE ROLE OF SUBJECTIVE FACTORS ON SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING

2.2.1 THE EFFECT OF THE READER'S CONTENT KNOWLEDGE ON SELECTIVE FOCUS

The literature that explores the role of content knowledge on comprehension is quite vast. However, it is not always possible to

perceive how the existing studies contribute to a better understanding of selective focus in reading. Two different sources of problems must be mentioned. First of all, the research in this area is mainly concerned with language comprehension in a general way. That is, it is either not particularly interested in focussing on reading per se, or it does not foresee selective focus as a cognitive process distinct from content apprehension (Bransford & Johnson (1972), Chiese et al (1979), Thibadeau et al (1982), Just & Carpenter (1984), Voss (1984), Wilson & Anderson (1986), Rowe & Rayford (1987), Beers (1987) and Witney (1987)).

The second problem to be mentioned is that some of the existing work makes no distinction between reader-based and text-based factors. The study developed by Voss, Vesonder and Spilich (1980) well exemplifies this issue. Investigating how expertise in a particular subject matter domain (the game of baseball) affects comprehension of texts the authors state that :

"(high knowledge) individuals were better able to keep track of macrostructure information during the reading of the text than were (low knowledge) individuals, and this advantage enabled the (high knowledge) individuals to integrate the sequences of actions and state changes of the game more readily than (low knowledge) individuals (Voss, Vesonder and Spilich(1980) p.651).

The study quoted above is mainly preoccupied with analysing how the underlying knowledge structures of a reader leads him/her to apprehend certain pieces of information from a text. This is a reader-based approach to reading. However, in discussing the issue, the authors link it to the notion of macrostructure (Kintsch & Van Dijk (1978)), which is a text-based explanation supported by linguistic categories (see section 2.3.2). As no further clarification of the nature of such a link is offered, this work seems to be relating the reader's underlying knowledge structure to the text structure. To equate the organisation of knowledge in the reader's mind to the organisation of information in the text is certainly problematic. It presupposes that the hierarchical organisation of an expert reader's knowledge - predicted by the schemata theory - is reproduced in the text structural organisation. This is a prediction difficult to be

sustained. Furthermore, it assumes that the "ideal" reading is the one that follows the structure imposed by the text. This may not always be the case - as is going to be argued in section 2.3.1.

It is generally accepted that a reader's prior knowledge influences his or her selective focus. Among the literature, three illustrative studies will be considered: Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson (1979), Roller (1985), and Ohlhausen & Roller (1985). The work developed by Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson indicates that differences in background knowledge about the content of text material may be an important source of individual differences in reading comprehension. The authors analyse how readers from the United States and India read letters about an American and an Indian wedding. Their results show that subjects recalled a larger amount of information from the native passage, produced more critically appropriate elaborations of the native passage and more culturally based distortions of the foreign passage. The data also indicates that whether recalling the native or foreign passage, the subjects tended to recall more of the text elements considered important by other subjects from the same cultural heritage. The author's analysis highlights that the reader's selective focus is affected by content knowledge acquired through their cultural experiences (Steffensen et al (1979)).

The two following studies investigated simultaneously the effect of text-based and reader-based variables. In these investigations, content knowledge is understood as a variable independent from text-structure. Roller (1985) conducted a series of four experiments to investigate the role of text-based factors and reader-based factors on perception of importance. Two of these experiments focussed on reading. One employed an importance rating task, and the other employed a summary writing task. As a control for the readers' previous knowledge on the topic of the text, the authors designed a training task which imparted knowledge of a fictitious insect family. Experimental groups were asked to compare and contrast the description of four fictitious insects - Abug, Bbug, Cbug, and Dbug. The control groups had no training, and thus lacked previous knowledge of the insect family. Four groups of readers - two experimental and two

control - were exposed to either an unelaborated version or to an elaborated (structured) version of the same text. The experimental findings indicated that different tasks may favour different criteria of importance. In summary writing tasks, the perception of importance was influenced by text elaboration. In contrast, importance rating tasks were mostly affected by reader-based factors - i.e. previous knowledge of the topic.

Ohlhausen and Roller(1985) investigated the operation of text structure and content schemata both in isolation and as they interact. The authors tested three versions of a passage about a little known country, Melanesia. The passages were designed to favour the use of specific schemata. So, one of the versions favoured the use of structure schema(S), the other favoured content schema(C) and finally, the third version allowed the use of both(S/C).

The experimental results indicated that on the average, subjects used a structure strategy in the structure passage and content in the content passage. The data also indicated that the use of structure schema tended to be higher in difficult or unfamiliar text in (S) and (C) than in the (C/S) condition. Considering these results the authors suggested that well internalized structure schema of adults operate in different ways depending on the difficulty or familiarity of the text.

Ohlhausen's and Roller's study also indicates a developmental trend in the use of the appropriate strategy - content or structure - on the passage designed to evoke a particular schema. Students at fifth grade level were not able to use the expected strategy. The authors link such a result to the state of the school curriculum and the students life experiences. That is, in younger readers the required content schema is in an embryonic stage and thus not very useful. In addition, their school experience did not allow them to develop the necessary structure schema. At fifth grade level, students have been exposed to few expository texts in school. So they have not been taught strategies for dealing with it. The authors then suggest that the developmental trend found in their structure and content schemata

interact with schooling and text to influence processing during reading.

Summarizing the discussion, the three studies mentioned above indicate that content knowledge may affect selective focus in reading. However, the data obtained by Roller and Ohlhausen & Roller indicate that content knowledge per se is not sufficient to interpret how readers select information from texts. That is, the effect of content knowledge on selective focus may vary due to the nature of the reading task or the type of text to be read. Ohlhausen & Roller by including "schooling" as a third variable to be investigated seem also to indicate the need to consider factors that go beyond the reader and the text. The focus of Steffensen et al on socio-cultural issues may be understood as an interesting direction to explore the effect of broader factors.

2.2.2 THE READER'S PERSPECTIVE AND INFORMATION SELECTION

Originating as a counter-proposal to text-based approaches, the studies developed by Pichert and Anderson (1977) attempted to put forward the concept that the importance of an idea unit depends on the reader's perspective and should not be understood as an invariant property of the text. To test their hypothesis, the authors asked the reader to read a story about two boys playing hooky from school. The passage includes the description of one of the boy's house. Readers were asked to read the text from the perspective of either a burglar or a person interested in buying a home. The data indicated that the attribution of significance to a specific idea unit, is affected by the reading perspective adopted (Pichert & Anderson (1977), Anderson & Pichert (1978)). The same experiment has been reproduced with some modifications in a series of studies (Goetz et al (1983), Newsome III (1986), Kardash, Royer & Greene (1988)). The results obtained by these studies suggest that telling readers to take a perspective induces them to process the story in a way that results in better memory for information related to the given perspective. As Newsome pointed out, subjects who were assigned to recall the story from the burglar's

perspective were using their knowledge of what is important to burglars.

However, it may be argued that main issue being investigated by the above mentioned studies is not the reading perspective but the reading purpose. It would make more sense to conceive that these readers interpret the reading instruction as : "read this text as if you intend to steal this house" than "read this text impersonating the world perspective of a burglar". Certainly the world perspective of a burglar is not restricted to stealing. It is reasonable to assume that a burglar who is intending to buy a house would focus on different information items than the ones favoured by the "burglar's perspective". This criticism does not invalidate the main argument defended by Pichert and Anderson, i. e. the importance of certain information units is not an invariant property of the text. Such a criticism just highlights that what these experiments are in fact investigating is not the effect of the reader's perspective on selective focus, but the effect of another variable, i. e. the reading purpose, imposed, in this case, by the experiment's instruction.

This distinction is important, since both purpose and perspective may affect the way readers select information from a text. The work of Birkmire (1985) offers some grounds for thinking in this direction. Investigating how the selection of main ideas from a text may be affected by the text structure, the content knowledge, and purpose for reading, the author found out that all three variables affected processing during reading. A sharper distinction between reader's perspective and reading purpose is useful to clarify that reader's selective focus, on one hand, may be affected by his/her own way of seeing the world (Steffensen et al (1979)), and on the other hand, it may also be affected by purpose of reading externally imposed upon the reader - as Pichert's and Anderson's reading instructions. As purpose for reading may be externally determined, i. e, it is not necessarily a choice of the reader or an imposition of the text - the present investigation has opted to classify it not as a reader-based factor but as a social-based factor. Such a classification is also motivated

by the fact that purpose for reading occurs within specific reading situations which are not neutral to social values and norms.

2.2.3 THE GOTHENBURG STUDIES' PERSPECTIVE

The Gothenburg studies are a series of investigations that follows the research methodology and conceptual framework presented by studies developed in the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. This series is associated with the work developed in Sweden by psychologists such as Terence Marton, Roger Saljo, Lennart Svensson, Lars-Ove Dahlgren, and works developed in Great Britain by authors such as Dianna Laurillard, Noel Entwistle and Dai Hounsell (see Dahlgren (1984), Entwistle (1979, 1984), Marton & Saljo (1976a, 1976b, 1984), Laurillard (1979, 1984), Hounsell (1984), Svensson (1977, 1984)).

The main objective of this line of investigation is to bring to the fore the importance that subjective and motivational factors have in education. That is, the way the students understand the learning environment, the nature of the tasks to be undertaken, teacher's demands, and usefulness of the information to be learned, have a direct effect on attitudes towards learning, and, as a consequence, on the quality of the final learning product. Even though most of the studies developed within this framework are mainly concerned with learning in a general sense, some focus on the reading process (Svensson (1977), Marton & Saljo (1976a, 1976b), Saljo (1984), Entwistle et al (1979)).

The discussions of reading indicate that learning from texts occurs within a continuum, the extreme points being at one side passive reproduction of the text, and, at the other side, active interpretation. Different reading outcomes are explained in terms of different approaches to the learning task. The authors vary in the way they understand the nature of these approaches. However, they all seem to agree that passive learners tend to focus on the text as a self contained domain of words and fragments of ideas to be memorized unthinkingly. In contrast, active learners tend to relate the ideas conveyed by the text, to grasp the text's main point or message, to



recover the author's intention trying to establish relations between the text and their own world.

It is necessary to stress that even though these studies are discussing reading, their central concern appears to be restricted to the quality of content apprehension from a text. In fact, most of the data taken into consideration are obtained by interviews about ways of approaching the reading task and questions that aim to verify the type of content apprehended by the readers. Their analysis of learning from texts certainly highlights how classroom practises and assessment procedures may affect the way readers relate to and use school knowledge. However, not much is said about how readers select information from a text. Selective focus in reading seems to be understood as a by product of content apprehension, and very much tied to the notion of the author's intentionality. Such a notion is emphasized in the work of Saljo. The author proposes that :

"...even in cases where messages are interpreted as running counter to what the readers themselves happen to know or assume, the reader must - in one way or another - provisionally accept the line of reasoning followed by the author while they are reading. Thus the reader/learner must grant to the writer the active role in directing the dialogue, provisionally accept the premises the writer has introduced, and search for the message or 'wholes' pointed by this anonymous communication partner" (Saljo (1984) p. 86)

Taking selective focus into consideration, the present investigation would like to argue that it may be misleading to equate reading to a dialogical situation. Reading involves comprehension of a text, while a dialogue involves both comprehension and production of text. Furthermore, in a dialogue, both language producer and receiver share the same social situation. Thus, to conceive reading as a dialogue implies that the condition and situation of language production matches the condition and situation of language reception. This may not always be the case. The reader's intention for reading a text may be completely different from the writer's intention for writing it. This possibility is in fact pointed out by Hounsell (1984) when the author mentions that readers may read a book (a) for entertainment, (b) to gain an overall impression of its content, (c)

to locate specific ideas or discussion, (d) to familiarize oneself with its central concept or theme, and (e) to understand the whole book in detail . It seems reasonable to expect that different reading intentions have an effect on the type of information that readers consider relevant to be selected from a text.

In a real life reading situation, it is not always true that the ideal type of reading is the one that tries to identify the pieces of information that an author stresses as important. As discussed above, the weight that a specific reader attributes to certain pieces of information in a text may be affected by the reader's personal universe, or by specific purposes for reading that exist within a specific situation of reading. An author cannot always 'direct his anonymous communication partner', because he/she has no control over all the situations in which his/her text is going to be read. The Gothenburg model for learning conceives students as active critical thinkers. Its proposals make very explicit this possibility which is, in fact, incorporated in its conception about the text's content apprehension. However, at the level of selective focus in reading this model seems to equate 'author's intention' with 'text structure and content'. This results in a text-based approach - the very assumption it tries to redress.

2.3 THE ROLE OF TEXT ORGANIZATION ON SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING.

2.3.1 THE HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CONTENT STRUCTURE

The relation between the hierarchical organization of the text structure and the reader's memory was investigated by Meyer (1975) and further developed in a series of papers published by the author (Meyer (1977), Britton & Meyer (1979), Meyer, Brandt & Bluth (1980), Meyer (1984)). The author's proposals have inspired several studies. These studies tend to follow three different lines. One investigates whether the reader's use of structural strategy enhances the retention of the text's main ideas (Cook & Mayer (1988), Taylor (1982), Berkowitz (1986), Stevens (1988)). The second investigates whether certain structural organizations are easier to be remembered than others (Richgels, Mcgee, Lomax & Sheard (1987)). Finally, the

third line (Cirilo & Foss (1980), Reynolds & Anderson (1982)) explores the selective attention hypothesis suggested by Meyer (1975).

Analysing Meyer's work it is possible to notice a shift in the research questions, and even in the author's understanding of the role that structural factors play in retention of texts. However, over the years two basic axioms have been maintained: (a) the content of text is organized in a hierarchical way, and (b) information high in the content structure tends to be better recalled than information low in the structure. Meyer (1975) is particularly concerned with the fact that when a group of people read the same passage, some ideas tend to be recalled by everyone, whereas other ideas are hardly recalled. Considering these differences, the author constructed a series of experimental texts aiming to investigate if the text's structural characteristics affected the recall of ideas from a passage. Following the basic tenets of Grimes (1972), Meyer analyses the semantic structure of the text in terms of hierarchically arranged tree structures. The nodes in these structures explicitly state and classify the relationships in the content. Two major types of semantic relations are considered by Grimes' grammar : role relations and rhetoric relations.

Role relations classify the way lexical predicates are related to their argument by specific semantic roles. They are responsible for the organization of the text's lexical structure, and they are always directly under certain types of content word. Rhetorical relations or predicates are responsible for the prose's overall organisation. They relate lexical propositions (lexical predicates and their arguments) and rhetorical propositions (rhetorical predicates and their arguments). By showing how coordinates, superordinates and subordinate ideas are related together, rhetorical predicates organize the hierarchical structure that characterizes the content structure of texts (see appendix 1 (a) for further details).

On the basis of this hierarchical organization of the text structure, Meyer suggested a selective model of comprehension. This model predicts a relation between structural level and probability of recall. In other words, information high in the content structure

tends to be recalled, whereas information placed at lower level is recalled by very few readers. The author tested this model by placing identical paragraphs into two distinct structural levels. The results obtained from recall protocols from college students indicated that the height of information in the content structure influenced recall.

It is interesting to highlight how this initial causal relation established between the text's structural features and the reader's memory developed in the author's work. Comparing different studies it is possible to detect a shift in the emphasis given to structural factors, and also in the role attributed to them. Meyer (1977) supports the author's previous findings. In addition, this study indicates that certain top level structures facilitate the acquisition of information more than others :

(...) causal or comparative relationships appear to facilitate the recall of information from prose over loosely organized top level structure that lists a collection of attributes (ibid p. 199).

Meyer then suggests that these structural features should be explored by authors to increase learning from texts :

(...) the information that a writer wants his readers to remember should be placed high in the content structure of the prose. (...) the writer should select a top level structure for his content that will best facilitate its recall (ibidp. 198-199).

Britton & Meyer (1979) investigating the selective attention hypothesis proposed by Meyer (1975), noticed that the reading of a target paragraph high in the content structure was not accompanied by increased reading time. These results did not support the selective attention hypothesis. However, the data showed that there was almost twice as much free recall for the information in the target paragraph when it was high as when it was lower. As an alternative explanation the author proposes the retrieval hypothesis also suggested in Meyer (1975). This hypothesis establishes a strong link between the way a text is structured, and how it is remembered:

(...) information high in the content structure is stored in superordinate positions in the memory structure and low information is stored in subordinate positions. The mechanism producing recall differences is that superordinate information is more likely to be recalled first, whereas subordinate information will only be

*recalled if its links to superordinate information are intact
(Britton, Meyer et al (1979) p. 505)*

Meyer Blandt and Bluth (1980) - discussing performance of 9th grade students - approached the matter in a slightly different way. Text structure is now analysed as influencing reading/learning strategy. Proficient readers focus on following the organizational structure of text in order to determine what is important to be remembered. The structure strategy is then pointed out as an effective mnemonic :

*(...) The use of the structure strategy, or following the organization of a passage, is important because it provides ninth grade students with a systematic learning and retrieval guide
(Meyer, Blandt and Bluth (1980) p. 99)*

Meyer (1984) argues in a different direction. The question now is no longer "why certain ideas are remembered by the majority of the readers" but "how does the reader construct a mental representation of the text similar to that intended by the author". Mentioning the work of Grice (1975) Meyer refers to reading as a communication between writer and reader. Structural knowledge is pointed out as necessary to recover the cognitive representation of the author:

(...) a writer uses knowledge about topics, audiences, and writing plans in order to best satisfy the goal for a particular writing task. (...) The resultant text is a subset of the cognitive representation in the mind of the writer; the readers are expected to apply their world knowledge and knowledge of writing plans to build a similar cognitive representation (Meyer (1984) p. 3).

In short, Meyer (1975, 1977, 1979) proposes that the structural organization of the text affects the retention of certain ideas. Thus, information that a writer wants his/her reader to remember should be placed high in the content of the text. Meyer (1980) suggests that structural knowledge must be followed by readers because it is an efficient learning strategy and it works as a retrieval guide. Meyer (1984) sees structural knowledge as necessary to the communication between readers and writers. In this last version, the issue is no longer text retention but the recovery of the author's intention. This shift in theoretical positions may be an indication that the strong structural position proposed in Meyer (1975) was

difficult to be maintained. It may also reflect a refinement in the author's conception of text structure.

In fact, Meyer (1984) presented a much more elaborated notion of structural organization. In this work the author considered broader categories, and emphasis plans. Emphasis plans make possible for an author to bring to the fore information that was lower in the content structure. It is also possible to detect in this latter work a preoccupation with pragmatic issues, as the explicit reference to the work of Grice indicates. However, it can be argued whether Grice's proposals are at all applicable to the work of Meyer. The Gricean notion of 'intentionality' aims to characterize how a language receiver apprehends the meaning of an utterance, and not how a reader attributes importance to the information unit of a text. As mentioned in section 2.2.3 above, the weight given to specific information units may vary in different situations of reading. Readers may adopt a different criterion of importance than the one emphasized by the author in the structure of his/her text. Apart from this, as Resnick points out :

"When one studies a text for purposes of learning about a domain, one is not interested in establishing or retaining a memory of the text itself or the author's particular intention. One is interested in using the information in the text as part of a more general effort to construct a mental representation of a knowledge domain. For this purpose, it makes sense to add the text information to what one already knows and then to forget about the text per se (Resnick (1984) p. 436-437).

It is interesting to point out that Meyer (1984), discussing the focus given by older adults to information lower in the content structure of a text, does indicate that the reader's selective focus may be guided by factors other than the structural ones :

(...) experiences as an older adult may encourage adding more details (e.g. experiences with recipes instruction manuals) or simply a focussing on ideas of relevance to the self rather than the text author. (...) This detail strategy was posited to result from a preference for details, rather than a deficit in identifying or using organization (Meyer(1984) p. 15).

However, even though the author points to this possibility, she does not explore it any further. Summarizing this discussion, Meyer's data

indicates that the text dimensions may affect mechanisms of cognitive processing. However, the author does not explore to what extent the results obtained characterize reading to study in general, or just a specific situation of reading in which the reader is asked to reproduce the text, or the author's 'main ideas'. The empirical findings of Luftig (1983) seems to point to the second possibility. The author's analysis suggests that structural importance in text is a control process rather than an invariant characteristic of the text. Differential expectation of recall can affect performance. Thus the use of structural importance in a text can be manipulated by task demands. Similar results were previously indicated by Marton and Saljo (1976b).

2.3.2 MACROSTRUCTURE : SEMANTIC REDUCTION RULES AND MULTIPROCESSING

The ability of readers to identify the 'main ideas' from a text has also been investigated by studies that favour the adoption of summary tasks (Brown & Smiley (1977), Brown & Day (1983), Brown, Day & Jones (1983), Garner (1985)). Some of these studies have explored summary as a useful tool for understanding and studying texts (Brown, Champione & Day (1981), Garner (1982), Taylor (1986), Hidi & Anderson (1986). This close relation between the summarization and comprehension of a text was originally suggested by the work of Walter Kintsch and Teun A. van Dijk (van Dijk & Kintsch (1977), Kintsch & van Dijk (1978)).

Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) proposed a comprehension model which attempts to offer a processing explanation of the correlation between some structural aspects of the text and recall probabilities found in studies such as Meyer(1975). The notion of structure conceived by the authors is highly dependent on the linguistic notion of referential coherence. The model assumes that the semantic structure of a discourse is characterized at two levels : microstructure and macrostructure. The microstructure is the level of the individual propositions and their relations. The macrostructure is of a more global nature, characterizing the discourse as a whole.

The macrostructure of a discourse is constructed by the application of rules of semantic reduction, i.e. macrorules. The formal description of the macrorules includes three types of rules :

(1) deletion - each proposition that is neither a direct nor an indirect interpretation condition of a subsequent proposition may be deleted.

(2) generalization - each sequence of propositions may be substituted by the general proposition denoting an immediate superset.

(3) construction - each sequence of propositions may be substituted by a proposition denoting a global fact of which the facts denoted by the microstructure propositions are normal conditions, components or consequences. (Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) p.366)

These rules are applied under specific conditions :

(a) semantic entailment must be preserved. A macrostructure must be implied by the (explicit) microstructure from which it is derived.

(b) no proposition may be deleted, that is, an interpretation condition of a following proposition of the text.

(c) macrorules must be applied under the control of a schema which constrains their operation, so as to avoid the macrostructure becoming meaningless generalization. Thus, world knowledge is necessary for the operation of these rules.

(d) macrorules are affected by conventional structures of discourse and their specified sets of characteristic categories.

(e) idiosyncratic personal processing goals play a role in controlling the macrorule application. The rules application depends on whether a proposition is or is not judged to be relevant in its context, with the schema specifying the kind of information that is relevant for a particular comprehension task.

The application of the macrorules organizes the text base in such a way that the propositions that are in a superordinate position - i.e. propositions to which most of the propositions refer or relate - tend to be maintained at macrostructural level. On the basis of these

linguistic intuitions, Kintsch & van Dijk propose a processing model which attempts to explain why readers/hearers tend to retain some information units from a text and not others. Their proposal is based on the concept of argument overlap among propositions.

Taking into consideration that text bases must be coherent, the authors emphasize the semantic function of referential coherence in organizing discourses:

"Referential coherence is probably the most important single criterion for the coherence of text bases. It is neither a necessary nor a sufficient criterion linguistically. However, the fact that in many texts other factors tend to be correlated with it makes it a useful indicator of coherence that can be checked easily, quickly and reliably (ibid p. 367)

Accepting the semantic importance of referential coherence, their model for text processing assumes that the first step in forming a text base consists in checking out its referential coherence. If the text base is found to be coherent, it is accepted for further processing. If no argument overlap is found, the inference processes are activated to add one or more propositions in order to make the text base coherent.

The second assumption is that the checking of the text base referential coherence cannot be performed on the text as a whole, due to the capacity limitations of the working memory. Thus, the text is processed sequentially in chunks of several propositions at a time. The first (n_1) propositions are processed in a cycle, then the next (n_2) propositions and so on. The number of propositions included in each cycle is not always equal. The number of propositions included in a chunk suitable for a cyclical comprehension process depends on text as well as reader characteristics.

Since the propositions of the text are assumed to be processed in a cycle, the model had to explain how each new chunk is connected to the ones already processed. This leads to a third assumption: in each cycle, certain propositions are retained in a short-term memory buffer to be connected with the input set of the next cycle. If there is an overlap between the new propositions and the propositions retained in

the buffer, the input is accepted as coherent with the text. If no connection is found inference operations are required.

Following this procedure, the model analyses the whole text constructing a network of coherent propositions. This network may be represented as a diagram, the nodes of which are propositions, and the connecting lines indicating shared referents. In this way, a hierarchy among text-based propositions is established on the grounds of referential coherence. The topmost positions may represent presuppositions of the subordinate propositions that occupy the lower structural levels. The role of the macro-operations is to ensure that propositions in the topmost positions are also the most important or relevant ones.

The fourth assumption made by this model is that argument overlap among propositions accounts for the retention of certain propositions in memory. Propositions in topmost positions tend to be favoured by multiple processing. In other words, due to referential coherence, high level propositions are, on average, processed in more than one cycle. This multiple processing favours their retention. In this way, the model explains the high correlation found in previous studies (Kintsch & Keenan(1973), Kintsch et al(1975) and Meyer(1975) between structural aspects of texts and recall probabilities. The retrieval process described by Kintsch and van Dijk also predicts that the reconstruction of a text from memory is governed by semantic rules. The reconstruction rules are the inverse application of the macro-operators that generated the macroproposition, i.e rules of addition, particularization and specification.

To review, the Kintsch and van Dijk model - like Meyer's model - examines the text's semantic structure at the level of individual propositions and at the level of the text as a whole. These two levels aim to describe how propositions which are internally organized relate to each other at a more global level - i.e. the discourse level. To describe broader semantic relations Meyer considers the notion of rhetorical predicates, which organize the content of discourse in a hierarchical way. Information units high in the content structure tend to be better recalled. Kintsch and van Dijk

attribute level effects to distinct factors (referential coherence, discourse topic and conventional discourse structure).

The notion of macrostructure explored by the Kintsch and van Dijk makes reference to much more sophisticated linguistic intuitions than the ones considered by Meyer. Although adopting a text-based perspective to describe the comprehension process, the authors are careful enough to include in their discussion considerations about subjective and situational issues. For instance, they state that the application of the macrorules can be affected by the reader's goal:

The reader's goals in reading control the application of the macro-operators. The formal representation of these goals is the schema. The schema determines which microproposition or generalization of microproposition are relevant and, thus, which parts of the text will form its gist (Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) p. 373).

Van Dijk (1979) goes a step further, proposing a dichotomy between textual relevance and contextual relevance. Textual relevance is defined in terms of structure, and contextual relevance through criteria such as a reader's interest, attention, knowledge, wishes. In this particular study the author mentions that a special purpose for reading may override the effect of text structure.

Considering the issues raised above, it seems fair to say that Kintsch & van Dijk (a) are bringing to the fore a non-deterministic conception of text structure and (b) are not excluding the effect of subjective and situational factors on reading. However, it is unclear how the processing model proposed by the authors accounts for all the interesting issues raised in their discussion. In fact, the cognitive model proposed by Kintsch & van Dijk seems to be too limited to satisfactorily describe the authors' intuition about language, reader and situation of reading.

For instance, it is also very ill defined how in such a model macrorules may be controlled by personal processing goals and reading task demands. The concept of macrostructure is so tidily linked to the notions of discourse topic, referential coherence, and overlapping of propositions, that it is difficult to understand how the macro-operators are processed when these elements are no longer central. In

addition, not much is said about how conventional structure of discourse affects the operation of the macrorules.

The second major question to be raised deals with the author's conception of the deletion mechanism. The reduction of the semantic content of the text into macropropositions is presented as a necessary condition due to the limits of the working memory. Nevertheless, describing the nature of the macrostructure the authors suggest :

"Macro-operators transform the propositions of a text base into a set of macropropositions that represent the gist of the text. They do so by deleting or generalizing all propositions that are either irrelevant or redundant and by constructing new inferred propositions. "Delete" here does not mean "delete from memory" but "delete from the macrostructure". Thus a given text proposition - a microproposition may be deleted from the text's macrostructure, but nevertheless, be stored in memory and subsequently recalled as a microproposition". (Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) p. 372)

If it is possible to delete a microproposition from the macrostructure, and yet register it in the long term memory, then it is unclear how the authors are in fact conceiving the limitations of the working memory. After all, it was exactly because of this limitation that micropropositions have to be semantically reduced in the first place.

The final issue to be raised refers to the concept of comprehension as a process of semantic reduction. In the study being discussed, the authors established as their main goal the description of the '*system of mental operations that underlie the processes occurring in text comprehension and in the production of recall and summarization protocols*' (ibid p. 363). The present investigation accepts that such a model provides valid insights into the process of text summarization. In fact, investigations that adopted summary tasks did find a high correlation between summary protocols and the structural issues raised by the authors (Brown & Smiley (1977), Brown, Day & Jone (1983), Garner (1985), Taylor (1986)). These results indicate that readers may be affected by argument overlapping in some situations of reading, such as when they are reading with the purpose of apprehending the gist of a text. However, this situation does not typify all possible situations of reading. Considering other reading situations, the

processing model proposed by Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) seems insufficient to describe the authors' own intuitions about the role of subjective factors and task demands on reading comprehension.

2.3.3 TYPES OF TEXT AND THE IMPLICATION TO READING

The discussion above has focussed on two different proposals for text structure. One mainly based on the notion of rhetoric relationship. The other, mostly supported upon the notion of referential coherence, and argument overlapping. Lunzer & Gardner (1984) explore in more detail a third structural proposal, i.e. conventional text types. This approach to text structure takes into consideration some general patterns of text organization and define them in terms of functional categories.

It is necessary to stress that the work being discussed here is not particularly concerned in offering a theoretical model for reading comprehension. Lunzer and Gardner (1984) are reporting the results of a four years project which was designed as a contribution to curricular development and teaching methods. This project involved the design of several thousand lessons. Based on the results obtained in classroom practices, the authors proposed several pedagogical techniques to implement the use of text in classroom activities. Central to their proposals there is a concept of text types which was also elaborated as part of the project's work. The author's guidelines for the use of texts as means of instruction indicate some interesting insights about the effect of textual organization on selective focus. For this reason, this work is being included in the present literature review.

After working with secondary teachers for a whole year, the project team noticed that the passages chosen by teachers shared some structural characteristics in spite of their difference in topic. These shared characteristics made possible to relate texts from very different areas by taking into consideration their structure. Three possibilities of text organization were then analysed. The first one considered the structure of small sections of the text and it was based upon very general features, such as beginning, middle, and end.

The second one focuses on topic coherence. The authors distinguished four different ways in which different topics may be related within a text: parallel treatment of parallel topics, natural succession of one type following another, embedding and interweaving. They also pointed out that it is not uncommon to an informative text to deal with more than one topic. Thus embedding and interweaving structures are quite frequent in this type of text. However, problems may arise when different groups approach the text with different emphasis and bias. Difference in bias may lead to different decisions about which theme should carry most weight.

The third possibility of text's organization proposed by Lunzer & Gardner is based on functional categories. Working with texts selected by teachers, the project team noticed the possibility of relating in terms of structure, texts from very different areas. They perceived, for instance, that a text about fossil fuel - that deals with the origin of coal oil and gas - and a text about mitosis - that explains the formation of new cells, could be associated to each other, since both are describing processes. Texts that describe processes have in common two features : (a) they discuss how something changes into something else, over time, and under certain influences, and (b) they describe a series of phases that are necessary to reach such a change. In a similar way, comparison could be established between a history text about medieval castles and a physics text about the aneroid barometer. Both texts are explaining a structure of a class of objects.

The perception of standard patterns among different texts lead the project team to categorize texts in terms of text types. Passages that belong to the same text type tend to share a number of features, such as :

- (a) they deal with the same kind of content, even when the topic is very different.
- (b) they tend to break up in the same way, yielding segments or sections that serve the same function.

(c) the type of information within these segments is more or less standard, and predictable within each text type.

Taking these features into consideration, it was possible to classify the texts normally used in secondary schools into ten different text types (for further details see appendix 1(c)). The authors noticed that specific text types tend to reappear within a subject area. Considering this similarity among texts they proposed that, students, by learning to identify the type of passage, may also form the same kind of expectation that writers and teachers of a subject area share about the content of texts. In this way students may learn to ask the proper questions in any area. They may become aware about the type of information they should search for.

Apart from this discussion on text typology, Lunzer & Gardner made some other interesting observations about the use of texts in a classroom situation. They pointed out that teachers and students do not read texts in the same way. Students read a text to know something. Teachers - and here they are referring to secondary school teachers - know the information already. That is, they do not read the text with the objective of learning, but with the objective of exploiting the text in a way that best suits the pedagogical aim that they have in mind. The teachers' aims determine which aspects of the text should be focussed on.

As an illustrative example, Lunzer and Gardner mention a passage about *The Hindenburg*. The text discusses the tragic accident that happens with a huge German airship built by the Zeppelin Company. The aircraft exploded near Chicago in 1937, due to a bomb that was placed in one of its gas bags, by a saboteur. This text could be explored in different ways by teachers. It could be used as a starting point for a study of the properties of hydrogen in chemistry. It could also be part of a historical study in which the emphasis would be socio-scientific. Another possibility of use could be within the study of safety at work. All these different contexts of study will privilege specific information items.

This discussion about the use of texts in the pedagogic context reveals that the interaction of a student with a text may be mediated by the teacher's pedagogic aims. That is, the student/reader is not merely interacting with an author through the text - as most dialogic models of reading tend to propose - but is also interacting with the teacher that selects the text with a specific pedagogic purpose in mind. The teacher's purpose, in its turn, is directly affected by the requirements of the school curriculum. This complex chain of intentions, highlights that the selection of information from a text may also be affected by social factors that characterize specific situations of reading.

It is interesting to stress that the conception of text type as proposed by Lunzer & Gardner seems to go in the direction of the concept of discourse discussed in chapter 3, section 3.3. The major difference between the two is that in the notion of discourse the role of social factors is made more evident. In relation to social factors, the authors' work indicates that reading within the classroom situation is not solely affected by the text's organization or the reader's personal aim, but it is also influenced by the teacher's pedagogic goals. This concept of 'uses of text' indicates the importance of considering the effects of social factors on reading in general.

2.4 READER-BASED AND TEXT-BASED PERSPECTIVES : INSIGHTS AND LIMITATIONS

Chapter two has analysed different interpretations that the literature have given to the selective focus process. The existing studies have been clustered into two major groups : reader-based and text-based. Reader-based perspectives have indicated that previous content knowledge affects the way readers select information from a text. The work of Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979) indicated that readers who share a common cultural background tend to share specific types of content knowledge. As a consequence, they tend to recall similar information units from a passage. However, other studies have suggested that the effect of content knowledge schema is not the same in all reading situations, i. e. it depends upon the

nature of the text or the reading task. Adult readers tend to rely on their structure schema if faced with a difficult or not familiar text (Ohlhausen and Roller(1985)). A certain type of tasks - such as importance rating tasks - seems to be highly affected by reader-based factors. In contrast, summary writing seems to be highly influenced by the text's organization (Roller(1985)). The Gothenburg studies have offered considerable evidence that content apprehension from a text may be affected by subjective and motivational factors. Even though these studies do not explore this notion in relation to selective focus, it seems reasonable to expect such factors to affect the way a reader attributes importance to the information unit in a text. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that selective focus in reading may also be influenced by other factors.

In fact, the empirical results obtained by the text-based perspective support the notion that reading may be affected by the text's characteristics. The studies developed by Meyer, and Kintsch and van Dijk do offer some evidence in this direction. However, as the present discussion stressed, the notion of structure per se does not seem to be a sufficient basis to interpret all the interesting linguistic intuitions mentioned in the work of Kintsch and van Dijk. The empirical findings of Luftig(1983) suggest that structural importance in texts is not an invariant property of the text, but a control process. Lunzer and Gardner points in a similar direction when they describe the uses of texts in a classroom situation.

The review of the literature indicates that reader-based and text-based factors are necessary but not sufficient conditions to interpret selective focus in reading. This review also pointed out that in a situation of 'uses of texts', readers may also be affected by social-based factors. The existing literature has very little to say about the effect of social factors on selective focus. Yet, reading acts always occur within specific social settings which are impregnated by social norms, values and beliefs. In addition, neither the reader nor the text are neutral to social influences. Taking these issues into consideration, the next chapter explores the basis for a social-based approach to selective focus in reading.

CHAPTER 3

3 READING FROM A SOCIO-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE :

A proposal to show the social basis for selection in reading.

3.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 sketched a model for critical reading, attempting to explore within the limits of reading situations, the complex interface between social constraints and individual freedom. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on selective focus in reading. The analysis of the literature mostly conducted in chapter 2 indicated the necessity of considering the effect of social factors on reading. Chapter 3 proposes a social basis for selection in reading. Considering studies developed within different academic traditions, this chapter integrates social conceptions of literacy practice, language use and cognitive processes. The main argument put forward by this chapter is that literacy practices in general, and selective focus in particular, should be understood in social terms. Neither the reader, nor the text can be properly analysed without an appreciation of the social context. A socio-cognitive approach to literacy offers a richer set of possibilities to interpret the problems that readers may face when selecting information from a text. Furthermore, it provides a necessary theoretical background to inform the critical reading model defined in chapter 1.

The issues on literacy and language discussed in the present chapter are organized into four major sections. Initially, section 3.2 analyses some recent studies on literacy which have pointed out the necessity of considering the ideological nature of written language practices. Three studies from two different theoretical traditions are considered in this section. Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) from cross-cultural work in cognitive psychology, Brian V. Street (1984) and Kenneth Levine (1986) from the socio-anthropological tradition. Following different research aims, these studies have provided a broad conception of literacy. They have shown that :

(a) socio-ideological conventions shape the literacy practices in specific societies;

(b) literacy practices exert some effect on specific cognitive skills;

(c) literacy cannot be dissociated from knowledge;

(d) in modern societies there are multiple literacies.

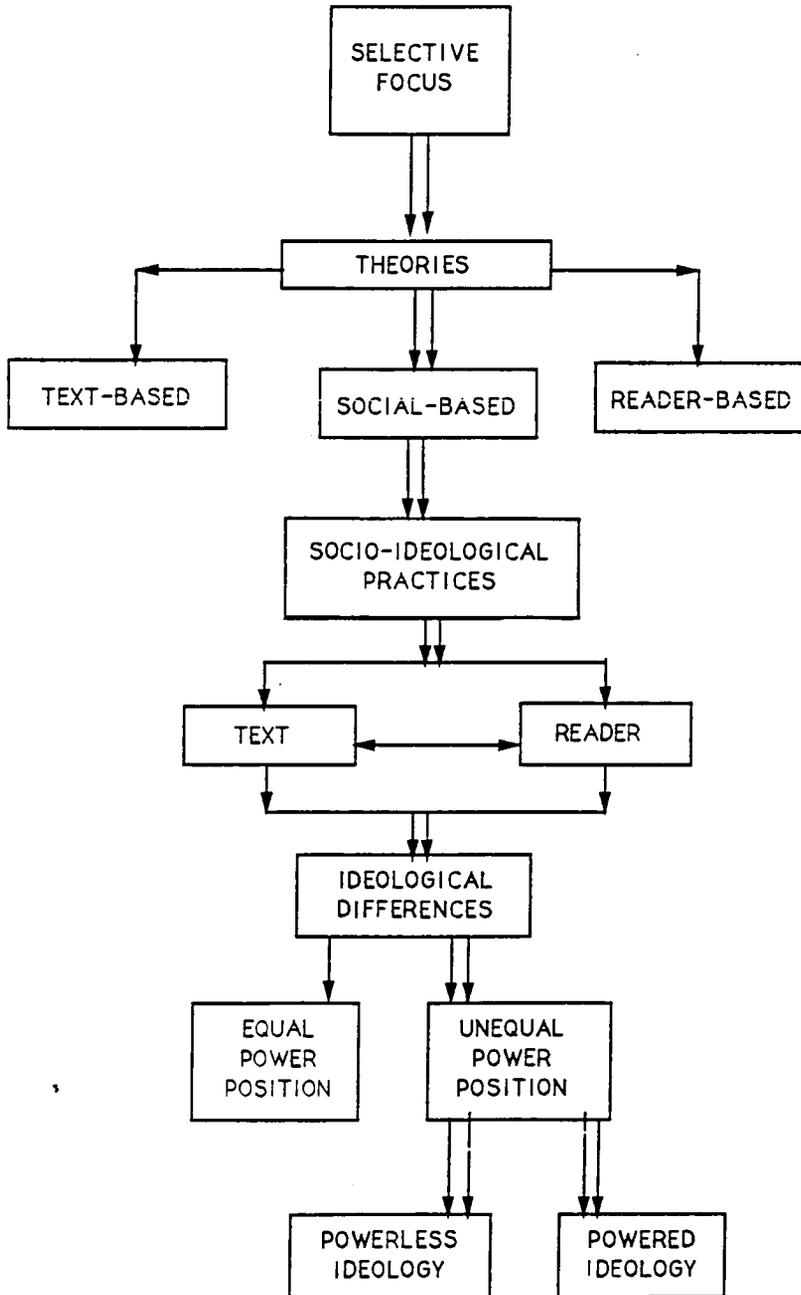
Section 3.3 links this general proposal on literacy to the work of Gunter Kress. Coming from the linguistic tradition, Kress focuses his discussion on how societal norms and values are reproduced in social groups and in individuals through language. His proposals offer insights into the way texts and readers are shaped by ideologies, discourses, and genres derived from social institutions and social groupings. They also highlight how ideological contradictions are hidden by texts, and the role of power in imposing certain ideologies.

Section 3.4 discusses the relation between language and society from a cognitive perspective. Considering the socio-cultural approach of Soviet psychology, it explores how the individual internalizes socio-historical consciousness through linguistic interaction. On the basis of such a theoretical proposal, this section presents a socio-cognitive description of selective focus in reading. Finally, section 3.5 discusses how a social-based conception of selective focus in reading is useful to understand the critical reading model proposed in chapter 1. Figure 3.1 offers a flow chart representing the main issues being discussed in this chapter.

Before advancing the discussion, some issues must be clarified. This chapter is linking different theoretical approaches, aiming to offer a more comprehensive description on how social factors may affect individual readers. Such a link may be seen as an attempt to construct an heuristic model to help the interpretation of problems faced by readers when reading texts within the context of specific reading situations. The theories selected to be discussed have in common the emphasis on social factors. However, it is necessary to point out that none of the studies analysed make explicit their conception of 'society'. Thus, in most cases, it is difficult to

establish how each notion of social relates to the Gramscian notion adopted by Giroux and Aronowitz (see chapter 1).

Fig. 3.1 Social-based approaches to selective focus



This relation is made even more obscure by the fact that each one of the studies aims to bring to the fore specific theoretical arguments - which are relevant to the discourse of a certain academic area. The stress on specific questions conceals how each author conceives society as a whole. That is, it is not possible to distinguish if the author left certain issues aside from his/her discussion because he/she (a) did not consider them relevant or (b) did not consider them central to their argument.

For example, Kress's main interest is to describe how social norms and values are transmitted through language uses. Discussing this issue, he emphasizes the role of ideologies in co-articulating discourses and genres. He then proposes that social groupings and individuals are linguistically constructed. Gramsci (1971) also stresses the role of ideology in shaping social life. However, to Gramsci, ideology works at three different levels: the unconscious, the common sense, and the critical consciousness. It is not evident if Kress's proposals can be equally applied to all three levels. Even more important, Gramsci stresses that ideologies can only be understood within the economic and political conditions that ultimately determine their influence or effect. Kress indicates that social power is not derived from language. However, his analysis is restricted to linguistic issues, and it is not very clear how he sees the relation of language with these broader social factors.

In contrast, the Vygotskian approaches, in general, tend to be highly concerned with notions such as history and culture. These approaches tend to emphasize how inter-cognitive functions become intra-cognitive functions within the context of specific socio-historical practices. Great stress is given to the role that language plays in the process of the individual's consciousness formation. This concept of social activity seems closer to the one conceived within a Gramscian perspective. However, the socio-cultural perspective of Soviet psychology does not explore the notion of ideology - which is central to Gramsci's conceptions on education. It also leaves aside very important notions such as social antagonism and power.

It is important to stress these differences because they are in some ways reflected in the discussions developed within each of the sections below. Nevertheless, these are the theories available. By relating them, this investigation is not ignoring their differences. It is merely searching for a further exposition of how social factors may affect individual readers. So, from now on this discussion will leave aside the differences, and concentrate on theoretical issues that may be seen as complementary.

3.2 READING PRACTICES AND IDEOLOGY: A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERACY.

In general, discussions of literacy have developed around three main issues: first of all, the distinction between oral and written modality (Stubbs (1980), Ong (1982), Tannen (1982), Brown & Yule (1983), Halliday (1985)); second, the analysis of the psychological repercussion of literacy (Luria (1976), Greenfield (1972), Olson (1977) Scribner and Cole (1981); and finally, the significance of literacy to human societies (UNESCO (1975), Goody (1977), Street (1984) Levine (1986), Graff (1987)).

The three studies discussed in this section - Scribner and Cole (1981), Street (1984), and Levine (1986) - are mainly addressing the two last issues mentioned above. These studies are pursuing different theoretical questions, and are taking into consideration different sources of data. However, in spite of their intrinsic differences, they all point in a similar direction: it is necessary to consider literacy as a product of ideological social practices. Their theoretical proposals provide a general guide-line to a socio-psychological approach to literacy.

3.2.1 THE EFFECT OF LITERACY PRACTICES ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT.

The effect of literacy acquisition on thought processes has been the subject of many investigations. Among the first studies was that of Luria (1976). Comparing non-literate farmers with other residents of the same villages in Central Asia, the author observed that the groups performed differently in reasoning tasks. The non-literate group tended to solve problems in a concrete and context-bound way,

while the literate group tended to consider conceptual and logical relationships to find the solution. The minimally literate group fell in between. Similar results were also found by Greenfield (1972) in her research in Senegal. However these studies faced a similar methodological problem: literacy was related to other major changes in life experience, such as schooling and socio-economic conditions. Due to this problem, it was difficult to affirm that literacy per se was of causal significance in cognitive development.

Scribner's and Cole's research on Vai literacy made possible the separation of schooling from literacy. Vai people have developed their own script, which was learned at home. The empirical results obtained by this study have challenged many current theoretical assumptions that look upon literacy as an 'emergent force', able to bring into existence an entirely new mental structure or process (Greenfield (1972), Goody (1968), Olson (1977)). Comparing the performance of illiterates, schooled literates, and non-schooled literates in a whole range of tasks, the authors found different trends in the results. Their empirical data indicated that knowledge of reading and writing does not always have the intellectual consequences promoted by schooling, nor do the consequences of schooling completely subsume the consequences of literacy. In addition, the results did not indicate deep psychological differences between literate and non-literate populations, i.e. not all non-literates performed at a lower standard than all literates.

The authors then suggested that such a variegated pattern of results could be better understood in terms of the concept of practice. Practice always refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge to accomplish tasks. Any practice, be it a conceptual activity - such as the practice of law - or a more sensory-motor one - such as weaving - involved three basic components: technology, knowledge, and skill. By 'skill', the authors meant a co-ordinate set of actions involved in applying a particular system of knowledge to particular settings.

Considering the practice framework, the authors proposed that literacy is not a mere acquisition of a script. It requires the

learning of how to apply the knowledge of reading and writing for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. It is the nature of this practice that will determine the kind of skills associated with literacy. The Scribner and Cole conceptual model implies that cognitive skill - no less than perceptual, motor, or linguistic - are bound up with the nature of the practice that requires them. This practice can only be understood within the larger social system that generates specific kinds of practices, and poses particular tasks for these practices.

The data obtained in the Vai country provide evidence for such a framework. Vai people have three forms of script available to them: Latin, Arabic, and Vai. They are learned and used in different situations. Vai script is learned at home, and is used primarily for secular or pragmatic practices such as: letter writing, listing of political contributions, records of religious and fraternal organizations, farmer's and craftsmen's business ledgers and technical plans. Arabic script dominates the Vai liturgical, and religious practices. It is formally taught, and it involves learning to read and recite from the Koran. Latin script is learned at school. English, the official language of Liberia, is used in all official dealings, for taxation, laws, elections, and in commercial transactions with non-Vai. The data have shown that the nature of these practices, and the way the different scripts are learned, exert some effect on specific cognitive skills. The concept of practice was also useful to explain the pattern of results obtained between literates/illiterates, and schooled/non-schooled literates.

Vai literates, for instance, had a high performance in grammar tasks - i. e. talking about correct Vai speech. Such a result could be easily related to the emphasis given by script literates to the quality of the writing specimens. Koranic learning conferred an advantage in incremental memory tasks, which could be explained in terms of the rote learning of the Koran. English literates, were high ranked on 'talking about' tasks: explanation of sorting, logic explanation, explanation of grammatical rules, game instructions, and

answers to hypothetical questions about name switching. All these skills are necessary to teacher/pupil dialogue in the classroom.

The diversified pattern of results found among the non-literate population could also be understood in terms of the practices that individuals engage in their daily life. Urban life activities, for instance, demand a set of cognitive skills different from the ones necessary for rural practices. Urban residency appeared to be a major influence in shifting people away from reliance on functional modes of classification to the use of taxonomic categories. Jobs in the modern sector seemed to have an influence on better communication skills.

A similar account could be offered for the asymmetry found between schooled and non-schooled literates' performances. Literacy practices may differ in different contexts. A practice, such as letter writing, where one is writing to an acquaintance, has different requirements than if one is writing to earn a grade in English. Also, schooled literate activities are just part of other activities, the sum total of which constitutes schooling. It was the nature of these schooled practices and activities that seemed to affect most the performance of English literates.

Considering this empirical evidence, Scribner and Cole suggested that the cognitive skills found in their research have been shaped by a range of activities in Vai society - literacy being one of them. Taking Vai literacy in perspective the authors stated:

' The cognitive skills that we found in our research among traditional Vai people have been shaped by the range of literacy practices in Vai society. Our ethnographic data show this range of practices to be limited when compared with literacy functions in modern, technologically sophisticated societies. If uses of writing are few, the skills they require are likely to be limited. They have to be used to accomplish only a narrow range of tasks in a few content domain. Such pattern can be expected to give rise to specialized or specific literacy-related skills - the pattern we found in our studies. As the repertoire of functions increases, existing practices may come to embrace more complex tasks or to be extended to new content domains' (ibid p.258).

However, to understand the nature and scope of literacy practices, it is necessary to go beyond literacy per se, and to focus on the nature of the social formation:

'Vai culture is in Vai literates practices: in the writing system, the means used to transmit it, the functions it serves and contexts of use, and the ideologies which confer significance on these functions' (ibid p.259)

Scribner and Cole's proposals make two important contributions to our understanding of literacy. First of all, they provide evidence that there is a close relationship between the nature of literacy practices and the cognitive skills required and (promoted) by the acquisition of the written language. Secondly, they emphasise that literacy practices can only be understood in socio-ideological terms. This latter issue is strongly defended by Street (1984) and is also supported by Levine (1986).

3.2.2 LITERACY AS A PRODUCT OF SOCIO-IDEOLOGICAL PRACTICES.

Street (1984) offers a comprehensive critique of the 'great divide theory' which replaces the earlier anthropological distinction between 'primitive' and 'modern' culture by a distinction between 'literate' and 'non-literate' culture. Such a distinction attributes to the written word the capability of developing 'logic' and fostering the development of scientific thought (Goody 1968). Street refutes Goody's claims and the consequence of the 'autonomous model of literacy' which adopts similar premises. Drawing arguments from anthropology and linguistics, Street sets out effectively to propose that most of the cultures are likely to offer a mix of oral and written activities and literacies, which are context bound and ideologically loaded. This complex continuum between oral and written modes of communication can only be understood within an 'ideological model of literacy'. Such a model should be able to interpret literacy events in relation to larger socio-cultural patterns which they exemplify or reflect. He then advances the characteristics of such a model:

- a. concentration on specific social practices.

b. recognition of the ideological and therefore culturally embedded nature of such practices.

c. stress on the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for literate participants.

d. concern with the general social institutions through which this process takes place, and not the explicit educational ones.

e. analysis of the significance of literacy for specific social groups.

f. investigation of the role of western teaching in the social control and hegemony of the ruling class.

g. concentration on the overlapping of oral/literate modes.

Street supports his conception of ideological literacy with a detailed investigation of Cheshmeh, a fruit-producing mountain village in Iran, which achieved great economic development during the boom of the early and mid 70's, following the oil price rises. His analysis highlights how literacy practices are intrinsically connected with other social factors. Due to structural factors mountain fruit croppers were better placed to respond to the leap in urban demand for agricultural products than were the peasants of the grain-producing plains. A number of factors contributed to the ability of such villages to adapt to the new condition. Fruit cropping in the structure of small holdings can be increased without major structural changes. Improvements require only small machinery which individual owners could afford (Lambton (1963) cited in Street (1984)). However, as Street pointed out, the economic development of fruit-croppers was also made possible due to the knowledge of specific literacy practices.

Cheshmeh's economic development was dependent on a well organized system of distribution and exchange of fruits, in which the entrepreneurs, or the 'tajers' had a major role. The tajers bought fruit at an agreed rate from fellow villagers, and stored and transported it to city dealers. The tajer's expertise, their transport facilities and bulk purchasing provided the organisation necessary for

the villagers to take full advantage of the upsurge in urban demand. Street argues that the tajers, who were the crucial group in enabling villages like Cheshmeh to cash in on the new economic circumstances, were able to achieve their successes partly through basic skills - i.e. 'commercial literacy' - necessary to keep records of and control of commercial transactions. He then proposes that this new type of literacy was not created anew, but was closely related to forms of literacy known by the tajers, and acquired in the religious school, the 'maktab'.

The author then proceeds to explain some of the similar and different characteristics that could be found between both types of literacy. The knowledge that is imparted in the maktab is primarily that of the Koran. Students are taught to recite by rote whole passages of the Koran. By reproducing these passages students are in fact being socialised to a specific, ideologically-based literate mentality. They are being trained to see the texts as 'true', in looking for moral truth in them, and in framing their moral sense in terms of such texts. Maktab students also learn from their books to express and develop their moral sense in terms of argumentation and dispute. The suras of the Koran and the commentaries taught in the maktab explicitly raised false arguments in order to dismiss them.

This practice of searching for the 'true' argument and moral guidance leads maktab students to learn to thumb their way around the Koran and other texts and to use headings and content pages as clues to find specific passages. Although it is not explicitly taught, students learn to perceive meaning not only in the content but also in the form, layout and conventions of its representation. Their familiarity with the books from which they have been taught also allows them to use graphic clues as mnemonics.

Street suggests that some of these skills acquired in the maktab literacy were during the 70's adapted to the demands of marketing and commerce. Such skills were basic to the development of 'commercial literacy'. The uses of literacy associated with exchange and commerce in fruit-producing villages were very specific. With regard to

writing, they involve the signing of cheques, the writing out of bills, and the labelling of boxes.

Accounts were kept on school books and their layouts were precise and conventional: a page for each separate deal; columns for sections of the account with indications for quantity, weight, price, and final total; space for signatures. This notation should be clear to both parties. Such record keeping of transactions required certain literacy skills, some of them learned in the maktab and expanded in new ways and conventions to cope with the demand of the commercial enterprise. The most significant of these skills were skills in recognising layout and format, and retrieval skills, including thumbing a text. In maktab literacy, information was retrieved through the separation of categories and the associated use of headings, page, numbers, etc. In a similar way, within commercial literacy, the layout and presentation of lists, tables, columns were crucial indicators of meanings.

However, commercial literacy was not textual, and it drastically differed from the maktab literacy in its set of social practices and ideology. Due to these ideological differences, the development of new and specific skills, such as, recording and communicating for the self became crucial. Tajers had to learn by themselves specific conventions for recording versions of transactions that could be agreed to by different parties and be put away for future use. To do this they needed to 'adapt' the way in which space had been used on the page in the maktab literacy. Furthermore, the maktab texts had authority, while tajers had to learn how to give authority themselves to writing and to the papers they were producing. That is, they needed to create a new representation which was legitimized within a new set of conventions and authority structure.

Within this new structure, the concept of 'signature' was seen as an indication of agreement to a transaction. It rested upon an institutional framework that specified formal relations between commercial and legal processes. This concept was incorporated into the village's commercial transaction, and those who could not write their names simply impressed inky thumb prints on appropriate pieces of

paper, indicating participation in, and agreement to this institutional framework and its new status. The local court gave some formal support to this process. Signatures and stamps would make ordinary scraps of paper into a document with official standing.

All this experience with specific literacy practices contributed to a social and conceptual framework within which reading and writing acquired a specific meaning, and became a crucial source of power.

Quoting Street:

'The development of such skills and knowledge and the construction of such literate forms is neither an individual matter nor is it necessarily the product of specific formal training: it is a development at the level of ideology, a social construction of reality embedded in specific collective practices in specific social situations. The social group which shared perceptions and uses of literacy in the village may not have all exhibited comparable levels or kinds of skills but they did share a common ideology and a common understanding of the 'meanings' of that literacy. Farmers and 'tajers' alike became used to the practice of handling cheques, notes, bills of sale, etc. and of seeing particular transactions represented in material form on paper, against the shared background of the 'maktab' learning on the one hand and commercial change and expansion on the other. In this sense those who imprinted their thumb on a page shared an experience of literacy practice with those who could write. This shared experience facilitated the control of positions of power by those with more developed expertise in that area (ibid p. 176)

Street's analysis of 'commercial literacy' stresses how specific literacy activities are created and legitimized in specific social contexts, and embedded in specific power relations. He suggests that communal interests determine the differences in the meaning of literacy to various groups and the kinds of literacy practice they develop. These skills may be adapted to new contexts, but they are not applicable to any context. Cheshmeh villagers were aware that maktab literacy was different from the one acquired by modern students in urban schools - which is learned within a context of secular literature and school text books. They also had an implicit recognition that urban education was not sufficient to handle - without any specific training - commercial practices. In fact, the different literacies relate to different processes, to different ideologies and employment situations.

The work of Street supports the relation between practice and specific literacy skills already proposed by Scribner & Cole (3.2.1). However, it complements Scribner & Cole's study in three relevant ways:

- a. it illustrates how specific related literacy skills acquired through specific social practices may be extended and adapted to new content domains.
- b. it shows in a more explicit way how specific literacy practices are created and legitimized within a specific social context.
- c. it stresses how literacy practices may be related to power control mechanisms.
- d. it points out how different literacy practices may coexist within a single language/script.

Levine (1986) argued in a similar direction. His study of literacy was developed within the context of modern Western societies. Considering data on adult literacy programs in Nottingham, England, the East Midlands labour market for manual work, and employment procedures and policies the author questioned every-day myths about the social benefits of literacy. He showed that literacy did not always have an effect on self esteem, workers productivity, or better job opportunities, and - in the context of modern industrial societies - it tended to be used just as a justification for the increasing differentiation of social power, wealth and prestige (see also Graff (1979; 1987). Like Street, Levine challenges the notion of a 'neutral' set of literacy skills that once mastered could be freely transferred across the entire corpus of written material in a language. He then proposes a link between literacy learning and discourse acquisition. Modern societies have a diversity of texts in circulation, each presenting the reader with a distinctive set of communicative difficulties. A model that aims to present a unified view of literacy, needs necessarily to account for all the complex sets of high level cognitive skills required for the reading of different types of written material. Levine points out that, in practice, the elaboration of such a comprehensive and complex model

seems implausible. It is more economical to integrate the notion of 'information' with literacy, and to accept that modern Western societies are characterised by multiple literacies. Quoting the author:

(...)there is no clear demarcation between linguistic competences on the one hand, and common-sense knowledge and substantive information on the other. The competent interpretation of almost every text requires a combination of both(...)Since different kinds of message invoke different kinds of social knowledge and employ different linguistic skills, literacy is clearly not all of a piece(...) literacies are differentiated by the type of information they assume and transmit (Levine 1986, p.44).

Within this conception, literacy should be understood as:

'the exercised capacity to acquire and exchange information via written word (...) as the possession of, or access to, the competences and information required to accomplish transactions entailing reading and writing which an individual wishes - or is compelled - to engage (ibid p. 43).

The conception of literacy defended by Levine , converges to the one previously advocated by Street. Both authors put forward the idea that fruitful insights concerning literacy can only be achieved if one goes beyond the notion of technical skills, and examines ideas in the sociology of knowledge: how knowledge is created and reproduced (or not) in particular social communities. Similar theoretical direction may be found in the work of Scribner and Cole. Although inquiring about mental processes, the authors also arrive at the conclusion that the effects of literacy on the development of specific cognitive skills are linked to the nature of socio-cultural practices.

Therefore, integrating the three analyses, it is possible to conclude that a socio-psychological conception of literacy should consider that:

a. literacy is not a technical skill, neutral to ideological factors.

b. literacy is a product of specific social practices, each practice demanding (and promoting) the development of specific cognitive skills.

c. each literate society has a multiplicity of literacies at its disposal.

d. literacy cannot be dissociated from knowledge.

e. in modern societies, readers cannot have access to all types of knowledge conveyed by texts. So, within these societies, everyone is illiterate in relation to certain types of texts.

Such a general conception of literacy is strongly related to the notions of ideology, discourse, and genre explored in the work of Gunter Kress, developed within the field of linguistics.

3.3 LINGUISTIC PROCESSES IN SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES.

The work of Gunter Kress (1979, 1982, 1985, 1987) may be associated with a new trend in linguistics, which is particularly concerned with the role of social norms in language usage. Within linguistics, during the 60's, a shift was noticed: from the study of idealized linguistic systems and ideal speakers - Saussurian and Chomskian Schools - to the study of the language within the broader context of social behaviour (see Gliglioli (1972)). The systematic description of the way in which cultural norms and values of specific communities are reflected in language usage, brought to light the complexity of the linguistic interaction. It also pointed to some serious limitations in traditional universalistic approaches to explain linguistic variations that exist from individual to individual and from situation to situation. New theoretical notions were offered to explain the nature and source of these variations: restricted and elaborated code (Bernstein (1964, 1971, 1975)); language function (Stubbs (1980)); information strategy and involvement strategy (Tannen (1985)); topic centred style, and topic associating style (Michaels (1986) and Collins & Michaels (1986)).

Kress's work is highly influenced by Halliday's proposals of systemic linguistics (see Halliday (1985), Halliday & Hasan (1985)). Within this perspective, language activity is conceived as a complex conjunction of a series of socially motivated choices. As mentioned, Kress is particularly concerned in investigating how the social structure is transmitted to the individual through language. The

present discussion is mainly focussed on Kress (1985). Two reasons motivated this choice:

- a. differing from the majority of work that deals with the notion of genre, within the systemic linguistics tradition, Kress' discussion is not restricted to production, i.e. there are reflections on both text production and reconstruction.
- b. in this work, Kress' conception of linguistic and social matters seems to be more clearly sketched.

3.3.1 THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY, DISCOURSE AND GENRE IN TEXT PRODUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION.

Kress's conception of language as a social activity is mainly anchored on three basic concepts : ideology, discourse and genre.

Ideologies - i.e particular processes of production, consumption and representation of meaning and behaviour - are produced by the larger social structure. Ideology determines the way in which reality is talked about in institutional discourses. Through ideology, language producers and receivers acquire the categories necessary to shape any thinking about the social practises in which they are involved.

Referring to the work of Michael Foucault, Kress defines discourse as a systematically organized mode of talking. Discourses derive from social institutions that constitute the larger social structure. They present modes of talking about the world from the point of view of these social institutions. That is, they establish the meaning and values relevant to the social institution that they represent. Furthermore, they provide a set of possible statements about a given area, and prescribe the manner in which a particular topic, object or process is to be talked about.

However, texts are not solely constituted of discourses. Texts are also constituted of genres, i.e. conventional forms of social interaction that are possible on different occasions within institutions. Conventionalized forms of occasion lead to conventionalized forms of texts, i.e. specific genres. A genre is

characterized by a set of linguistic forms. These forms construct social positions or roles to be occupied by the language producers and receivers. Both discourse and genre are derived from the larger social structure. The main difference that Kress establishes between the two is that a 'discourse' represents the meanings and values relevant to a social institution; while a 'genre' represents the type of social interaction possible on occasions that occur within institutions. For instance, medicine is an institution which has a discourse : medical discourse. It has also a range of conventionalized occasions: lectures, scientific meetings, experimentation, job interviews, medical consultation, etc. Each occasion favours a specific type of social interaction, i. e genre.

Kress proposes that any text represents an assembly of texts. That is, the speaker/writer's experience of other texts leads him/her to create a new text which meets the demands of a particular social occasion. So, any text has a relation of inter-textuality with a vast network of other texts and it is simultaneously known and new. A text is known, since it is entirely constructed in the conventions of discourse and genre. Yet, a text is always new, since it is appropriate to and arises out of one specific social situation. The choice and articulation of discourse and genre found in a text are always ideological in nature. In other words, ideology indicates preferred matching of discourses and their articulation in specific genres. Thus discourses and genres account for what there is in a text. Ideology accounts for how what there is, is there. Causal questions can only be understood in terms of ideology.

3.3.2 SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THROUGH TEXTS

Social ideologies are reproduced through texts by the articulation of discourses and genres. Ideologies organize language in such a way that causal questions tend to disappear. They determine the arrangement of discourses in a text that responds to the demands of the larger social structure. That is, they indicate:

(a) how two discourses are going to be valued and ranged in relation to each other.

- (b) how their contention is to be resolved
- (c) to what extent and how each is to appear in the text
- (d) the articulation of discourse in specific genres

The author then proposes that the intricate articulation of discourses and genres favours the reproduction of specific social structures by veiling the ideological interest that lies behind the production of a text. Texts are motivated by differences which tend to arise in situations of social exchange due to (a) the writer's personal history or (b) his/her present social location. These differences are triggered by ideologies that lie outside the text being constructed and are negotiated through this text. To Kress the ideological function of a text is to control and if possible to eliminate or hide discursive contradictions. This task may be achieved by :

- (a) elimination of one discourse
- (b) dominance of one discourse over another
- (c) attempts at discourses' accommodation

As the author points out :

"The task of the writer is to construct a text which will most effectively coerce the reader into accepting the constructed text. To do this, the text should seem natural and plausible, uncontentious - from the reader's point of view - and obvious"
(Kress 1985 p. 40)

When writing a text, a writer has in mind an ideal type of reader. This 'ideal reader' is already part of a group defined by their common readership of a system of texts and discourses. In this case, the text has the function of confirming and reassuring certain ideologies. But there are cases in which the potential audience may not match the ideal aimed at. So, texts are also written in such a way as to recruit new readers to a reading position.

Texts aim at short and long term effects on readers. In the short term, a reading position is constructed to instruct readers on how to read a text or a set of texts. In the long term, a certain subject position is created. By doing so, texts describe and prescribe a

range of actions, modes of thinking and being for an individual, which are compatible with the demands of a discourse. In both short and long term, the social function of a text is to confirm, to promote, or even to impose through power specific reading positions. In this way language plays a role in reproducing the broader social structure.

3.3.3 THE RELATION BETWEEN TEXTS AND SOCIAL POWER

Kress (1985) established a very strong link between text production and struggle for power. It may be argued that texts may not always be a product of discursive struggle. Language may be used merely as means of social contact - as it may be in the case of personal letters. However, Kress' conception of language and power is useful to understand reading to study - which is the reading situation explored by the present thesis. According to the author, social power is not derived from language, but it is possible to establish a very close relation between language and power. Kress's work analyses this relation at two different levels. One level discusses how a social institution may gain power by spreading its set of values and meanings through texts. The second level stresses how social power is imposed and reproduced through texts. The author explores the former in his concept of discursive struggle. Defending institutional meanings and values, a discourse tends to struggle to colonize the world imperialistically by propagating the point of view of a specific social institution. It tries to impose itself onto the area which is of immediate concern to an institution and to embrace increasingly wider areas of concern. As a consequence, there are social areas contested by several discourses, each presenting alternative or contradictory accounts of reality. All texts reflect this contending and struggling for dominance. The struggle may be identified between texts and also within a single text. It is not uncommon to find more than one discourse within a single text.

To colonize areas of social life, discourses attempt through texts, to reconcile the contradictions, mismatches that exist within a domain. This reconciliation process is achieved by attempts at discourse accommodation, or by blurring antagonistic perspectives, making what is social seem natural and that which is problematic

obvious. The assimilating tendency of specific discourses may be favoured by the choice of a genre. As Kress points out, certain genres portray power in an explicit way, others present it in a hidden form. When the source of power is obvious, it is potentially open to challenge. Whenever it is hidden, the source of authority is difficult to detect, and, therefore, difficult to question. He then proposes that the scientific genre well illustrates the latter.

The ideology of science insists on impersonality as an indicator of objectivity. The individual investigator is irrelevant, and the intrusion of subjectivity is ruled out as a subversion of the ideology. So statements in science are presented as impersonal statements. This lends 'objectivity' to them, and also confers upon them the status of 'truth' and 'factuality'. This process endows the statements made by the individual scientists with great power. This power, in its turn, can be used by individual scientists. Thus, through texts, discourse and genre contribute to social power by spreading and reinforcing specific ways of seeing reality.

The second level of power discussed by Kress is based on notion of social reproduction. Discussing the school system, as an example, the author emphasized how powerful groups are in a more privileged position to impose their own ideologies. He proposed that:

'The education process is about the processes of classification, repositioning individuals with respect to potent social/cultural classificatory systems, re-ordering the classificatory systems of those who are the learners. Power is involved at every point in that process, in the struggle over particular terms, over whose classificatory systems are to prevail, whose are to be valued and whose are to be dismissed. Within each discipline and across the whole curriculum there are struggles over classification. In the process the learner discovers categories of culturally relevant and valued knowledge, and also discovers the significance of power in the construction of knowledge. In school - as on certain other social occasions and in certain other structures - the powerful can and do enforce their classifications as 'knowledge'. (Kress 1985 p. 63)

Kress' analysis of the notion of power provides useful insights into the way powerful groups may attempt, through texts, to impose their own ideologies. Through texts social power is expressed and indexed. The author's work also indicates how social power may be

challenged through discursive struggles. The present research is particularly interested in this second conception of power (see section 4.5).

3.3.4 THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL GROUPINGS AND INDIVIDUALS

The construction of social groupings and individuals certainly is not solely determined by ideologies and language uses. Economic and political factors cannot be ignored in this process. However, as far as reading is concerned, language and ideology are indubitably central concepts. Thus, to understand the social effect of texts, it seems essential to explore these notions further. Kress's proposals offer some clarification in this direction.

The author proposes that the place one occupies in the social and institutional structure predicts the texts one is exposed to. That is, the network of relationships in which a person is involved within social institutions will determine the set of texts in which he/she participates as a consumer and producer. Language producers or receivers are not isolated individuals. They are social agents located in a chain of social relations that occur in specific places within a specific social structure.

Writers and readers belong to specific social groupings. As part of a social community they share the membership of specific institutions, with their practices, meanings, demands, prohibitions and permissions. This social experience both shapes and is shaped by (a) the kind of language used by the group; (b) the texts that tend to be prominent in the community; (c) the form, content and function of those texts. It is through texts that institutions and social groupings transmit their value systems, systems of norms and modes of behaviour.

Social groups are linguistically formed by the place they commonly share within certain discourses and intersecting sets of discourse. Group membership makes certain facets of the linguistic system familiar and accessible and others strange. However, as Kress stresses, social groupings are not linguistically homogeneous. They have a multiplicity of discourses due to the significant number of institutions that operate within any social group. These discourses

may reassure or complement each other, but they may also offer alternative or contradictory accounts of reality.

A similar description accounts for the linguistic formation of the individual. The author proposes that the 'individual' does not mean non-social. It is within the social structures and processes that 'individual' characteristics are shaped. It is expected that individuals from the same social position will have similar discourses. Being part of a common group, they will probably have access to much the same linguistic experiences and, therefore, quite similar forms of language are available to them.

However, even within a single group, individuals do not have identical personal histories, i. e. they do not occupy and experience exactly the same social place in institutions such as family, church, school, work, etc. Thus individuals within a social group also have different linguistic experiences. Individuals within a group tend to differ to the extent that their individual discursive history, and present place in social institutions differ.

It is interesting to stress, that although Kress' linguistic analysis favours to a certain extent a strong social determination, his description of the linguistic formation of social groupings and individuals is not deterministic. That is, his proposals do not exclude the possibility of differences and conflicts at the level of social groups, nor at the level of the individual. Kress(1985) does not explore the notion of discursive conflicts within the individual, nevertheless his proposals as they stand do not rule out this possibility.

In relation to individual readers, the author proposes that differences in discursive histories account for differences in reading. That is, any reading is a particular combination of a set of discourses interacting with the text. These discourses are constructed with respect to race, gender, religion, age, class, etc.. As there are several intersections of discourses, there are several possible readings of any text. This notion of possible re-readings of a text, is necessary to clarify, from a linguistic perspective, the

reading model proposed in chapter 1. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 3.5.

3.3.5 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON KRESS' PROPOSALS

The discussion above has presented basic concepts necessary to understand how Kress (1985) conceives linguistic processes within a socio-cultural analysis. The author's proposals emphasize that groups and individuals are socially formed by the language they use in their daily interaction. Social groups and individuals shape and are shaped by discourses and genres that they adopt in their social relations. The choice of particular discourses and genres is always determined by socio-ideological factors.

Kress establishes a very close link between ideology and the nature of the written text. His work explores from a linguistic perspective, the ideological conceptions of literacy put forward in section 4.2. In the same direction as Scribner and Cole, Kress recognises a strong link between linguistic knowledge and social practices. Like Street, he also stresses the ideological and culturally embedded nature of such practices. Furthermore, Kress offers an explanation of why language uses cannot be detached from the notion of discourses. His linguistic analysis is useful to understand Levine's proposal of multiple literacies. Therefore, Kress' work further clarifies the issues of literacy previously discussed within two distinct academic traditions: cross-cultural psychology and socio-anthropology. The next section analyses these questions from a cognitive perspective.

3.4 A SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPLANATION OF HIGHER COGNITIVE PROCESSES

The two previous sections are linked by a central argument : language and literacy are social phenomena, and, as such, products of socio-ideological practises. Street has exemplified in his analysis how specific socio-historical conditions give rise to specific social practises and literacy uses. Kress has explored how the formation of social groups and individuals are affected by language uses. That is, how social norms are transmitted through language norms. Accepting such a strong link between language and social practices, a question

is still to be answered : how does the individual, through language, internalize socio-cultural practises?

To explore such a question, the present investigation has searched for information in the psychology field. The studies above mentioned, and the empirical results obtained by Scribner and Cole point in the direction of a cognitive theory not constructed upon a dualistic conception of mind and society. Within the theories available in the field, the socio-historical approach proposed within soviet psychology seems to be the best theoretical option in this line. Going beyond the directions explored by the behaviouristic or Cartesian currents in psychology, the socio-historical current attempts to conceptualize the relationship between external/internal activities. Behaviourist approaches have focussed on the external behaviour and ignored the complexity of internal psychological processes. In contrast, Cartesian approaches have focussed on the internal activity, stressed the role of innate competence, and neglected, as secondary, how social and physical contexts influence individual mental processes.

The present section explores some basic concepts brought to the fore by Soviet social-historical psychology. These concepts provide insights into the internalization of social processes, and they also provide a theoretical foundation for a social-based description of selective focus in reading, as discussed below.

3.4.1 A MARXIST APPROACH TO COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS

The socio-historical or socio-cultural school in Soviet psychology is mainly guided by a basic Marxist assumption : to understand the individual, one must first understand the social relations in which the individual exists. This school in psychology was originally created under the influence of the theoretical and methodological proposals of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. It was also highly influenced by the work developed by two of his students Alexander R. Luria and Alexei N. Leont'ev. In the mid 1920's Vygotsky set out to reconstruct psychology in a manner that would be faithful to the Marxist's philosophy and method. To develop such a psychology, Vygotsky adopted many of Marx's ideas about the relationship between consciousness and practical

activity at the social level, and applied them to problems in the psychological analysis of consciousness.

Lee (1985) established an interesting parallel between the axioms shared by Marx and Vygotsky, which is important in clarifying how the authors conceive the nature of consciousness. Considering the relation between practical activity and consciousness, Marx proposed that subject and object are created by their constant interaction in practical activity. Man shapes, changes and creates reality, and consciousness is an integral part of this process. In the same line of argument, Vygotsky stated that consciousness is neither reducible to behaviour nor separate from it, but it is an attribute of the organization of practical activity.

Distinguishing human practical activity from animal activity, Marx considered the Darwinian evolution adequate to explain the development of animal organization, but not adequate to explain the structure of human productive labour. Human production differs from animal production due to different levels of awareness. Human productive labour includes subjects aware of their relationship to others and their activities, and it is this awareness that guides production. Human labour is not only primitive and instinctive, it has the character of premeditated, planned action directed toward definite ends known in advance. So, labour must be explained in terms of a new principle of development: dialectical materialism. Man acts on the external world and by changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.

Vygotsky, applying these notions to cognitive development, proposes the existence of two lines of development: a natural and a social line. The natural line is characterized by processes subject to physiological laws and simple principles of learning. It corresponds to Piaget's sensory-motor period. The social line is heavily dependant on the child's acquisition of language, and it follows principles based upon the structure of communication. By moving from the natural to the social, a child becomes part of a social system, whose evolution is governed by principles of dialectical materialism.

Both Marx and Vygotsky considered consciousness as dialectical. Marx understood that consciousness changes as the organization of the productive forces and relations develops. When new levels of this organization develop, new forms of consciousness emerge. As productive forces and relations exist in a dialectical interplay which takes place in real time, the study of consciousness must be both dialectical and have a historical or genetic dimension. Vygotsky applied the same principle to explain the nature of development. He proposes that cognitive development is not the result of a gradual accumulation of separate changes. A child develops in a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive factors which overcome impediments that the child encounters.

Within the work of both authors, practical activity is interpreted in functional terms. To Marx at the level of society, practical activity should be analysed in terms of production. However, production can only be understood in a functional relation to consumption. That is, production and consumption cannot be defined without showing the role one plays in respect to the other. Extending the functionalist explanation to psychological processes, Vygotsky proposes that the definition of all psychological states and processes presupposes one another, and are all functionally interrelated by consciousness. Memory necessarily presupposes the activity of attention, perception, and comprehension. Perception includes functions of attention, recognition or memory, and understanding.

Finally both Marx and Vygotsky see human activity as mediated. Within the Marx and Engels tradition, labour is linked to the existence of tools : a thing or complex of things, which the labourer interposes between himself and the subject of his labour, and which serves as conductor of activity. Vygotsky extended the notion of mediation by tools to mediation by signs. Signs are used in order to manage the psychological tasks involved in coordinating one's efforts with others and in self regulation (Lee (1985)).

This parallel between Marx and Vygotsky is useful in understanding the direction followed by the socio-historical school in psychology. Accepting that human conscious activity is not determined by a concrete material vehicle - the brain - it seeks for psychological explanations in socio-historical processes. As Luria states:

In order to explain the highly complex forms of human consciousness one must go beyond the human organism. One must seek the origins of conscious activity and "categorical" behaviour not in the recesses of the human brain or in the depths of the spirit, but in the external conditions of life. Above all, this means that one must seek the origins in the external processes of social life, in the social and historical forms of human existence (Luria (1981) p.25).

Thus, within this approach, the understanding of individual higher cognitive processes is necessarily linked to the understanding of social relations in which the individual exists. Higher psychological functions characteristic of human beings first appear at the social (inter-psychological level) and only later at the individual (intra-psychological) level (Vygotsky 1978 p.57). As Vygotsky proposes:

Any higher mental function necessarily goes through an external stage in its development because it is initially a social function. This is the center of the whole problem of internal and external behaviour. (...) When we speak of a process, "external" means "social". Any higher mental function was external because it was social at some point before becoming an internal, truly mental function. It was first a social relation between two people. The means of influencing oneself were originally means of influencing others, or others' means of influencing an individual. (Vygotsky 1981 p.162)

The socio-cultural determination of the human mind - a concept central to the Vygotskian approach - is anchored upon two theoretical notions : (a) internalization (b) semiotic mediation. Both notions are discussed in further detail in the sections below.

3.4.2 INTERNALIZATION : THE SEMIOTIC MEDIATION OF SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONING

One of Vygotsky's greatest contributions to the formulation of a cognitive Marxist theory was to propose that the internalization of social processes is possible due to the mediation of sign systems, especially language. Accepting Marx's and Engel's view of labour and

tool use as critical in the creation of human consciousness, he claims that this activity is made possible due to the use of sign systems - "psychological tools" (Vygotsky 1981 p.136). The semiotic mediation of practical activity makes it possible for humans to be aware of and plan their actions using historically transmitted and socially created means of production:

The symbolic activity (has) a specific organizing function that penetrates the process of tool use and produces new forms of behaviour. (1978 p.24)

This notion is further explored by Leont'ev:

(...) human activity assimilates the experience of human kind. This means that humans' mental processes (their "higher psychological functions") acquire a structure necessarily tied to the socio-historically formed means and methods transmitted to them by others in the process of cooperative labour and social interaction. But it is impossible to transmit the means and methods needed to carry out a process in any way other than in external form - in the form of an action or external speech (Leont'ev 1981 p.56).

What is fundamental to stress, as Wertsch (1981) well points out, is that when Vygotsky proposes that human behaviour is mediated by sign systems, he is not simply proposing that sign systems mediate some activity that would exist without them. He is, in fact, claiming that these systems are constitutive of the activity:

(sign systems) are not viewed as being handy tools for making an existing activity easier. Rather, as in the case with all forms of mediation, they allow and even lead to the creation of types of activities that would not otherwise exist (Wertsch 1981 p.26)

Discussing ontogenetic processes, Vygotsky proposes that initially, the growth of elementary psychological functions in a child - forms of memory, perception, practical tool using intelligence - is biological, similar to the mental life of apes. At this early stage of development, thought is governed primarily by biological factors and simple reflex learning. When speech and use of signs are incorporated into any action, the action becomes transformed and organized along entirely new lines. There is a change from the biological line of development to the socio-historical one:

(...) the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to purely human forms of practical

and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development converge. (...) Prior to mastering his own behaviour the child begins to master his surroundings with the help of speech. This produces new relations with the environment in addition to the new organization of behaviour itself' (Vygotsky 1978 p.24-25).

At this point, the individual's biological line of development obeys socio-historical principles of evolution:

'Cultural development is superimposed on the processes of growth, maturation, and organic development of the child. It forms a single whole with these processes. It is only through abstraction that we can separate one set of processes from the other.

The growth of the normal child into civilization usually involves a fusion with the processes of his/her organic maturation. Both planes of development - the natural and cultural - coincide and mingle with one another. The two lines of changes interpenetrate and in essence form a single line of socio-biological formation of the child's personality.' (Vygotsky 1960- quoted in Lee 1985 p.74)

Thus, the acquisition of speech triggers a transformation and re-organization of pre-existing cognitive processes. Learning to speak, a child acquires a social system of signs which any institution develops according to socio-historical principles of dialectical materialism. In this way, through language, a child internalizes society (see Vygotsky (1978, 1962, 1981); Wertsch (1985b); Bruner (1985); Davydov and Radzikhovskii (1985); Lee (1985); Zinchenko (1985); Wertsch and Stone (1985)).

The following section explores the characteristics of the linguistic sign that makes feasible the passage of external to internal processes. However, before proceeding with the discussion a clarification must be made. Within the Vygotskian perspective, the internalization process has been investigated at two different levels: ontogeny and phylogeny. Scribner (1985) discusses this matter in great detail. The present discussion, for the sake of brevity is only focussing on ontogenetic issues. The evidence provided by ontogenetic studies seems to be sufficient to describe - in a general way - how consciousness can be linguistically formed.

3.4.3 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE INTERNALIZATION PROCESS

Vygotsky proposes that the passage from the inter-psychological level to the intra-psychological level is mainly possible due to the nature of human interaction and due to specific characteristics of the linguistic sign. The primary reason for human beings to participate in verbal interaction is to engage in communication and self regulation. In fact the two main functions of speech are communication (social contact) and representation (reference and predication).

The possibility of other regulation and self regulation through language is feasible mainly because language is structured as a multi-functional, communicative, and representational system. The multi-functional aspect of language allows it to be used in many types of goal directed activity, such as : getting someone to do something, providing information, promising (see Austin 1962). This aspect of language makes it possible for adults , or more expert peers, to regulate and control the action of young children (Vygotsky (1978)).

Initially, as Wertsch and Stone (1985) pointed out, a child says more than he/she realizes and, by understanding what is meant by what is said, develops cognitive skills. That is, the child starts by producing seemingly appropriate communication behaviour. Words are not used in their categorical meaning - as adults use them - but as mere indicators. This behaviour is enough to sustain the adult/child verbal interaction. Gradually, in a process of acculturation, the child recognizes the significance of the external sign forms that he/she has already been using in social interaction. This acquisition of word meaning leads to increasingly stable and de-contextualized categorical verbal behaviour, which is essential for the development of higher mental functions.

The initial asymmetrical communication between adult/child is possible because word meaning - even though intrinsically generalized and categorical - has also a referential component. That is, word meaning involves extremes of maximally generalized abstract

conceptualization - determined by the word's position in a system of sense relations - and the immediate sensory grasp of an object - determined by the perceptual aspect it denotes (for further detail see appendix 2 (a)). The initial stage of adult/child interaction is based on an agreement on reference. The child is able to pick out objects independently of categorizing these objects in terms of generalized meaning (Wertsch and Stone 1985).

However, this very simple understanding of words, is enough to maintain basic verbal interaction. The child, by using speech forms that have the effect upon the adult of referring/predicating, is able to get the adult to do things for him/her. It is this interaction that provides the force behind the transition from the biological to the culturally based psychological processes.

Through verbal interaction, the child is gradually confronted with the way adults understand language. That is, the child is induced to perceive the multi-functional aspect of language and is lead to understand word meaning not in terms of a context bound sign-object relationship, but in terms of a complex semiotic system that involves sign-sign relationships. This process of language use and internalization of word meaning triggers contrasting but related vectors of development: development of planned action, linguistically mediated motivation, and development of logic and abstract thought. Lee (1985), reviewing Vygotsky's work, states that on one hand the apprehension of means-end and inter-personal aspects of language use is mainly responsible for the upsurge of inner speech and linguistically mediated motivation. On the other hand, the discrimination between the immediate referential component of word meaning from its more abstract and categorical component makes possible the development of logic and abstract thought.

3. 4. 3. 1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER SPEECH.

Initially, very young children are unable to detach word from concrete objects (Vygotsky (1978, chapter 5), Luria (1981, chapter 3)). Action and speech are seen as undifferentiated parts of the same psychological function directed to fulfil some ongoing and

context specific goal directed activity. Gradually, because speech activities occur together in the same perceptual field, a progressive differentiation and internalization of speech and perceptual field occur. This allows speech to become a mediator for the perceptual field, which enables the child to have greater freedom from the concrete visual aspects of the situation.

A further step is accomplished when speech mediates and supplants the immediacy of natural perception. The child is then able to perceive the world through language as well as through sensory perception. This shift from the ongoing situation makes possible the development of planned behaviour. The child, not needing to be tied to the immediate concrete action, is then able to regulate his/her own action on the basis of the means-end aspect of language use previously experienced in verbal interaction with adults. That is, he/she is able to use language as an aid to foresee a situation and plan in advance the nature of the solution. Self-regulation grows out of other-regulation.

To better explain how this process occurs, it is necessary to clarify how Vygotsky foresees the interactional nature of development. To Vygotsky a child's development occurs at two levels. The actual developmental level established as a result of already completed developmental cycle, and a higher developmental level. This higher level, labelled by the author 'zone of proximal development' (Z.P.D.), encompasses the cognitive functions that have not yet been matured, but are in process of maturation. At this level the child, even though not able to carry on the action on his/her own, is capable to do it under the guidance or in collaboration with a more capable peer. The structure of the joint activity becomes internalized (actual level of development), Vygotsky (1978 p.85-91). See also Cole (1985).

Ontogenetically, this process follows three steps according to Vygotsky (Vygotsky (1962), Wertsch and Stone (1985)). Initially the child uses language to engage in communication and to accomplish certain immediate goals. This use leads to the mastery of word meanings and linguistic norms. By mastering language, the child

gradually starts to differentiate the referential and regulative aspects of speech from its pragmatic communicative function. At the beginning this differentiation is incomplete. So, whenever the child is in a demanding situation, where planning of action is necessary, the child uses overt forms of speech - characteristic of verbal interaction - to organize his/her action. This process gives rise to egocentric speech (see appendix 2 (b)). Gradually, the planning function of speech is more clearly differentiated from its social communicative function. The egocentric speech is internalized - it becomes inner speech. Inner speech is more condensed than normal speech, and it obeys a different grammar principle (Wertsch (1979 b, 1985 b)). It no longer requires the overt form of a communicative context. At this stage the social foundations of collaborative forms of behaviour that previously existed at the inter-psychological plane, are transferred to the sphere of the individual's psychological functioning - intra-psychological plane. The conscious plan of action is then made possible through the mediation of language.

3.4.3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINGUISTICALLY MEDIATED MOTIVATION AND ABSTRACT THOUGHT.

The development of linguistically mediated motivation is well exemplified by children's play. Through play, new motivation and new kinds of attitude toward reality are created. The action of very young children tends to be attached to the immediate situation. It is the situation that dictates what can be done given what is wanted. For instance, the vision of a bell may trigger the action of ringing the bell. In contrast, in a play situation, reality bends to conception and action is dictated not by the object per se but by the idea represented by it. A broom stick becomes a "horse". Action is no longer guided by what the child is actually seeing, but by what the child imagines. In play, the child constructs meaning to guide action.

According to Lee (1985), the mediation of meaning /object relation, essential for the development of play, is a process that follows three main steps. Initially, the child understands that the

word "horse" is attached to the object horse. At a later stage, there is a separation of word and object, to make the word stand for the desirable object. This leads to a final stage in which meaning is attached no longer to the object horse, but to the word "horse". This detachment from word/object - triggered by play - makes possible the development of a more complicated motivational structure in which language fulfils the role of the immediate situation to generate action.

The integration of a child into a verbally mediated action also creates conditions for the development of logic and abstract thinking. This vector of development is linked to awareness about abstract forms of categorization that are a constitutive part of linguistic meaning. As Vygotsky proposes:

' In order to transmit some experience or content of consciousness to another person, there is no other path than to ascribe the content to a known class, to a known group of phenomena, and as we know this requires generalization. Thus it turns out that social interaction necessarily presupposes generalization and the development of word meaning, i. e. generalization becomes possible with the development of social interaction' (Vygotsky 1956 p.51 quoted in Wertsch and Stone 1985).

Simultaneously, an increase in levels of generalization allows the child to reach new possibilities of communication and, as a consequence, new levels of generalization. So, the demands of the social (verbal) interaction forces the child to move away from the context bound representational function of language and to apprehend abstract forms of categorization, which are intrinsic components of word meaning. When the child becomes aware of sign-sign relations, he/she is no longer constrained by the restrictions imposed by the concrete context. That is, he/she is able to use language to represent anything, including language itself. The application of the self reflexive representational properties of language to its own representational properties is essential to the development of logic and abstract thinking. Within the Vygotskian approach, this issue is exemplified by the acquisition of the scientific concept (Vygotsky (1962); Luria (1981); Lee (1985); Werstch and Stone (1985)).

Summarizing, through the concrete activity of verbal interaction with adults and/or more experienced peers, a child is encouraged to master the full significance of the linguistic sign that was latent in his/her social communication. The mastering of the linguistic meaning has a direct effect on the development of higher cognitive functions. It gives rise to an entirely new form of motivation, it triggers the development of logic and abstract thought, and it also makes possible the planning of action. Therefore, human consciousness is formed within the context of a particular activity - verbal interaction - which is made possible due to the mediation of semiotic systems, language in particular. As Lee (1985) stressed, Vygotsky considered language an ideal mediate device in the process of consciousness formation due to its reversibility. Speech can be reversible because words can be both stimulus and response. A heard word is the stimulus, and a word pronounced is a reflex producing the same stimulus. (Lee (1985) p.76).

This tight link between consciousness formation and verbal interaction is a basic argument to support the main claim within a Vygotskian approach: higher cognitive processes involved in conscious activity are not merely a product of biological development. They are social in nature, and their development depends mainly on the social use of linguistic signs. Linguistic signs are part of a system, whose dominant structuring principle is social contact and communication. As social interaction is determined by historical and cultural processes, higher cognitive functions involved in conscious activity must be explained in socio-historical terms.

The theoretical account offered by the socio-cultural approach parallels Street's affirmation that literacy can only be understood in the context of socio-ideological practices. It also links with Scribner's and Cole's empirical findings on the cognitive abilities promoted by different literacy practices (see section 3.2). Such an approach is also useful in understanding how the listener/reader, speaker/writer are constructed as certain kinds of linguistic and social beings. As Kress proposes, within his linguistic account:

'there is a significant place for a psychology of a certain kind, concerned to provide an understanding of how the social is internalized to become the individual/psychological' (Kress (1985), p. 2).

The Vygotskian approach seems to be a useful theoretical option to offer such a psychology.

3.4.4 SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING: A SOCIAL-BASED DESCRIPTION.

The previous section has discussed the relationship between internal/external linguistic activities. It has pointed out how the socially evolved meaning system of a speech community affects the development and the form of intra-psychological functions. The discussion has stressed that higher mental functions are functionally interrelated to consciousness, and consciousness is culturally formed. The present section aims, in the light of such a proposal, to provide a social-based description of reading selective focus.

The present study takes it that the reading process is a conscious activity and, therefore, that it involves higher mental functions. Accepting that higher mental functions are socially formed, it also assumes that the special focus that readers give to certain items of information in a text - their selective focus - is linked to a criterion of relevance that is socially learned and ideological in nature.

Readers, as individuals, belong to social groups and share the membership of specific institutions that are accessible to these groups. Their social experience provides them with a set of meanings, prohibitions and permissions. Such a set of meaning and values that characterize their social experience and activity shapes and is shaped by: the kind of language used by their own group; the texts that tend to be prominent in their community; and content and function of these texts (Kress 1985). In other words, by interacting with texts that occur in concrete situations, individuals learn what type of social beings they need to be in order to be a member of a particular group/society. They become familiar with the discourses and genres that are characteristic of their own social group, and

tend to accept as 'natural' the set of meanings, values, and behaviour shared by their social community.

Social contact and communication allows external processes to be internalized as truly mental functions (Vygotsky 1981). So, through linguistic interaction, the meanings and values relevant to the social institutions (external processes) are assimilated by the individual affecting his/her way of perceiving, understanding, and acting upon reality (internal processes). The detailed ethnographic study conducted by Heath (1983) provides empirical evidence for this line of analysis. The data collected by the author showed how two working class communities - Tracktown and Roadville - had distinct conceptions about 'ideal' language uses. It also showed that these two literate groups had different ways of interacting with written material. Heath stressed in this study how these groups' language/literacy experiences differed from middle class (school) practices, and how these differences could be associated with the school failure of the working class children. The author's comparison between story telling in Tracktown and Roadville also illustrated how different language uses may create different expectancies in relation to texts. In Roadville, tales have the function of reassuring the commitment to community and church values. They highlight personal and community weakness, and the struggle faced by individuals to overcome and live through them.

In Tracktown tales are intended to intensify social interaction and to give every one the opportunity to share the common experience on which the story is based, and the humour of language play and imagination. Individuals are, therefore, expected not to give straight forward accounts of reality, but to re-tell a story with a particular style that expresses their feelings about the story.

The different purposes fulfilled by the stories affect the way they are structured, and their evaluation as good or bad stories. As Heath points out:

... in Tracktown there is only one 'true story', that would be to Roadville residents anything but true. In contrast, neither Roadville's factual accounts or tales from the Bible would be

termed stories in Tracktown... In short, for Roadville, Tracktown's stories would be lies; for Tracktown Roadville's stories would not even count as stories (Heath 1983 p. 189).

It is reasonable to expect that these different conceptions about what constitute a 'true story' - described by Heath - lead to different ways of dealing with the text and also favour the adoption of different selective focus. In one case, this focus is going to be directed to information that supports a moral lesson, in the other case, the focus will be directed to linguistic creativity and fiction.

Applying this general theoretical framework to reading, it is possible to say that the comprehension of any written material is highly affected by the nature of the social/linguistic activities that are accessible and familiar to readers. These activities will affect the way readers apprehend the content of a text, and will also influence the type of information that they select as relevant. That is, selective focus is a process guided by a value criterion, which is a product of socio-ideological practices. The familiarity with certain practices will make readers aware of and search for specific types of information in the text that are relevant to these practices and disregard others as peripheral and irrelevant. This criterion of relevance is affected by the discursive history that readers bring to the text. It is the readers discursive history that will determine how a specific reader understands the content and function of a text, and also how he /she perceives the demands of a particular situation of reading.

Since reading may occur in different social situations, and since readers may bring to the text many different discursive histories, the selective focus adopted during the reading of a single text may vary between readers and also between situations of reading. This broad possibility of variation has been ignored or not fully explored by text-based and reader-based approaches to selective focus in reading. The critical reading model proposed in chapter 1 may be seen as an attempt to represent such a possibility of variation. In this model special emphasis is given to situations in which reading occurs

in a context of unequal power position - an issue further discussed below.

3.5 A SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ACCOUNT OF CRITICAL READING SELECTION.

Chapter 1 proposes a reading model based on the guide lines provided by a particular educational model, i.e. Critical Education. This model of education is particularly concerned with those students whose own lived experiences and sedimented histories are at odds with the dominant culture. It proposes that classroom practices should aim at developing in learners a spirit of critical inquiry. This attitude may lead them to be aware of the contradictory nature of their own social reality. By perceiving contradictions learners may become informed about the nature of the social conditioning that they are subject to, and also conscious of their potential of acting upon social constraints. .

However an educational line is not itself a sufficient condition to promote a critical attitude through classroom reading practices. The teaching of reading occurs within methodologies. Any reading methodology is based not just upon a conception of education, but also upon a conception of learning and of language. So far the present research has discussed the two last conceptions focussing on one specific process involved in reading: selective focus. This study assumes that a methodology that aims to promote critical reading should be informed of cognitive and linguistic theories that emphasize the role of social issues in language uses. The Vygotskian approach offers an insightful contribution in the understanding of the socio-cultural formation of the human mind. Its proposals of 'zone of proximal development' also provide an interesting social conception of the learning process. Kress's linguistic accounts offer some theoretical fundamentals to analyse language from a socio-ideological perspective. The notion of social power, explored by the author, is useful to interpret problems that a reader may face when reading a text in a situation in which his/her discursive history is not in a privileged power position.

3.5.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATION OF THE NOTION OF POWER.

Kress analyses the notion of power through two different perspectives. One explores how social power is expressed and indexed through texts (Kress (1985), p.52-67). The other indicates how social power may be challenged through resistant reading (ibid. p.42-43). Even though the author considers both possibilities, his work mainly discusses the former, i.e. how ideologies, discourses, and genre are produced and reproduced through texts, and how texts are used in the struggle for ideological dominance. The author's approach certainly offers insights into understanding how discourses supported by powerful institutions are in a privileged position to be socially reproduced.

However, Kress does not explore how a specific discourse or genre gains the necessary power to be institutionally supported. He also does not explore in great detail how norms of discourse and genre can be reformulated within the context of linguistic interaction. His discussion indicates that reading outputs may vary due to the reader's discursive history. He also makes reference to the effect of the reading situation on reading, but this is not a possibility that he analyses further.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the social situation, aimed at by particular acts of reading, also tends to favour specific types of discourses and genres. So, the consideration of both - the reader and the situation of reading - seems necessary to explore the fluid nature of discourses' power. In fact, the reading act presents an indissoluble connection among discourse and genre privileged in three systems: the situation of reading, the text, and the reader. This connection is displayed in figure 3.2 below.

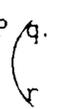
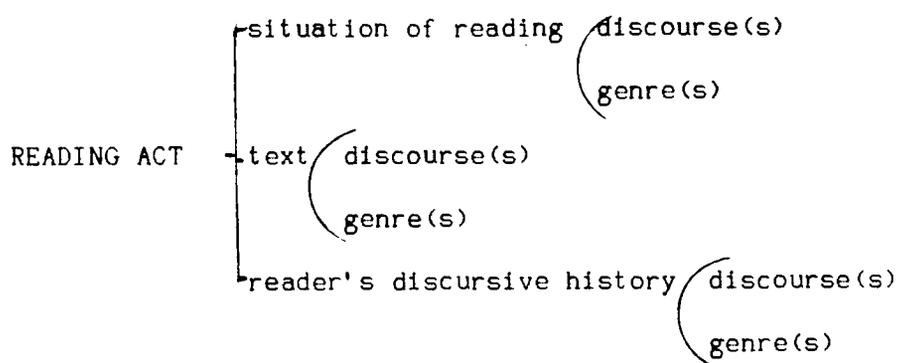
The notation used in figure 3.2 is $P \begin{matrix} q \\ r \end{matrix}$.  This notation was suggested by Ogborn (1988). It implies that in describing the features of P, attention must be given to the description under both q and r.

Fig. 3.2 Representation of discourses and genres involved in a reading act.



The connection between these systems should be understood as an inter-functional one. That is, it is not possible to describe any of the systems without taking into consideration the role each plays with respect to the other. Each system both presupposes and creates the other (see appendix 2 (c) for further discussion). For instance, a reader can only be constituted as a 'reader' in the presence of a text to be read. The interaction of reader and text always occurs within specific situations of reading. The act of reading is influenced by the reader's discursive history. Such a discursive history, is built upon the concrete experience that the reader had with the texts and the specific social situation in which he/she was exposed to these texts.

In a similar way, texts depend on and presuppose a reader and a reading situation. Any text is a dialogue; it is motivated by and aims at an audience and a situation of reading, and such an aim is reflected in the way the text is constructed. (Voloshinov 1929). Yet, texts 'become' texts in concrete acts of reading, which occur in concrete social situations and involve concrete readers. The nature of this situation and the reader will also determine the way a text is read. The same inter-functional connections apply to the situation of reading.

The inter-functional connection that exists between situation/text/reader allows multiple arrangements of genres and discourses. The present research proposes that the variation of these possible arrangements account for the variations in reading outputs. The multiple combinations that are possible give a dispersed nature to the power of discourse and genre norms. Any form of social organization is characterized by different and conflicting conceptions of reality, which are in constant tension fighting for dominance. It is not always predictable how the discourses privileged by the situation, the reader, and the text will interact within a concrete act of reading. Neither is it possible to foresee with certainty, how the power of particular discourses may intersect and create context for some discourses to become more socially accepted.

Institutional power does not have full control over how discourses and genres intersect, neither can it clearly predict how powerful and well-accepted certain intersections will be in specific socio-historical contexts. Thus, institutional power is not deterministic. However, in situations where social sanction is involved, the power acquired by specific social institutions does have an influence in the imposition of particular discourses and genres. In this case, the reading act is constrained by specific social values and meanings, and readers only have degrees of freedom. Whenever social sanction is involved, readers need to be aware of the nature of the social constraints. Such an awareness is a necessary condition to resist and struggle against oppression. This is the specific type of situation addressed by the reading model proposed in chapter 1. The present study considers that school is an institution in which powerful ideologies are promoted through the curriculum, and imposed through the sanction of the assessment procedures. Therefore, it expects to find within the educational context instances of the reading situation predicted by the proposed reading model.

3.5.2 CRITICAL READING RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE.

Chapter 1 defended the idea that an ideal literacy program should lead readers to be more aware of possibilities that exist within their own social reality. A critical reader should be able to challenge the

myths and contradictions of the existing society, and to perceive more clearly its reality in order to find new directions for actions. It was proposed that such an attitude towards texts can only be achieved if learners are made aware of the ideological nature of any social practices.

In relation to literacy practices, readers should question to what extent the ideologies conveyed by texts illuminate or distort the way their own social reality is perceived or lived. As Giroux proposed, ideologies that operate at the level of unconscious needs, common sense, or critical consciousness can both reflect the reality of social practices or mythicize the nature of such a reality. Kress addresses the latter issue when he proposes that, due to ideological struggle, one of the functions of texts is to hide contradiction and conflict between discourses. In this way, texts serve the assimilating tendency of discourses.

This study is assuming that awareness of ideological differences and contradictions is essential to promote the emancipatory potential from ideologies, and to resist the assimilating tendency of powered discourses. Both reading problems considered by the present work - i. e. naive and passive reading - are being defined in terms of unawareness of social differences.

Considering Kress' theory of discourse, naive reading may be identified by its lack of awareness of the nature of powered discourses within situations. Discussing reading practices, Kress suggests that if a reader 'occupies' a discursive history which contrasts with or contradicts the discourses appearing in a given text, he/she will tend to resist the reading position provided by the text from the point of view of his/her own contrasting discourse. This may provide a linguistic account of the source of naive reading.

To reconstruct texts within the framework of one own's history is a possible and natural process. However in a situation of unequal power a reader is not entirely free to choose the ways in which a text is going to be reconstructed. Unequal power position may involve social sanction. Thus, if a reader is unaware of the norms of discourse and

genre privileged by the reading situation, and naively reconstructs the text through the perspective of his/her socially undervalued discursive norms, he/she runs the risk of being socially penalized. Naive reading overlooks differences in power. Due to social power, what is a natural process of reconstruction of textual meaning may become socially problematic.

In contrast, passive reading is characterized by a lack of awareness of the hidden contradictions that exist between the 'reality' portrayed by texts, and the reality of one's own social praxis. Passive reading reflects a process of individual/group suppression. Considering Kress proposals, it may be possible to account for the origin of such a reading problem in terms of the colonizing tendency of discourses and institutional power. Groups with more social power are in a better position to spread their discourses across institutions. These groups are also in a better position to impose their own discourses with the help of institutional sanctions.

Schooling may well represent this process of discourse spread and imposition. Through the exposition of a selected set of texts, or through the sanctioning of 'non-proper' readings, readers are taught how to distinguish and select the 'relevant' information according to 'proper' discourses and genres. The learning of the valued choices of discourse and genre allows the reader to avoid the problem of social exclusion. However, this learning may occur acritically. That is, the reader may be unaware of the ideologies that lie behind the 'chosen' discourses or whose interests these ideologies serve. In this case, he/she may run the risk of passively reproducing a set of values, ideas and behaviours that are in contradiction with his/ her own individual/group real needs.

The two types of reading, discussed above, are marked by a fragmented conception of the social reality. Naive reading neglects the nature of the social structure with its powered ideologies and its valued norms of discourse and genre. Passive reading neglects the individual/group ideologies, discourses and genres. Both types of

reading are problematic for readers in powerless positions. Such a reader requires a critical approach to texts.

To Kress a reader is critical and resistant if he/she is able to:

- a) see the constructedness of the text and of the reading position.
- b) reconstruct the text in a manner useful to himself/herself.

He also proposes that critical reading is possible due to the fact that readers may distance themselves from text and adopt a type of subversive reading position which does not accept the expected reading position. Distance from texts may be attributed to three different factors:

- a) different discursive history.
- b) different reading position than that of the writer's coded reading position.
- c) different context of reading than the one foreseen by the author.

Such factors are represented in the reading model proposed in chapter 1. However, some theoretical associations being made here must be clarified. What in the model is being labelled 'values' and 'needs', may be related to Kress notion of 'ideology'; 'uses of knowledge' may be related to his notion of 'discourse'; and finally, 'interaction roles' may be related to his notion of 'genre'. Accepting as plausible these theoretical associations, it is possible to say that, from a linguistic perspective, a critical reader should be defined as a reader capable of perceiving, within a specific reading situation, the possibility of variation and difference in the social value attached to language uses. To perceive such differences, this reader should be aware of:

- a. the ideological nature of any text.
- b. the nature of social constraints that exist within specific reading situations, and how it affects the value attributed to certain discourses and genre.

c. the conflict between the discourse(s) and genre(s) privileged by reading situations, and the reader's own discursive history.

d. The conflict of discourse(s) and genre(s) constitutive of a text, and the reader's own discursive history.

This awareness seems essential to avoid passive and naive types of reading, and to promote a critical approach to texts. Readers to be critical need to be aware of their own discursive history, the nature of the social constraints they have to face in different reading situations, to choose, among the possibilities available, the one that best suits their own individual/group interests.

3.6 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The present chapter aimed at describing the effect of social norms on selective focus. In order to explore this matter in a comprehensive way, it linked theoretical proposals from different academic fields. This inter-disciplinary approach attempted to provide a richer perspective to interpret reading acts in social situations. Figure 3.3 shows a graphic representation of the inter-relation of ideas proposed in this chapter. A social-based conception of reading is a necessary theoretical background to understand readers as agents within history. This is the reading attitude that critical education aims to promote. Having established this position on theoretical grounds, the present research proposes to investigate the heuristic value of the axioms adopted. The reading of experienced readers in real life situations was chosen as an ideal source of data to evaluate the issues on selective focus raised by this investigation. Figure 3.4 shows a relational chart of the issues covered by part 1 of this thesis.

[1] The author would like to thank Dr Tony Burgess for pointing out the fact that Kress' analysis does not fully explore Foucault's conception of social systems as systems of possibilities, where changes are not solely structurally determined.

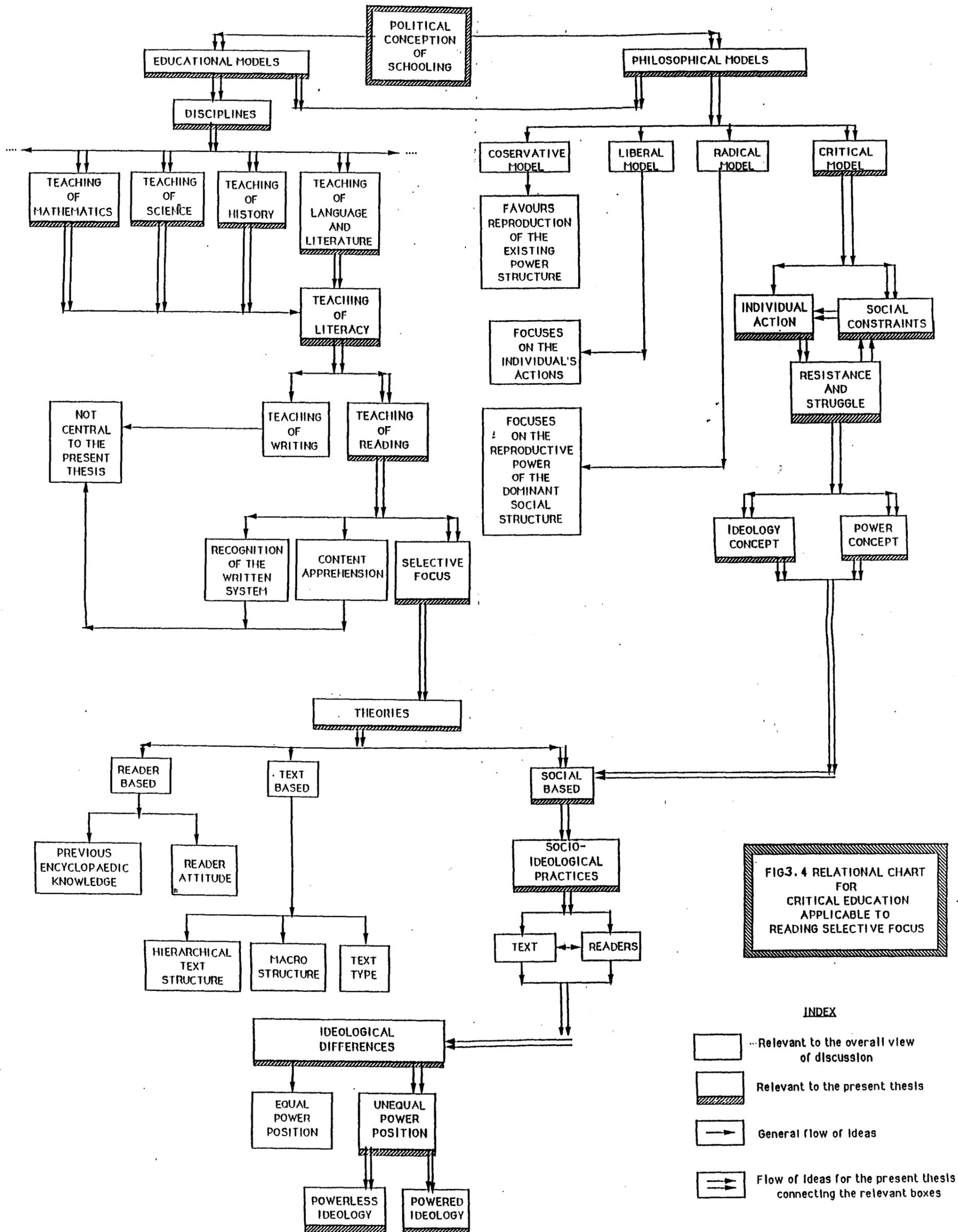


FIG. 4 RELATIONAL CHART FOR CRITICAL EDUCATION APPLICABLE TO READING SELECTIVE FOCUS

- INDEX
- Relevant to the overall view of discussion
 - Relevant to the present thesis
 - General flow of Ideas
 - Flow of Ideas for the present thesis connecting the relevant boxes

PART II

SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING
FROM THE READER'S PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 4

4. SEARCHING FOR A METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 stressed that reading should be understood in functional terms. It also emphasized the importance of social issues for reading in general and for selective focus in particular. Yet, if these issues are so important, as argued in the present thesis, it is reasonable to ask why they had not been addressed by the literature on selective focus. One possible explanation may lie in the nature of the empirical evidence commonly considered. Most of the existing studies are based on data obtained within the context of a single social situation, i. e. experimental situation. Such a restriction may have lead researchers to overlook the possibility of variation in selective focus due to social factors.

Trying to overcome this limitation, this research has opted to focus on daily life reading acts to investigate the heuristic properties of the theoretical issues raised here. Such an option poses serious methodological considerations. The present chapter aims to present and discuss the methodological choices taken in this investigation. Section 4.2 will initially consider the choice of expert readers, and then argue in favour of oral interviews as a suitable instrument for data collection. Section 4.3 discusses the findings of the initial exploratory study and its contribution to refining the methodological procedure. Section 4.4 reports the findings of a second experimental study conducted with the aim of testing and refining procedures in the light of findings from the first study.

4.2 WHY INTERVIEW EXPERT READERS ?

As mentioned above, the present investigation has opted to describe selective focus within the context of daily life reading situations. To consider a reading act as a daily one, two major requirements must be fulfilled:

(a) The reading act must be generated by normal life practices, i. e. it must not be imposed by the researcher or affected by his/her presence or interference.

(b) The reading act must occur in a non-experimental situation.

As a consequence, this type of study places serious constraints on the type of data required and on the nature of the sample to be chosen. The data must comprise the readers' own report, and the sample must be selected from a group of readers who are able to analyse in retrospect and discuss their own reading practices. These requirements favoured the choice of expert readers. In the present research, reading expertise was determined by a formal criterion, i. e. the conclusion of undergraduate higher education. It has been assumed that readers who have successfully completed their degrees, and are engaged in further academic studies, should be regarded as proficient (expert) readers within the educational system. Apart from this formal evaluation criterion, this study assumes that these adult readers have had in their life time enough reading experiences to enable them to describe and have insights into their own reading practices.

Considering available methodological procedures, the present research favours open ended interview as a suitable procedure to access the data aimed at by this investigation. The Gothenburg studies adopted this procedure and indicated the benefits of understanding the learners' behaviour by giving them the freedom to discuss their own learning experiences (Marton, Hounsell, Entwistle(1984)). However, the use of interview to access data on cognitive and metacognitive issues has been a source of academic controversy. Criticisms of this methodology have followed two main lines. One line does not dismiss the possibility of using verbal reports as a source of data, but questions the accuracy of delayed verbalization. It argues that retrospective recall may be affected by memory factors. Thinking aloud method - i. e. simultaneous verbalization of thought and action - has been suggested as a methodological alternative to interview (Ericsson and Wilson(1980), Garner(1987)). Yet to ask readers to think aloud while reading imposes a condition that is not faced in everyday reading

acts. Garner(1987) also proposes three extra methodological alternatives:

(1) cross age tutoring - i.e. analysis of subject-tutors helping young children (non-experts) to read a text and answer very detailed questions about the material.

(2) optimal/non-optimal product - i.e. subjects are asked to produce a good or a bad version of a text (Bacewell(1983); Garner(1983))

(3) hybrid method of interview and thinking aloud.

However all three possibilities fail to fulfil the requirements of a daily reading act. In addition, these suggestions also constrain the possibility of access to reading situations not foreseen by the investigator. Retrospective reports have the advantage of not interfering with the reading act and make possible the access of reading situations not predicted by the investigator.

The second line of criticism focuses mainly on the relation between consciousness/introspection and verbal recall. It questions the capacity of human beings to observe accurately the work of their own minds. It argues that when a process becomes automated it also becomes unconscious. Thus , a great deal of computation involved in cognitive processes is not available to conscious introspection. This second line of criticism may be exemplified by the work of Nisbett & Wilson(1977), Just & Carpenter(1984), White(1988). Just & Carpenter address specifically the reading process. They state that readers are aware of the product of their reading, but not aware of the cues that evoke various expectations or interpretation(Just & Carpenter(1984, p.313-314). Nisbet & Wilson's criticism goes in a similar direction. They propose that there may be little or no access to higher cognitive processes. They suggest that people's reports on cognitive processes may be based on implicit apriori theories about the causal connections of stimulus and response(Nibet & Wilson(1977 p.231-233). Thus both criticisms conclude that accurate reports are not possible due to inescapable cognitive restrictions.

White, reviewing the existing literature raises the possibility of a different type of problem. He suggests that a lay person's report on

cognitive processes may also not be accurate due to social and practical factors. That is, a lay person is not necessarily concerned with making judgements that are accurate, but with making judgements that best suit the practical concerns that appertain to them at the time. In other words, the reports may reflect more of the subject's concern with the social interaction per se that occurs during the interview, than with scientific accuracy. White suggests as a methodological solution, ensuring that it is in the practical interest of the subjects, to make scientific accuracy their highest priority. He also proposes that - in order to have a more accurate assessment of the degree and type of insights people have into external causal influences on their own actions - an emphasis should be given to comparison between scientific standards of the accuracy of the report and practical standards of the report's effectiveness (White 1988 p. 40-41).

Considering this second line of criticism, it is important to clarify the aim and assumptions that guide the present data collection. The aim of this thesis is not to delineate a causal/explanatory theory. Its goal should be understood as restricted to providing a richer set of perspectives to interpret the ways that readers select information from text in daily situations. In spite of the existing controversy, the present study assumes that expert readers' reports are a rich source of information.

Three arguments may be listed to support such an assumption. First of all, reading is an act that requires expertise in very specific skills. The capability of experts to verbalize the requirements necessary to accomplish specific actions is an issue that has been explored by the Vygotskian approaches. The conception of 'zone of proximal development' is anchored on the axiom that it is possible for non-expert individuals to have their action guided by more expert peers. Most of this guidance is verbal (see chapter 3, section 3.4). Secondly, as Nisbett & Wilson suggest, people's reports on cognitive processes may reveal their own implicit a priori theory on the issues involved. If it is so, these theories may be a useful source of insights for exploratory research. Finally, it is important to stress

that this investigation is concerned with describing selective focus. This process involves a value criterion. That is, when reading a text readers judge some pieces of information as relevant, and others as secondary or peripheral. It seems reasonable to expect that readers with extensive reading experience should be able to describe - at least partially - the value criteria that they adopt to select information from a text. In addition, it should be assumed that the interference of social factors - predicted by White(1988) - would diminish if readers were considered experts. That is, readers should be more concerned with the accuracy of their answer if they consider themselves as the expert in the matter being discussed.

Summarizing this discussion, the present research accepts that expert readers are (a) capable of describing the relevant aspects of their own reading practises and (b) capable of having some insights into the nature of the criteria that guide their selective focus. On the basis of these assumptions this study employed interviewing of expert readers as a suitable technique to collect data on daily life reading practices. Nevertheless, it was necessary to develop appropriate procedures to ensure that the reader's replies were useful and sufficiently reliable. To achieve this, two exploratory studies were conducted to evaluate the procedures. Section 4.2 and 4.3 will discuss the stages of development of the procedures from the earlier unsatisfactory attempts to the more appropriate ones.

4.3 STUDY I : AN UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The initial procedure was designed at an early stage of the theoretical reflection. The notion of selective focus was then too embryonic to be fully explored by the researcher. However, as the existing literature has very little to say about the access of non-experimental data in reading, it was felt necessary to investigate a suitable technique to collect the desired data in parallel with the development of the reflection. At this exploratory stage unstructured interviews focussed on reading practice in general seemed to be an adequate methodological approach to maximize individual differences and to give the readers room for unpredictable responses. This historical account is important to understand the nature of the initial concerns.

It is also useful to clarify how this initial attempt contributed to developing more appropriate procedures.

The guiding concerns of this pilot study were:

- (1) to gain some insights into daily life reading practices in general and selection of information within these practices.
- (2) to evaluate the open discussion procedure when used to elicit general reading practices, i. e. to discover if it could generate informative data on selective focus.
- (3) to take steps, if necessary, to refine methodological procedures.

4.3.1 SAMPLE, MATERIAL AND PROCEDURES

On an informal basis, four readers were contacted by the interviewer. All four readers were involved in a post-graduation program at London University. In this initial contact, they were notified that the topic of the present research was reading. They were also informed that the purpose of the data collection was to consult expert readers' opinion about their own reading activities in order to refine research procedures.

A written instruction was given to all readers, asking them to keep a week's reading record, which should be given to the interviewer before the time set for the interview. This procedure aimed to allow the researcher to have, prior to the interview, some ideas about the type of material read. The interviews were conducted in a secluded room and tape recorded. Originally, the intended approach was in line with the informal conversational interview described by Patton(1982). Questions should be spontaneously generated by considering either the respondents' reading diary, or their previous answer(s). The aim was to keep the interview as open as possible. However, the analysis of the data indicated that even though the issues raised in each interview differed, some general pattern could be detected in the questioning. This pattern indicates bias in the interview procedure. The questioning reflected some of the researcher's theoretical concerns. For instance, in all interviews, at some point, questions about selective focus were raised. These questions tended to occur in the context of discussions

on reading to study. The interviewer was also affected by the interview experience. Following the experience of the first interview, the questions raised tended to explore the comparison between different types of text. The interviews started by referring to the reading diary. Such a diary presented a wide range of text types: academic texts, press material, personal letters, literary texts. The interviewee was asked to specify the reading of one type of text, and later to compare this reading with the reading of another type of text mentioned in the diary. Sometimes issues raised by a reader during the interview were brought up by the interviewer in the following ones (for some illustrative examples see appendix 3.1(A)). In spite of the bias, the issues raised during the interviews to a large extent were asystematic.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim. The responses were coded with a letter that indicated the subject and a number that indicated the location of the response in the recorded tape. The protocols were analysed and the questions raised clustered into seven major categories:

- (1) choice of material to read
- (2) reading strategy
- (3) purpose for reading
- (4) subjective factors
- (5) textual factors
- (6) selective focus
- (7) interview strategy

Table 4.1 below provides an account of the issues explored by the different interviews. It is important to clarify that some of the questions raised dealt with a single issue. Others incorporated more than one issue (for an illustrative example see appendix 3.1 (B)). It is also necessary to stress that this table is only reporting the more general categories. Examples of each category of question and response elicited are reported in appendix (see appendix 3.1(C)).

Table 4.1 Nature of the questions raised during the initial set of interviews

ISSUES EXPLORED BY THE QUESTIONS RAISED DURING THE INTERVIEWS			NUMBER OF QUESTIONS EXPLORING THE DIFFERENT ISSUES			
			INTERVIEW A	INTERVIEW B	INTERVIEW C	INTERVIEW D
CHOICE OF MATERIAL TO READ			2	-	-	-
READING STRATEGY	TYPE OF MATERIAL	PERSONAL LETTER	3	2	-	2
		ACADEMIC MATERIAL	7	3	5	4
		PRESS MATERIAL	1	8	3	3
		LITERARY WORK	-	-	1	2
		INSTRUCTION MANUAL	1	-	-	-
		LEAFLETS/ OUTDOOR POSTERS	-	-	-	3
	INTER-TEXTUAL RELATIONS		2	-	-	-
	PURPOSE FOR READING		2	2	3	5
	TRUST IN THE SOURCE		-	3	1	-
PURPOSE FOR READING			1	1	4	6
SUBJECTIVE FACTORS	BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE		1	1	-	-
	PERSONAL INTEREST		1	1	1	1
	INVOLVEMENT WITH THE TEXT	ACADEMIC MATERIAL	1	-	-	2
		PERSONAL LETTER	1	-	-	2
		PRESS MATERIAL	1	-	-	1
		OTHERS	-	-	-	1
TEXTUAL FACTORS	AUTHOR'S INTENTION		2	2	2	1
	TEXT STRUCTURE		1	-	-	1
SELECTIVE FOCUS			3	3	4	5
INTERVIEW STRATEGY	CHECKING CONTENT OF A RESPONSE		13	7	15	18
	ASKING FOR EXPANSION		4	8	10	9
	REPHRASING QUESTION AND CLARIFYING QUESTION'S AIMS		13	4	3	4
	INTRODUCING A TOPIC		14	8	12	15
	INTRODUCING A TOPIC THROUGH COMPARISON		7	8	7	7

As Table 4.1 indicates, the open discussion procedure made possible the access of a wide range of issues involved in reading practices. However, for the sake of brevity, the present analysis has opted to explore only the issues directly relevant to this research: (1) the range of responses related to the notion of selective focus and (2) the contribution of this first study to refining methodological procedures.

4.3.2 SELECTIVE FOCUS : SOME INSIGHTS

All four readers that participated in this study were asked to identify the criterion that guide their strategy of note taking and/or underlining in situations of reading to study. Reader (A) stated that the way she attributed weight to certain information items in a text might be affected by the background knowledge as indicated below :

(A130) sometimes you read a text and perhaps take in or note down what you thought was important. But then, when reading it again at a later date, you will pick up other things that you think are important and you don't know why you didn't pick up in the first time. Perhaps your knowledge base changes during that time, so you are picking other things as important or you read it differently because your knowledge base changed...

(A322) (...) if it is something new that you are looking at, that particular new issue seems to become a major part of the text, whereas when you read it again - because you already know about it - it doesn't seem so important.

Reader (D) also acknowledged that her selection of information may be different between readings. She pointed to the possibility of selective focus being more general or more specific :

(D269) I think it depends on what I am looking for at that moment. If I read it for the first time, and it was my first month here (in England), it would be more general information. But, if I had to re-use the book two months after - when I was more advanced in my studies - perhaps I would look for other things and look at them more closely instead of taking a general view of it.

The notion of purpose for reading hinted by the reader (D) was also stressed by readers (B) and (C).

(B381) Let's put it in this way. If, for example, I am working as a school advisor to help children with some specific needs (...) when I am reading this chapter (...) I would tend to try to remember the specific information which is relevant to my experience during that certain period.

(C534) I have to study it for my lecture so in a way I have to find in the text what we have been discussing during the classes.

(C316) I have something in mind that I am looking for. So I am not reading to increase my knowledge in literature. I have some questions to answer, so what I do, I underline, or try to pay more attention to this sort of thing that is related to what is required.

Reader (C) also pointed out that her selective focus might also vary if her purpose for reading was internally or externally determined.

(324) (what is required) either by the course or by work I have to present. There is a sort of external requirement so the information I am looking for has to fit in this apriori task. I am not reading at all for general background.

(C335) (general background) I think you select information according to your interest, according to your own purpose. You don't have an external purpose to fit in.

Thus, in relation to selective focus, these initial interviews indicated that it might be affected by background knowledge, and by purpose. Purpose for reading might be established by an external task or might be triggered by personal interest on a specific topic.

4.3.3 SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of interviews revealed that comparison between the reading of different text types - i.e. press material, academic material, literary work, personal letter was a constant during the interviews. These comparisons were naturally triggered in the first interview by the fact that the reader had mentioned in her diary the reading of newspaper articles, academic material and a personal letter. These interviews began by making reference to the reading diary :

(I) I have read your diary and you have written what you have read and how you have read it. I would like to ask you some questions. First of all, focussing reading to study, how do you usually chose a paper to study.

The next question was:

(I) When you get those papers do you have any particular way of dealing with them?

After discussing the reading of academic articles in general the reader was asked to compare different types of texts.

(I) Well, you mentioned in your diary that you read basically newspapers, academic articles and a personal letter. Did you find any difference in strategies you have used to read them?

The answer of these questions about strategy triggered questions about purpose for reading

(I) *Why do you read newspapers?*

This question was followed by a question about letter reading which was in sequence related to academic reading.

(I) *When you read a letter how is your reading?*

(I) *How would this be different from your reading of academic articles?*

This interview procedure seemed to have been a useful resource to engage this reader in discussions about her reading practices, and the same procedure was reproduced in the other three interviews. That is, whenever a reader had extensively discussed the reading of a specific type of text, the interviewer would ask him/her to compare it with the reading of another type of the text mentioned in the diary. Originally it was intended to use the diary as a source of concrete reading practices upon which the readers could base their responses. However, as the example above illustrates, the readers' diary was merely used to trigger more general questions about reading.

Table 4.1 above indicates that the interview of expert readers provided some interesting insights into reading practices. However, the readers were not all exposed to the same questions. In addition, the number of questions directly related to selective focus was very small. This result indicated the need to focus the questions more on the theoretical issues central to the present study. A more targeted type of question could help the readers to discuss in more detail selective focus. Reader (A) indicated that readers might have problems in discussing the way they selected information from a text if questions were raised in too a general way, as the example below suggests:

(I) *What makes some information, for you, to be more important than others.*

(A298) *Like the ones I note down, for example?*

(I) *Yes.*

(A302) *I could be noting down everything from a particular part of the text. I would copy down, I would take the key word or*

something that refers to it, but I don't really know how I decide. I mean, I know, I can't really explain.

Summarizing this report, the evaluation of the procedures adopted indicated that :

(a) comparison between different types of text may help readers insights on selective focus within the different reading practices discussed.

(b) the questions raised did not fully explore the readers' insights on selective focus within the different reading practices discussed.

(c) readers may face difficulty in answering general questions about their procedures to select information from a text.

(d) the interviewer was affected by the interview experience, which introduced bias into the procedure.

4.3.4 STEPS TO IMPROVE METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In the light of these results, the study concluded that the open discussion procedure was not indicated for collecting the data aimed at by the present research. A structured type of interview was considered a better type of technique to obtain the responses intended. Such a technique facilitates the focus on the relevant questions, and also has the benefit of reducing the interview bias found in the study.

The main issues reported in Table 4.1 should be the basis for the elaboration of a questionnaire to guide a new set of interviews. The questions should attempt to explore better the effect of different factors on selective focus. Among these factors it should include the ones that tend to be emphasized by the literature such as : reader's interest and background knowledge, and text structure. A section of the questionnaire should explore reading to study. In this type of reading practice, the use of specific study strategies such as note taking or underlining could favour the reader's awareness about the criteria they adopt to select information from text. To avoid the interview effect, this new study should select a new group of readers.

4.4 STUDY II - A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

In the light of findings from the first study, a new study was conducted to refine procedures. Five central questions guided this new study:

- (1) Is a common set of open ended questions able to provide a source of data that would reveal the reader's choice of selective focus and the factors that influence the choice?
- (2) Would the data be sufficiently detailed to reveal (a) within reader cross topic comparisons? (b) between reader comparisons?
- (3) Are the questions formulated in a way that are easily understood by the interviewees?
- (4) Is comparison between different text types a useful trigger to engage readers in discussions about reading practises?
- (5) Is reading to study a suitable situation to explore in further detail the effect of different factors on selective focus?

This broad exploration of method guided the design of a questionnaire. The questions were formulated to further examine points raised in the previous study and also to explore the effect of different factors on selective focus. The final version of this questionnaire (see appendix 3.2) was subdivided into three main sections. Initially, a warming up section reminded the readers of the purpose of the interview, i.e. to access their opinion about their own reading experience. This section also raised general questions about their reading experience in general.

Section II aimed at investigating selective focus within the context of real life reading situations. A brief introduction made the reader aware that the purpose of the study was to gather information on how readers approach texts and select information from the texts they read. The readers were then asked to select from their diary three texts that they considered as very different ones. Question number 1 explored the reader's purpose for reading the texts. The following four questions focussed on comparisons between the texts chosen by the reader. The interviewees were asked to focus

on two of the texts each time and identify similarities and differences between them as texts(question item 2). They were then requested to analyse the similarities and differences in the way they had approached them(question items 3a and 3b); their aims for reading the text(question item 3c) and the information that they expected to obtain from the text(question item 3d). Once these comparisons were concluded, they were asked to select one of the text to compare with the third one. Question items 4 and 5 follow the same pattern of question items 2 and 3 described above.

After these comparisons were concluded, the readers were asked to discuss each text in isolation(questions 5, 6 and 7). These questions aimed to explore each reading in more detail. To focus the discussion, some specific points were raised. The points considered dealt with the reader's background knowledge(question items 5a, 6a and 7a), selective focus(questions items 5b, 6b and 7b) aims for reading(question item 5c, 6c and 7c) and personal interest(question item 5d, 6d and 7d).

Section III explored in more detail the criteria that affected the selective focus within the context of a single reading situation, i.e reading to study. This section started with an open question about selective focus(question item 8). readers were then asked to judge the effect of different criteria on the way they selected specific information items from a text. Three major criteria were explored by the questions : text structure(question item 9), author's intention(question items 10 and 11) and background knowledge(question item 15). A scale with four different factors(text structure/purpose for reading/author's intention/personal interest) was presented to the readers. The interviewees were asked to rank the factors according to their importance to the selective focus that they adopt during reading. The two final questions(question items 16 and 17) explored the readers' conception of critical reading.

The selection of the sample and interview procedures followed the ones adopted in the initial study (see page 122). The readers interviewed varied in their area of specialization: medicine (reader E), engineering (reader F), computer science (reader G) and law

(reader H). The questions were presented to the readers in the same serial order.

4.4.1 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data obtained in this study gave an idea of the complex set of factors that may affect the selective focus adopted during reading. Table 4.2. illustrates the different factors identified during the analysis.

Table 4.2 Description of some of the factors involved in the reading practises selected by four readers

DESCRIPTIONS OF READING SITUATIONS				
READER	TYPE OF TEXT READ	SITUATION OF READING	READING AIM	FOCUS
E	1 JOURNAL ARTICLE (MEDICINE)	STUDY (RESEARCH)	LEARN A TECHNIQUE TO CONDUCT EXPERIMENT	PROBLEMS WITH THE USE OF A SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE
	2 GENERAL INTEREST BOOK (SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR)	LEISURE (PERSONAL INTEREST)	SELF ANALYSIS	ISSUES RELATED WITH PERSONAL LIFE
	3 GENERAL INTEREST BOOK (HUMAN BEHAVIOUR)	LEISURE (PERSONAL INTEREST)	SELF ANALYSIS	ISSUES RELATED WITH PERSONAL LIFE
F	1 MAGAZINE ARTICLE (ECONOMICS)	LEISURE (ENTERTAINMENT)	ACQUISITION OF GENERAL INFORMATION	FACTS AND FIGURES
	2 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (SPORTS)	LEISURE (ENTERTAINMENT)	CURIOSITY	RESULT OF GAMES
	3 TECHNICAL BOOK (ENGINEERING)	STUDY (RESEARCH)	WRITE INTRODUCTION OF THESIS	DEFINITIONS AND CHRONOLOGY OF FINDINGS
G	1 ACADEMIC BOOK (PHILOSOPHY)	STUDY (PERSONAL INTEREST)	DEVELOP FUTURE WORK IN THE AREA	AUTHOR'S MATHEMATICAL MODEL
	2 TECHNICAL REPORT (COMPUTER SCIENCE)	STUDY (RESEARCH)	DISCUSSION WITH A VISITING PROFESSOR	ISSUES RELATED TO HIS RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS
	3 SPECIALIZED MAGAZINE (PHOTOGRAPHY)	LEISURE (HOBBY)	IMPROVE QUALITY OF PHOTOS	PARTS OF THE CAMERA THAT NEED TO BE CONTROLLED
H	1 MINUTES (UN SECURITY COUNCIL DOCUMENTS)	STUDY (RESEARCH)	CHECK PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION	POSITION OF DIFFERENT SPEAKERS ABOUT A SPECIFIC LEGAL PROBLEM
	2 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (AIRCRAFT CRASH)	LEISURE (PERSONAL INTEREST)	CHECK KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED DURING LECTURES	ISSUES RELATED TO COURSE MATERIAL
	3 HISTORICAL BOOK	LEISURE (PERSONAL INTEREST)	TO OBTAIN A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW ABOUT A SPECIFIC HISTORICAL FIGURE	ISSUES THAT NEED FURTHER INFORMATION

Table 4.2 indicates that the reading practises discussed by these readers vary in text type, in situation of reading, and also in reading aims. The difference between these reading practises may be further stressed if one takes into consideration the readers' analysis of the texts read and their approach to reading. Extracts of the interviews below exemplify the type of differences indicated by the readers.

(E304) *'How to be real' is a book that tries to say to you how you could have a happier life if you learn how to listen to yourself and others, how to communicate better. The technical book teaches you how to work with iodine 135. It teaches you how to handle this material, how much substance you should use, what problems you can have with this chemical reaction.*

(E405) *I am working with a problem, I have a problem and I need a solution. I take the text and I never read from beginning to end, I go directly to the part I am interested in(...) I know where they are(...) technical texts are written in a similar way and with a quick look you can find out where they are.*

(E491) *I don't read this book (How to be real) only to solve my immediate problem. It is not in this sense. I read all the book, considering all the chapters.*

Reader F, describing his reading of a magazine article and a technical book in engineering, stated that :

(F301) *(...) I was trying to write the introduction, an introduction to my thesis, so therefore, I had to get information. I had to write something about what had been done all over the years till the present stage and pick from there my own work(...). Although I have read this before, I was reminding myself of the information that I had acquired already in order to try to organize my ideas and get a bulk of information from which I would extract things in an order that would be suitable to write up.*

(F320) *(...) paging (the Economist) through... I saw an article that I was attracted to read. So I started to read it and I found that it was interesting enough to keep on reading. So I read it all. If at some stage I would find it boring or not interesting I would stop. In the first case(technical book) even if it was boring, which it was, I would have to read it to the end.*

Reader G, describing the difference between the two types of text - technical magazine and an academic book, proposed:

(G155) *One tries to be less formal as possible. The photography, one aims at a general public and tries to be very informal. This*

other author is not concerned with the general public - it is a very scientific text with definitions, theorems.

(G163) The language and the way the text is presented (varies). For instance, the encyclopaedia of photography has a lot of figures, tables, photographs to explain things more easily. This other author does not have this type of preoccupation. It is just definitions, facts, theorems. Sometimes he explains what he has in mind, but...

Reader H contrasted his reading of a historical book (due to personal interest) and his reading of minutes (due to research purpose).

(H187) The book I read from A to Z, but I am specifically interested in a narrower geographic area - Damascus and Syria. So I read the whole book, but I was very interested in Damascus and Syria and everything that was said about Lawrence of Arabia.

(H197) (...) In the UN documents I don't read everything. From the very beginning I focus on my legal problem which is consent either by the security council members or by the hostages or by the group of contributors in the conference. So, whenever the word consent appears in the document my eyes catch it and ... here we go...

The variety of types of text read, situations of reading, aims for reading, strategies adopted, all pointed to the complex set of factors that may affect the selective focus adopted by readers. The wide range of differences involved between the reading practices described made it very difficult to compare the readings. As a consequence, it was very difficult to explore how different factors affected the selective focus adopted during reading.

The discussion on reading to study (section III of the interview) seemed to offer a better ground for comparisons. In this specific situation the readers shared a common general purpose for reading, and the texts discussed tended to be academic texts. Internal problems with the instrument and procedure affected the quality of the data obtained (see section 4.2.3 below). However, some general relations may be established. Discussing their underlining, note taking strategy, these readers recognized that it might be affected by the questions they had in mind (readers E and G), by previous background knowledge acquired through lectures or other texts read (reader F and H), and also by the way the text was

organized(reader H). The effect of the three major factors investigated - text, author, background knowledge - is described in Table 4.3 below.

READER	FACTORS		
	TEXT	AUTHOR	BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
E	---	WELL KNOWN AUTHORS READ MORE CAREFULLY	IMPORTANT TO EVALUATE QUALITY OF MATERIAL
F	TEXTS MAY HAVE THEIR OWN UNDERLINING	CONSIDERS AUTHOR'S INTENTION IF TEXT IS UNCLEAR	AFFECTS DIFFICULTY OF READING
G	DOES NOT AFFECT SELECTION OF INFORMATION	NEED TO KNOW THE AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND TO UNDERSTAND HIS ARGUMENT	MAKES EASIER TO UNDERSTAND THE TEXT
H	IS AFFECTED BY HARDWARE (GRAPHIC LAYOUT) AND SOFTWARE (CONTENT)	IMPORTANT TO KNOW SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT	FOCUS ONLY IN WHAT IS NEW

Table 4.3 The effect of text organization, perception of the author's intention and reader's background knowledge on selective focus

Table 4.4 shows how these readers ranked the importance of different factors in situations of reading to study. In this table number 1 stands for the most important criterion.

Table 4.4 may be interpreted as indicating that certain factors - such as purpose - are more important than others in a situation of reading to study. However, reader H's response points to a much more complex possibility. Asked to evaluate the importance of the four factors(text/purpose/author intention/personal interest) to the selective focus adopted within a situation of reading to study he replied :

(H640) *The documents, do you mean the documents ? The second one the purpose... but this is only true for this text.*

(I) *And how about other texts?*

(H644) *Any other, could be any other.*

In relation to critical reading (questions 16 and 17) these readers consider themselves critical readers. For them critical reading implied:

(a) to be able to identify the author's aim for writing a text (reader E)

(b) to be able to establish comparisons (reader E and H)

(c) to be able to agree or disagree (reader F)

(d) to be able to detect qualities and mistakes and explain own evaluation (reader G)

ORDER OF IMPORTANCE	READER E	READER F	READER G	READER H
1	PURPOSE	PURPOSE	PURPOSE PERSONAL INTEREST	PURPOSE
2	PERSONAL INTEREST	PERSONAL INTEREST	AUTHOR'S INTENTION	PERSONAL INTEREST
3	TEXT	TEXT	---	TEXT
4	AUTHOR'S INTENTION	AUTHOR'S INTENTION	TEXT	AUTHOR'S INTENTION

Table 4.4 Scale of factors that affect selective focus in a situation of reading to study.

4.4.2 EVALUATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND PROCEDURES

Initially it was doubted if comparison between different text types was a useful trigger to engage readers in discussions about their reading practises. Section II of the questionnaire explored both the comparison between texts, and also the individual discussion of each text. Both procedures were useful to trigger discussions on reading practices. However, the data revealed that the questionnaire formulation required further refinements. Three major improvements should be considered. First of all, as Table 4.5 indicates, the questions in section I were not sufficiently centred on the notion of selective focus.

SECTION	QUESTION ITEMS	TOPIC
I	(1a) (1b) (1c)	PURPOSE
	(2)	TEXT STRUCTURE
	(3a) (4a) (3b) (4b)	STRATEGY
	(3c) (4c)	PURPOSE
	(3d) (4d)	SELECTIVE FOCUS/PURPOSE
	(5a) (6a) (7a)	BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
	(5b) (6b) (7b)	SELECTIVE FOCUS
	(5c) (6c) (7c)	SELECTIVE FOCUS/PURPOSE
	(5d) (6d) (7d)	PERSONAL INTEREST
II	(8)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (GENERAL)
	(9)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (TEXT)
	(10) (11)	AUTHOR'S INTENTIONS
	(12a)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (TEXT)
	(12b)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (PURPOSE)
	(12c)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (AUTHOR)
	(12d)	SELECTIVE FOCUS (INTEREST)
	(15)	BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
	(16) (17)	CRITICAL READING

Table 4.5 Questions on the topics explored by the study

Originally this study intended to explore the notion of selective focus within a more general discussion about reading. However, due to the complexity of the issues being dealt with, a more focussed approach than the one adopted in section II seemed to be more appropriate to obtain the data aimed by this study.

The second major improvement considered was the distribution of the questions. The questionnaire did not explore all the questions evenly. From the factors investigated, purpose for reading was the most prompted one. This stress on purpose reflected a theoretical preoccupation that characterized the investigation when the study was conducted. In other words, at that stage, a major theoretical concern was to gather further elements to clarify the notion of social-based factors. The questions on purpose for reading aimed to obtain more insights about situations of reading and social factors involved in these situations. A further study should better explore how reader-based and text-based factors affect the selective focus adopted during reading. The third improvement considered was the phrasing of the questions. the questions were too vague or general to provide informative answers as illustrated below:

(I) Did you find it easy or difficult?

(G351) Very easy.

(H431) Because of the complexity of the issue? or a difficult style to read? What do you mean?

(I) How do feel about it? Was it new for you?

(F425) Oh Yes, because it was a new result.

(H364) Of course, because I haven't read it before, but I knew what I was going to find.

(I) What are the similarities and differences between them as texts?

(H277) As text... You mean why I read them?

(G639) Text, but what do you mean by text?

4. 4. 3 A STUDY WITHIN A STUDY

In the initial study comparison between texts was found a useful tool to lead readers to discuss their reading practices in greater detail. In the second study, the comparison between texts was found as informative as the discussion of each text in isolation. In this study comparisons preceded the discussions of the individual texts. A fifth interview was conducted with reader H to investigate if an inversion in the order of presentation of questions would affect the

results. The aim was to test if the comparison between texts would improve if preceded by a more detailed discussion of each text. This interview also included a third set of questions to investigate if it was possible to prompt the readers to provide situations of reading that tended to be affected by specific factors (see appendix 4.2)

The specificity of responses obtained in this interview did not seem to alter when the discussion of each text preceded the comparison between them. Considering these five interviews, both procedures seem to be useful triggers to a discussion on reading practices. The responses obtained by the extra set of questions indicated this to be an interesting direction to be explored. The questions that follow exemplify the type of answers obtained by these new questions.

(a)author's intention

(HII 12) About two weeks ago I was in SOAS. I was checking an author who I am very interested in. I really didn't care about the issues he wrote because he was writing about a lot of things I really don't know - but I was interested in him - himself. So I was going through the books he wrote, regardless of the content. I just wanted to know what he wrote. That is an Austrian author that had travelled in the Middle East.

(I) So you were reading because you wanted to know about the author?

(HII 22) Yes, what he was writing because he was bringing in his own ideas and feelings. So I was trying not only to identify the facts he was describing, but all his ideas and principles about certain historical events.

(b)personal interest

(HII 30) Contrasts to the study situation(...) an examination you take it, because you have to take it - regardless of whether it is your interest or not - because you must answer a question regardless whether you like it or not. If it is for your interest, you select something that pleases you or you want to know because you are curious. That might be anything you are interested in, you want to get more background information.

(I) Would you consider your research in the first or in the second case?

(HII 36) Something in between. It is in the first case because it is a part of your exams, it is instead of one exam. It is in the

second case because you only do the research in a certain field because you are interested in it. So it is a mixture of both. So the pleasant purpose of satisfying your own interest meets the not so pleasant purpose of passing an exam.

(c) text structure

(II 44) structure covers it all(...) If you don't mind how it is written you just read it, because you don't care. But if you are the type that cares about the logical sequence - and normally the structure supports the logical sequence of the text - then you really like to read a structured text, instead of reading a 'mish-mash' one.

4.4.4 STEPS TO IMPROVE METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In the light of the results, this study established some directions to improve the instrument and procedures. Structured interviews provided a rich source of data. However, in this study, the wide range of differences involved between reading practices - differences in situations of reading, purpose for reading, text types, reading strategies - made very difficult any comparison between the readers' responses. Considering these results, it was considered desirable to concentrate the discussion on one single situation of reading. A more focussed discussion could favour a more detailed analysis of the issues involved. Among the possible situations to choose, reading to study seemed to be the ideal one. Reading to study had been explored by both study I and study II. In this specific situation, the use of strategies such as note taking and underlining are useful to make the information selected more salient. This may facilitate the reader's analysis of the selective focus adopted during his/her reading. Another benefit of exploring reading to study is that within this situation the texts read tend to be of one general type - i.e. academic material.

In order to conduct analysis in depth of the issues relevant to the present investigation, it would be more profitable to concentrate the discussion on the effect of different factors on selective focus. Reader-based, text-based and social-based factors should be explored in more detail. A fair try should be given to all the factors. The questions elaborated should be more specific. Expert readers should be consulted to evaluate the formulation of the new questions. This

new set of questions should also explore the relation between situation of reading and the choice of specific criteria to guide selective focus - a possibility tried in the fifth interview of this study.

CHAPTER 5

5 SELECTIVE FOCUS FROM THE READER'S PERSPECTIVE.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presents the main data collection. It is divided into three main sections. Section 5.2 focusses on methodological considerations. This in turn, is divided into 4 sub-sections . Section 5.2.1 describes the guidelines followed to elaborate the final version of the interview questionnaire. Section 5.2.2 discusses the selection of the sample and procedures for data collection. Finally, section 5.2.3 explains the procedures adopted for the data analysis.

Section 5.3 presents and discusses the data collected. It is divided into three sub-sections, each one describing a group of five readers. Section 5.4 presents some general considerations of the the results of the three groups discussed in section 5.3.

5.2 PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

5.2.1 METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Chapter 4 described some limitations found in the questionnaire that guided the second set of interviews. In an attempt to improve the instrument of data collection, a new set of questions were designed. The elaboration of the new questionnaire followed some specific criteria :

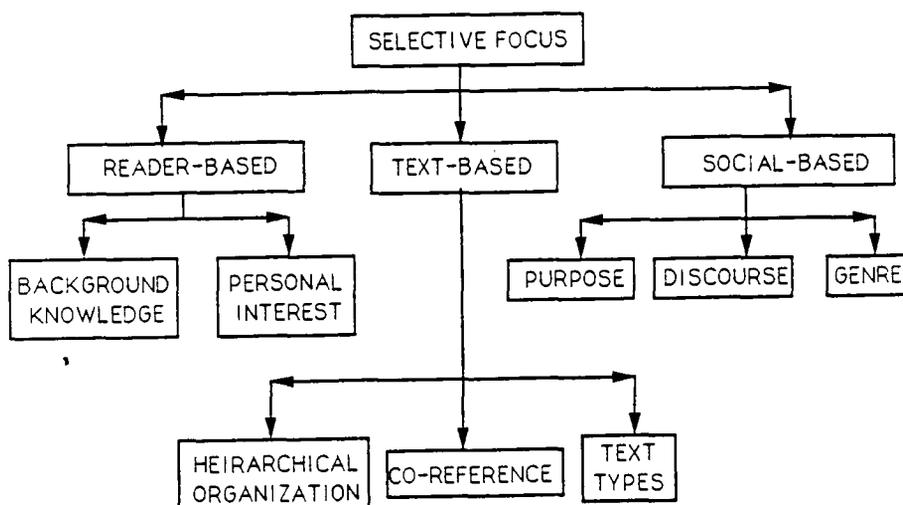
- (a) the questions should be restricted to a single reading situation
- (b) the questions should be designed to capture not just the overall criterion that affected selective focus, but also to detect particular criteria that may have affected the selection of some information within the text.
- (c) considering the difficulty that readers may have in discussing their own cognitive processes, the questions should guide them towards the elaboration of their answers.

(d) the questions should not be restricted to the social issues favoured by the present research, so as to avoid biasing the responses. A fair trial should be given to all possibilities predicted by the theories.

Having established these four criteria, the present study chose reading to study as the reading situation to be further investigated. This situation has been explored by several studies on selective focus (see chapter 2), and is also a situation relevant to the educational issues discussed in this research.

In order to expose the readers to all possible criteria, the new set of questions tried to explore the main factors that different theoretical approaches regarded as relevant to selective focus. The issues raised in chapters 2 and 3 were taken into consideration to construct a network that guided the questions' formulation (see figure 5.1). Such a methodological procedure for questionnaire construction has been suggested by Ogborn(1988)

Figure 5.1 Network for the questionnaire



To improve the phrasing of the questions, the questionnaire was tested with seven expert readers, selected from different academic areas. The readers were all engaged in a PhD or MA program in the following areas : Psychology (two readers), Physics, Electrical Engineering, Economy, History and Medicine. The initial written version of the questions was tested with one reader at a time. Each question was presented to the reader and he/she was asked to explain his/her understanding of it. Following this explanation, the researcher clarified to the reader the theoretical notion that the question aimed to explore. The reader was then asked if he/she could suggest any way to improve the clarity of the question. The questionnaire and the new possibilities of phrasing suggested were then tested with another reader in a similar fashion.

The final version of the questionnaire is included in appendix 4 (A). Appendix 4 (B) shows the network that guided the elaboration of the questions. The questionnaire is divided into two main sections. The initial section explores the effect of different factors within reading situations. The second section attempts to probe the inverse process, i.e. it gives the reader the effect of different factors and asks for instances of reading situations. In section 1, the reader is asked to evaluate how all the factors suggested by the existing theories affect his/her selective focus. Since priority is being given to the reader's perspective, it was decided that the questioning should always take into consideration the reader's starting point and then proceed by guiding him/her towards further elaboration. The questions were constructed in a way that the order of their presentation could be shifted around. So, the initial question is a general question, elaborated to capture the reader's starting point. The question item 2 explores text-based factors and question item 4 explores reader-based factors . Question items 3 and 6 focus on social-based factors. Question item 5 explores in further detail the reader's overall criterion for selection. Finally, question item 7 offers the reader a scale and asks him/her to rank all the criteria analysed. Thus, the questions in this section move from the overall criterion for selection to particular ones and then back to the

overall criterion again. The questions also move from a specific reading situation being discussed to other possible reading situations. This move was achieved by exploring possibilities with each of the questions.

The second section of the questionnaire investigates whether the reader could establish a relation between the situation in which they read a text, and the choice of the specific criterion to select information from this text. That is, the reader is asked to provide examples of possible situations in which they may give priority to different criteria. Both positive and negative possibilities of each item are prompted. Questions on background knowledge are omitted from this set of questions due to the impossibility of raising it in the negative form. Background knowledge is essential to content apprehension - a process that precedes selective focus. Thus, it seemed inadequate to ask the reader to provide an example of a situation in which his/her previous background knowledge related to the content of the text did not affect the selection of information from this text. Selective focus cannot be disassociated from content apprehension. So the lack of background knowledge always has some effect on the selective focus, since it hinders the apprehension of the semantic content of the text per se. The positive possibility of this question did not seem to add much to the information on this matter already investigated by question item 4 in section 1.

To check the consistency of the responses two possibilities were taken into consideration : replication of the interview or internal corroboration of the responses. The second one was chosen as a more adequate way to check data consistency. This issue is being discussed in the procedures for data analysis, section 5.2.3. Replication of the interview was excluded due to the following reasons :

(1) if the interview was replicated after a certain time interval, then responses could be affected by memory factors. The time interval could favour long term memory loss. Thus, it would not be possible to discriminate if the difference found in the responses of the first and

second interview should be taken as an index of data inconsistency, or should be merely attributed to memory loss.

(2) if the interview was replicated after a small time interval, then the responses could be easily affected by interactional factors. All the interviews were conducted by the same researcher. Recent pragmatic theory, following the Gricean tradition, has given great emphasis to conversational maxims. These maxims predict that utterances should be relevant and informative. During the first interview it was clear to the reader that the interviewer did not know the content of his response, and would not understand it without elaboration. It should be expected that in a second interview - conducted solely to verify consistency of responses - the reader would not engage himself/herself in the same way. The very purpose of the linguistic interaction would be different, and this would affect the nature of the responses.

5.2.2 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Even though the characteristics of the present study demand a small number of readers, the sample selected attempted to capture variation in the student population in higher education. Fifteen readers participated in this investigation on a volunteer basis. These readers were divided into three groups of five. Three different levels of higher education were represented in this sample : initial teacher training for post-graduate students (PGCE), master degree (MA) and doctoral degree (PhD). All the master students were selected from a single academic area : Psychology. However, three different academic areas were represented in the PGCE group - Geography, History and Science. All five PhD students came from different areas : History, Psychology, Economics, Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering. The readers were contacted during classroom activities or through personal introduction.

Prior to the interview, each interviewee received a written instruction that specified the purpose of the research, and explained to the readers how to keep a record of their reading. The readers were asked to chose from their diary a text that they had underlined or

taken notes from for study purposes. The text chosen - and the notes - were brought to the interview (see appendix 4 (C)). At the beginning of each interview the researcher reminded the reader of the purpose of the study (see appendix 4 (D)). After this initial introduction, question 1 was asked. The answer given to this question was classified by the interviewer as representative of one of the possible approaches explored by question items 2,3 or 4. The elaboration of the answer would then start by exploring the factor mentioned. For instance, if the answer given was classified as reader-based/background knowledge, the interviewer would move to question item 4A. Once this question was answered, the interviewer would move to question 2 and and ask the following questions serially. After prompting all the questions from 2 to 4 the interviewer would return to the initial question and ask all the possibilities listed under the sub item 4(B). This procedure was adopted to ensure that all the questions were asked and also to further explore the initial criterion chosen by the reader. Note that the questionnaire is separating question item 6 from question items 2, 3 and 4. This distinction was considered important due to the fact that the notion of 'discursive history' explored by question items 6 is linked to the notion of author, text type and reading purpose explored by previous questions which are independent of each other. So, this question was kept separate because of its different nature. Having completed the section I, the interview explored the questions in section II.

5.2.4 PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Each interview was integrally transcribed. The readers' names have been changed for purposes of reporting. To facilitate the analysis, and mainly the reporting of data, the transcription avoided the reproduction of hesitations, and repetitions characteristic of oral language use. The text was also punctuated. It is necessary to clarify that the data was collected by an unsophisticated tape recorder. The poor quality of the recording - specially in the initial set of interviews - made very difficult a rigorous reproduction of the readers' responses. The transcription presented here was the best one that the researcher was able to produce.

However, it is important to stress that this problem did not affect the content and sense of the interviews. The content of the responses quoted in the analysis have all been cross-checked with the original recording.

The interviews were analysed in groups of five. The data transcription was summarised by topic. Three major topics were taken into consideration: reader-based factors, text-based factors, and social-based factors. A description of the criteria adopted to classify the answers is included in appendix (see appendix 5). The data summary started by specifying the situation of reading. The reading situation was described on the basis of the answer given to question 1. This answer was also cross checked with the answer for question item 3, which deals with the purpose for reading. This relation between question item 1 and question item 3 was considered appropriate, since purpose for reading always exists within situations of reading. The researcher's interpretation of the students first answer was then marked and followed by the reader's further elaboration of the factor identified.

The next step in the summary elaboration was to consider the effect of each one of the three factors explored by this investigation. It initially took into consideration text-based factors. To describe the effect of text-based factors on selective focus, question items 2 and question items 8" were taken into consideration. The researcher then checked if any of the answers of the other questions could be identified as text-based. If so, they were also included in the part of the summary that deals with this specific factor. After text-based factors had been entirely described, the summary of the data was concentrated on reader-based factors (question items 4 and question items 8") and later on social-based factors (question items 3 and 6 and also question items 8). The summary of reader-based and social-based factors followed the same procedures adopted to describe the effect of text-based factors.

After the initial summary of the data provided by a group had been completed, a new summary was elaborated. The second summary separated the answers given about the actual reading situation being analysed -

i. e. answers about the text the reader had chosen to discuss - from the answers about other possible reading situations. In this new summary all five readers were considered together, and once again the summary was organized by topic.

Once the second summary was completed, each interview was analysed individually. The data report started by describing how each reader evaluates the effect of the three different factors on their selective focus. The data report explored initially the actual situation of reading described by the reader, and then moved to possible situations of reading. The report always started with the factors that seemed more salient in the data. Based on the summaries some statements about the data were made. Each statement made was then cross checked against the original transcription to verify if it could be supported by more than one answer and if it was coherent with the interview as a whole. Whenever these two criteria were not fulfilled, the interpretation given to the data was eliminated. Quotations from the interview were then presented to illustrate the basis on which the researcher's interpretation was supporting itself. Whenever striking inconsistency was found, it was mentioned in the corpus of the analysis.

After the data provided by all readers in the group had been individually reported, a general analysis was conducted. Based on the second data summary, the researcher evaluated how the group as a whole described the effect of the three factors on selective focus. After the three group analyses had been completed, an overall analysis was conducted to relate some major points raised by the groups investigated.

5.3 RESULTS

The results reported here include the researcher's interpretation of the readers' responses, and sections of the interview are quoted to illustrate the basis for the interpretation given (see section 5.2.4 and appendix 4(C)). To distinguish between the two types of text, the quotations are presented in a different layout. The number that precedes each quotation indicates the location of the response in the tape recorded.

5.3.1 GROUP I: PGCE READERS

Group I was formed of five readers engaged in a PGCE course at the Institute of Education, University of London. Three academic areas were represented in this sample: History (1 subject), Geography (2 subjects) and Science Education (2 subjects).

The course is a one-year full-time course of professional training for teaching, leading to a Postgraduate Certificate in Education which is a University of London award. This certificate is essential for anyone who wishes to join the teaching profession in Britain. The acceptance of the students to the course and the concession of awards are constrained by a specific set of social rules(1). To be accepted for the course, the student must have a degree from the University of London or any other approved university; or should hold the Diploma in Technology or a degree awarded by the Council for National Academic Awards. Before entry to their course of teacher training, he/she must also have obtained a Pass or a grade A/B/C at GCE Ordinary Level in English Language, and in Mathematics (or approved equivalent) or a grade A/B/C at GCSE examinations.

To obtain the certificate, the student is expected to pass two different types of examination. First an examination in the Theoretical Element. The candidate is expected on the basis of course work to show evidence of his/her ability to:

(1) develop an educational argument reflecting on experience gained and observations made throughout the year.

(11) make connections between educational theory and the principles and the methods of teaching;

(111) make connections between educational theory and practical issues concerning the classrooms, the school and wider society.

The second examination is in the Practical Element. Based on reports on the candidate's teaching work, the Board Examiner judges his/her proficiency in teaching. These are the official rules that constrain the assessment of a PGCE Certificate. The readers here being analysed aimed to obtain such a certificate. They had fulfilled the acceptance requirements which was an indication that they had a lot of experience in the activity of reading and writing within the British Educational System, to qualify as proficient readers.

The specific reading situation being focussed on was reading to write an essay. This essay was an assignment required as part of the course assessment procedures, but it was freely constructed. Taking the interviewee responses into consideration, it is possible to say that all five readers were aware of the fact that, in fulfilling this assignment, they were:

- (a) legitimate to have a point of view
- (b) Expected to develop an argument supported by texts.

The interviews highlighted how these readers realized their intention in the context of a PGCE course requirement, using the rules socially determined by the system. These rules were being judged in relation to a specific reading situation, i. e. reading to write an assignment, and in relation to other hypothetical situations. The data discussion was organised so as to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do these readers acknowledge the effect of reader-based, text-based and social-based factors on their reading selective focus?
- (2) If so, in which situation?

For the sake of clarity, the data presentation initially emphasized the factors that affected the actual reading situation and then

presented the reader's prediction on their reading selective focus in other possible study situations.

5.3.1.1 DATA REPORT

5.3.1.1 a SHEILA

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING.

Sheila was reading to write an essay in multicultural science teaching. This was a topic in which she was interested due to her own social experience, and in which she regarded as having considerable background knowledge. She was mainly concerned in putting forward and defending a specific point of view.

[658] *I had experience of it before, because I am an Asian girl anyway, going through British schooling. I had an informed opinion on the topic. So I knew some of the issues involved, some of the bias involved in it. Because I have been through teaching practices in school, and that was mainly a white school, and there I tried to introduce as much of multicultural science teaching as I could, that again, helped a great deal to actually ease, to form a focus towards what I want to see happening in science teaching in school.*

So prior to any reading, she had already defined the issues she wanted to discuss and her position in the multicultural teaching debate.

[651] *I had formed my own opinion, as I said before, I've actually written down a list of what I wanted to discuss in my assignment. I want to bring up some points which I didn't think were taught enough in school.*

In discussing those issues she was fully aware of being in a debate situation.

[651] *But I don't know whether other people might find my writing as being biased in a certain way, but certainly, I think my own opinions have impinged on selection.*

When asked why she had selected certain information from the book brought to the interview, her first answer made reference to her purpose and to her own position in relation to this purpose.

[210] *The reason why I read this book was because I was doing an assignment which is based on teaching in general, with special emphasis on science in a multicultural classroom. So I was looking*

for certain information anyway, using this book to pick out extra information and relevant information... I knew roughly what I was looking for: information that would back up my own assumptions, some that would challenge them so I can question, and other information which perhaps I didn't even consider.

Asked to elaborate on this point she specifies that:

[247] *The purpose again, I mean, prior to reading anything I've actually sat down and written the points which I wanted to make. So I've chosen or marked out areas which I wanted to consider, for instance, bias in school text books related to minorities, then I would go out and find relevant information or extra information related to that point. I didn't just pick up this book and say, what can I write about? I had already a task in mind to which I was finding more information.*

Her goal directed reading favoured the adoption of a skimming reading strategy.

[210] *While reading I just tend to skim through the words. I don't read line by line. I just just tend to skim my eyes over the text and then, a paragraph or a piece of writing which strikes me as being relevant or useful, I read carefully - if it is good enough, I mark it.*

Her approach to text seems to have place text based factors on a secondary level of importance. In her opinion, selection of information was not affected by structural factors. The organisation of information into sections is considered important merely to locate the content previously chosen, and also to support the skim reading strategy adopted.

[259] *The content... not really. I skim through the bold headings of the chapters and picked up just looking at the titles, the ones I would be interested in, that were related to what I was looking for*

[310] *This book is divided into sections all the way through and that really helped me to find the information that I was looking for(...)*

[350] *With this kind of text which is divided into sections, it is far easier beacuse I can sort of play around with the book, if you see what I mean, and turn from one page to another without losing the cohesion of the text*

Co-reference within the text or hierarchical organisation of the text were not considered at all. It is interesting to stress that when

prompted to evaluate if hierarchy in the text content affected her selection, she answered positively, but her answer went in the opposite direction of the hierarchical hypothesis.

[292] *Certainly, for that point, I was looking for information that was detailed. I didn't just want token reference to one part. I wanted to form a discussssion.*

The aim of establishing a debate and defending the position is throughout the interview pointed out as the main criterion that guided selection in this specific reading situation.

[491] *With this reading, I was looking for two specific view points anyway, one point which I agree with and another point which I disagree with. Because I have a specific task in mind I was looking for relevant information. One information had to agree with what I was putting forward and one information to make the reading more interesting had to disagree. So I was looking for those specific information.*

[562] *I didn't go to the book cold. I knew exactly what I was looking for. I was just looking for key phrases, which are universal in multicultural teaching - for example stereotypes, bias in school resources, ethnocentrism, words like that. I was looking for those in the text and whenever they came up I read about that to know in which context they were set up - those words.*

The aim of establishing a debate made the association/dissociation with a particular author's view point have quite an important effect on the selective focus adopted. This reader acknowledged herself more receptive to an author with whom she shared a view point. She also pointed out that she tended to focus just on conflicting positions whenever she disagreed with an author's view point.

[454] *there was one author who had, I wouldn't say the exactly opposite view, but a different emphasis on multicultural teaching. His thoughts did conflict with mine. So that author, I tended to pick up all the negative points, points that I didn't agree with. First of all, because they provided me with material to criticize. This author says this, I don't agree and say why and use examples. (...) So the authors that give conflicting opinions to what I think, I tend to mark out those points and highlight clearly the points that I totally disagree with and I don't put that much emphasis on points that I agree with the author.*

Other responses also showed the reader's awareness about her being more receptive to authors that shared her own point of view.

[44] *This was the first text that I've read on the topic and because it agreed, mostly agreed, with what I was trying to say, I sort of formed a certain bond with it because this was the only book I found which really agreed with what I had to say.*

[409] (...) *Because I agree with what he says I picked out information which agrees with what I think. But it so happens that the author has put it in such a concise and compact way that I tended to agree with it even more. I tended to be less critical about it, less analytical, and later on, if I read it again, then there might be certain discrepancies between my thought and the author's thought (...) I was tending to find that I agree with most things and my essay wasn't critical at all at the end of it. So I had to look up other things and see if it was pertinent.*

The reader was also aware that text may veil certain contradictions and she attributed her acceptance partly to the way the author put his argument across.

[409] *The way that the book leads you on from one point to another, analytically, critically; analysing, criticizing other writers as well, in such a way that you think, oh yes! I agree with this (...) It was only afterwards when I read what I have gathered, that I said, I don't really agree with that point and I have to change it. It was just the way the book was written (...)*

[439] *(I) agreed and then I went back. I didn't go back to it immediately, it was after I'd read other books and their points of view so I was able to have a more informed opinion of what I have collected beforehand, and going back to this book I thought I don't really agree with this. But I don't know why I agreed with that in the first place. I think that the reason was because the way the author lead you on to believe what he had to say.*

In the case discussed above, the identification with the author occurred due to some shared points of view, positive towards multicultural teaching, and also due to the characteristics of genre adopted by the author.

[379] *The author actually forces you to consider it from a personal point of view because he uses terms like "our". It is not just impersonal, he makes the book personal (...)*

However, this reader also acknowledged the possibility of such an identification on the basis of purely social identity.

[267] *There was actually a book written by a black head teacher to do with multicultural perspectives, and I read the brief history which he gave about his past, and I think because he came from a background which was similar to my own, meaning he was a black person in Britain, whatever he wrote I tended to have sympathy with and agree with, knowing what the author was saying.*

So, as was previously stated, in this particular situation of reading, in which the the reader wanted to put forward a specific point of view, the selective focus adopted was mainly affected by the reader's personal interest and background knowledge on the issue. The association or not with the author's standpoint also seemed to have played an important role in determining the type of information was selected from a text. In fact, such issues were mentioned, not just in the answers to question (3') and (8) as would be expected, but also on question (4) which focussed on personal interest. Asked if personal interest affected her selection of information from text she answered

[22] *It did, I think it did. Talking about this, it just brought up how much I was affected by this particular author in agreeing with what he was saying (...)*

Due to this consistency in the data, it seems reasonable to state the importance of the author's standpoint for selection. However, in scaling what affected her most in her selection, in this particular case, this reader rated the author's standpoint as the least important factor. There is no clear explanation for such a discrepancy in the responses. Actually, when asked to provide an example of a situation in which the author's standpoint did not affect her selection, she suggested that:

[286] *If there was a general topic I was reading, just a general area that I've got to cover, then the author wouldn't play any important role in what I was reading, because it was a general situation (...). But where I have specific tasks, which I did here, some of the authors that I've read I would remember their names and have my own assumptions about them, about their books and their major books. Having specific tasks, I do and I did tend to look at the author.*

The only possible explanation to offer considering the body of interview is that this reader did not pay enough attention while scaling the possibilities or did not fully understand the content of the possibility offered. In fact, in answering question (3'), that deals with the author's standpoint this reader stated

[279] *But I am not sure whether I was looking for the author's point of view in that sense. I was not looking at what the author was trying to tell me. I just read it as a text (...) I think that in other texts that I've read I haven't considered the author at all. It was a book, I just regard it as a book.*

However, in spite of this inconsistency found in the data, the present researcher considers that the interview as a whole does stress the importance of the author's standpoint in this particular situation.

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

Considering the responses given, it is possible to say that this particular reader perceived her criterion for selection varying within specific situations. If, for instance, she was reading the same text to fulfill another academic purpose, such as an exam, her selection wouldn't be so focussed, and she would be looking for more general issues.

[134] *(exam) In that case, I would probably underline information to such an extent that probably the whole book would be covered with underlines, because I would be looking at more general issues. (...) Had it been for a more sort of open, general type of discussion, I think I would actually underline points which I wouldn't have done, had it been a focussed assignment.*

Text structure was not considered a relevant criterion for selecting information in the actual situation that she discussed above, a situation in which she was personally involved and had a lot of background knowledge. However, in situations where she had little interest or little knowledge, her selective focus was highly affected by structural factors.

[685] *If I didn't have any opinion or little opinion on a certain topic then any book I choose or the first book I choose in that topic I would read cover to cover and then select material, and that would -I think- be material that was repetitive in the texts. So points which they bring out in certain chapters again, and again*

and again, I would highlight those because I would thought if they mentioned so many times it must be important. (...)

[66] *(...) If they are very difficult reading then I tend to abandon it all together, I just can't be bothered with it. If it is easy reading, things that I can familiarize with, then I think again I tend to use that sort of repetitive style again. If something is repeated again and again, I tend to give that importance, whether it is vital or not I don't know (...).*

Apart from structural guidelines, she also considered social guidelines in situations in which she had no interest in the reading. Providing an example of a situation of study in which her interest was secondary, she mentioned her experience in her degree course.

[423] *In my previous degree in micro-biology you had to do certain topics, you have to find out information about things which I didn't find interesting from own my point of view for various reasons.*

[461] *It was something I had to do. If I didn't do it, I wouldn't get the marks.*

[439] *(...) We would usually have a lecture before and then you would have to go and find out the information. Now in that lecture you've had certain guidelines given to you anyway. Certain phrases which you would go and look up and find more information about them (...) If there were no guidelines I would probably be asking some people about the subject and understand what I should look up under this topic.*

5.3.1.1 b SUZANA

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Suzana was reading to write an essay about the performance of girls in Maths. This is a topic in which she was interested due to her own previous experience.

[210] *Well, this is girls in Math and since I did Math I have an inherent interest in the article.*

However, in this specific situation, her background experience per se was not enough to define the issues that she should focuss on in the essay to be written. This focus is in fact determined after the reading of the text that dealt with the general topic that she was interested in. The text that she chose to discuss, follows the reading of this initial text. When asked to explain why she had underlined

information in the text, this reader made reference to her purpose, i. e. the elaboration of an argument in a written essay, and also referred to her initial reading-background knowledge upon which her argument was being built.

[230] *Because from the previous work I've read - I am writing an essay so therefore I have to have an argument or a series of elaborations on various points- So, my first text I read, there were highlighted there several points I was interested in and this text follows on from reading that and any time a phrase or a couple of sentences used or a paragraph or an idea which relates back to something that I have already read, elaborates on it gives a further example of it or something like that, then I underline it so that I can use it to elaborate on points that I've picked up elsewhere - or if there is a particular point that particularly interests me. But in order to keep my essay fairly structured I've tried not to do that.*

The purpose of writing an essay interacted in an interesting way with reader-based factors. Because she had done Math, she had an inherent interest in the topic. The personal interest in fact affected the selection of information in the first text. When asked if her personal interest had affected her selection of information she replied:

[609] *Originally, yes, because this is very much based on my initial reading and my initial reading keeps the points I was interested in, came from my own interest and from my own bias if you like, therefore, that is reflected obviously in this.*

However, once these original points were selected for discussion, her personal interest became secondary to the purpose of building a focussed argument. At this stage, the inter text dialogue assumed a more relevant position. This was made evident in the further elaboration of her first answer.

[302] *The only other thing that I could say is that because my essay has not got a title, it is up to myself to limit myself to certain key points that I want to discuss. So, therefore, if these points keep popping up, then they are obviously important and I underline them. So it is to focus attention on, to narrow my attention really down to the points I want to discuss and stop myself of going off the point too much. (...)*

In answering question 9" that deals with an example of the situation in which her personal interest had affected selection, she

again referred to the reading situation focussed on in the first section of the interview.

[222] *Yes, the initial one (...) one of the criterion that was affected was that I was interested in it. Although they stood out, yes...I was interested in it.*

Then, referring to the second text, which was being discussed

[210] *Well, this is girls in Math and since I did Math, I have an inherent interest in the article, therefore, although I was highlighting points that I want to raise, that did not stop me from reading the article all the way through. But I wouldn't highlight all the bits that interest me, although I would have read.*

The necessity of focussing on some issues in order to construct an argument, in the case of the second article read, had a stronger effect on selective focus than personal interest. This necessity for focus is made even more evident in the following answer.

[4] *Yes, if I have read it before, if I had been introduced to the topic before I am more likely to be looking towards the key points, especially in the context of writing an essay. So, therefore, I am more likely to try and focus in to save time.*

In the process of building up an argument, the inter-text reference and opposing views presented by the authors had an important role guiding the selective focus adopted by this reader during this reading.

[468] *(...) There are some points...they have actually written certain things from their standpoints that may contradict others, things or aspects of things in my previous reading. So, if their standpoint is opposing then that is interesting because I can go straight to the bit related to my point and draw in an example of an opposing view. So, in this case, they have exhibited an empathy to what I have read, so the purpose of this text is to add further evidence or further elaboration on the point. (...)*

[498] *Anything relevant to the point you made, whether it is empathizing or elaborating it or it has got the same results but different conclusions, or it's totally disagreeing, that is what I highlight.*

[550] *But this article, I think I just read it, straight read it and if any point resonated with what I was looking for, then I underlined it. And I also make comments as well so I know why I underlined it, as well. I sometimes, if I get something that I know*

directly refers back to something else then I sometimes put by it a question which help me link two pieces of text.

In the particular situation of reading being discussed, the text structural factors did not play a major role in guiding the selective focus. The structural aspect, in the reader's opinion would affect her approach to the text but not the selection of information from the text. When asked to specify the effect of textual organization on selection of information, this reader only stressed the role of introduction and conclusion. These two sections were considered helpful to identify the points that should be focussed on during reading. The text being discussed did not have these two sections clearly marked. It was according to the reader "short" and "general". However in typical texts:

[550] *If there had been a conclusion with really interesting points then that would would have made me go back and look for the more thorough coverage in the body of the text.*

However, the focus being given to the introduction and conclusion of a text was not considered determinant of the selective focus adopted while reading.

[420] *Whereas, if it has been in a structure of introduction, body and conclusion, then I would probably have gone straight to the introduction and straight to the conclusion and decide whether the text was relevant on that basis. So it affected my reading but I probably would still pick out the same points. Because those points were pertinent, I was on the look out for those points.*

In relation to structural factors, this reader was also aware that a text is divided into sections and that these sections are related to a general topic. However, in this situation, this awareness seemed only important to locate what part of the text dealt with the points she was already looking for.

[400] *(...) This is a more informal structure. It has a structure but it doesn't explicitly say introduction, abstract.. discussion, conclusion...you know and it is not explicitly broken down into those categories whereas I would say a lot of the text I have read has been, you can actually point to the discussion, point to the introduction, to the conclusion.*

[350] *(...they were all together in the same subject - the general topic and they took that general topic and discussed in sections which were related by nature to the overall topic(...)*

[382] *You have to be aware of how the text is structured in order to know if you have to read all or to how much attention you have to pay to the body of the text.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In relation to text-based factors, in answering question 9' this reader again stressed the importance of abstract, introduction and conclusion. She considered these sections to be relevant especially in situations where the texts were very long. But again, these sections seem to be more useful to locate certain types of information within the text and not in shaping the selective focus adopted. In answering the same question this reader suggested that selection of information was mostly affected by the purpose of reading and time constraints.

[180] *It depends on the use of it...It's time and use the time available, the use, what you want it for.*

Discussing how reader-based factors might affect her selective focus during reading, she stated that if a topic was new to her she was less confident in selecting information, and tended to read the whole text in a linear fashion and also would tend to take more notes. She also would not feel confident about using the information selected to fulfill tasks.

[666] *If the topic was very new I wouldn't feel familiar or confident with it. (...) If the research is new to me I am less likely to rely on the introduction and conclusion and more likely to read it from the introduction, main body and conclusion, highlighting bits as I go - that may be of relevance or interest.*

It is interesting to stress that the problem of selecting information tended to be even more aggravated if there is a lack of personal interest.

[622] *Oh, it is much more haphazard. I am much less likely to read it all through. I am more likely to pick what catches my eye and read it. But I am quite inefficient and I have to read bits over again, just to check that is probably why I usually go to the conclusion to find out whether it is relevant before I read it.*

Personal interest was, according to this reader, always directly or indirectly involved in her reading practices. If the text per se was not interesting, it might be read to fulfill a purpose and the interest in fulfilling this purpose would guide the selection

[235] *Well, if I was writing an essay on a topic that didn't interest me. (...) If the actual essay I was writing didn't interest me then I would still...if it was a compulsory essay, I would still have to do it.*

[247] *I still...it is a sort of continuous your interest just does not stop. Although the text in general didn't interest me I would still highlight bits that did...slightly new bits ...*

[251] *I actually find very difficult to read bits that don't interest me. It is very hard actually to motivate yourself to go through something that doesn't interest you, and it is not particularly necessary. Well, I mean if you need it to make a point in an essay you could just research on surface to make your point, but you will have interest in the point you are making although you are not interested in the text. So, your interest may lead you to read the text, even though the text in itself was not interesting, you would have an interest in finding what you want to extract.*

In relation to social-based factors, this reader acknowledged that her reading focus would have been different if she was reading the text to fulfill any other study purpose.

[25] *Yes, I should think so. The focus would be different. I might be focussing on different aspects of it. I maybe reading it as a whole rather than reading it for specific purposes.*

She was very aware of the genre demanded by different reading situations, and she also acknowledged that specific situations of reading might demand specific types of texts. So discussing a tutorial study situation, she stated that:

[50] *These key points that I've focussed on would probably not be there at all because of the lack of previous reading and the lack of purpose. So I would be probably much more critical of it. If it was for an assignment or a discussion in a tutorial, then you would be looking at their viewpoint...much more critical. It is a different emphasis all together, I should think.*

When asked about how her selection of information from this text in an exam situation, she dismissed the possibility of reading this

type of text - which is a report of an open day - in this specific study situation.

[33] *If I was reading for an exam I probably wouldn't be reading this. It is not an original article, it is ... by nature of an exam you should go back to the original source. So it is not an original source, it is an abstract, therefore, it wouldn't have a lot of views. A lot of the points that I've highlighted are their views or their own assumptions, a lot of it is not necessarily backed up by the ... it is more general, it is not the primary source.*

In relation to the author's standpoint, she proposed that it might affect her selection if she chose an article on the basis of it's author, or her own agreement with that of the author's. In this case the expectancy about the author, or her own agreement with the author's standpoint would affect her selection of information from the text.

[130] *I couldn't give you an exact example, but, I mean, I've chosen to read texts on the basis of my knowledge of an author's standpoint and then because I've had expectation of what he would or should conclude, therefore, ... I suppose I would read it because I knew he was going to say what I wanted him to say.*

[140] *Well presumably if he had a view point that view point would be reflected in the article and the reason I would read was because of his view point, therefore I would inadvertantly underline it.*

In cases where the author's standpoint is not known, it is difficult to establish the relevant information to be selected. So the knowledge of the author's position was understood by this reader as a possible guideline for selection.

[508] *Yes, I think so. If I didn't know their standpoint - well, presumably I would have to read more fully until I did. I would not be able to underline the first sentence. I would have to go and read if they were using it to shoot it down or whether they were elaborating on it because they agree with it. I have to be more careful and make sure that I knew that I was getting a representative viewpoint.*

However, this reader also stressed that the author's standpoint might be secondary in importance if she chose a text merely by its title. Asked to provide an example of a situation in which the

author's standpoint has not affected her selection of information from text she states:

[156] *Well, if I selected something on the basis of the title rather than on the basis of the author.*

It is interesting to stress that this is the situation of the text read in the concrete situation of reading initially discussed.

Discussing her expectations prior to reading she affirmed:

[65] *I knew by the title that it was relevant to the area I was looking at and therefore I expected some points that I've read about to be discussed in a certain form.*

5.3.1.1.c GILBERT

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Gilbert was reading to write an assignment on a topic related to problems that he faced in his own teaching practices. He is particularly interested in knowing more about the issue in order to improve his own teaching.

[670] *See, it is a kind of practical field, teaching, isn't it? Yes, I know the importance of theories, and the idea of entertaining ideas which may not be practical. But thinking about them also does sometimes give you ideas on how this sort of thing can be made practical. But, yes, I am also interested in looking for ways - practical ways - in which I can teach.*

He acknowledged previous background knowledge on the topic and attributed it to two different sources: his own teaching practice and his experience as a student on his PGCE course. In answering the first question in the questionnaire, he explained his underlining in terms of both sources.

[124] *This is an interesting aspect, because when I was on my teaching practice, I found that many of them had difficulty in understanding the language. And when I saw their written work, they had problems with it as well. So how does a teacher go about trying to help his pupil? And you find that from the course we are given bibliographies, with references and so on. We discuss certain articles in the class itself. For example, here it gives you ways in which to support pupils with language difficulties, gives you ideas as to what could be done to help such pupils.*

[146] *Well we have a guide from our tutors and so on which points us in this direction. Because, as I said, the bibliography that is*

given to us, and specific articles are also mentioned in the class.

The personal interest in improving his teaching practice and the background knowledge provided by his course was considered by this reader as the main criteria that guided his selection.

[167] *With mixed-ability teaching and in particular with supporting pupils, I am interested in knowing what the problem is. This word leads to these learning difficulties, so I highlight that. If that is the problem then, how can we help pupils? So, that would be the next stage. Or what is the cause of their problem, and then how can we help them? (...) If the pupils are normal, I mean, they don't have any particular mental problems, then it may be the language difficulty, which they are having. So what is causing that? Is it the lack of command of the language? And, why is it so, and how can we help them? These are the sort of things that I am looking for. This article does try to address that problem, how we can go about helping it, practical techniques, suggestions which give me ideas, I don't have to restrict myself to these only.*

[543] *The issue was discussed in the classroom (...) So, in a sense, some of the things I think were mentioned in a class we did in the first term and which I now go back to pick out for the assignment. (...)*

[524] *Yes, that is, it was recommended that we read it. That was the previous knowledge. It is an issue which has to be dealt with in teaching. Also certain articles are pointed to, via the lecturers, and one tends to then follow them up.*

He perceived a close relation between the assignment he was doing and his personal concern with his own teaching activity. When asked if the purpose of writing an assignment affected his selection of information from the text he stated.

[301] *Partly, (...) once I go into teaching the practical aspects will really be made much more useful. So it is a combined thing, not just for the assignment.*

[309] *Well, not only personal, but also, it will be related to my career, to teaching. I have to keep this in mind because, later on when I am going to teach, how can I help pupils with language difficulties? These will be some of the ways that I will be looking at. Because by doing the assignment one may think that it is over, we can forget about it. It is not the case here, you see. I'll have to keep this in mind, keep this article at least, so I can refer to it later on, so that I could help them. (...)*

This reader saw no conflict between what is expected from him in the course, and what he was aiming to learn. The closeness of aims is

such that he understood that his selection of information would remain the same even if there was a change in study purpose.

[331] *Oh no, I think what I've selected here, I would use in the exam as well, because, we are looking at practical aspects, how we can help the pupils that have difficulties with the language and hence, in an exam if I was asked to write about this I think I would use the same material here, practical techniques which could be used, perhaps giving an example of how this could be done.*

The same applied if he was reading the article to discuss it in the classroom.

[351] *(...) I mean, the context of history will be dealing with this(...) We have talked about mixed-ability teaching and this article has been referred to.*

In this particular situation of reading, text-based factors were not regarded as a very important criterion to select information from the text. This reader was aware that a text has a layout and that this layout highlights the importance of certain information. However, he did not consider his selection to be highly affected by the text layout. For him the content of the text and the relation of this content to his purpose-write an essay and improve his own teaching -were the main factors that determine his selection.

[149] *If I am going to select information from an article in a journal, I would not go straight, for example, to this because it stands out. Yes, it tells me when I glance at it that it is important, but it is just a technique - first I want to read what the author is saying.*

[287] *Layout is appealing to me, yes, but ultimately it is the content of the article that I am interested in, you see. That is the most important.*

Asked if the layout or headlines lead him to choose any of the information he answered:

[184] *Oh no, I am bit more critical than that I want to see what this section is saying; for example what are the practical techniques? This is very important in mixed-ability teaching, its practical aspects are more important. So I highlight, so that when I come back to this article later on, I'll know that I had highlighted it and it is something important. After all teaching is a more practical thing. Yes, the theoretical aspect will help it... how one can make it practical is the most important thing that a teacher wants.*

However, this reader did acknowledge that in his search for content, he was affected by the signalling adopted by the author.

[463] (...) for example, the author here is saying in this article that the main problem from the pupils viewpoint is the lack of linguistic formula. (...) so I would highlight that. I try to pick out the most important bit which the author thinks, problems, difficulties, solutions. (...)

Even though the author of the text is taken into consideration, reader-based factors and mainly the concern with the practical teaching activity were certainly the main factors affecting the situation.

[243] I would highlight a particular thing from a chapter or an article because it is interesting or it is related to what I am doing. For example, the quotation earlier on I will not use it again in the assignment that I'll be writing, but it was interesting for me at that time, because then it provoked a lot of thought. But then there are other aspects which I highlighted which I would use in the assignment.

[494] If it was an article on mixed-ability teaching I would go about reading it, but if I didn't find anything useful then I would leave it aside, because I am, after all, trying to present an argument in my assignment or trying to find something useful which I can use later on. (...)

The concern with the practical aspect of his study was emphasized in the answer of question 7 which dealt with expectancies prior to reading.

[623] Now, at the back of my mind it is saying; what is this article trying to say? Is it suggesting methods or is it giving us a theoretical argument? See, it is in the back of my mind that in mixed-ability... we must look for ways in which to teach or to make it easier for the teacher or the pupils. So, in a sense I had got in the back of my mind that I must look for ways in which I can help pupils so that the teaching which I do is interesting for them as well. So, to an extent I am already kind of ready to spot anything which may be of interest, which I can use.

In this situation of reading, the author's standpoint seemed only important to the construction of an argument in the assignment

[390] (...) If I didn't agree with that author, then I would want to bring his argument in and if it is related to the assignment, I am dealing with then I would want to criticize him and put my points of view across.

The reader was also aware that such an argument must be supported by texts.

[404] *I would not take what the author has written as fact. I know we are supposed to back up with evidence that we search on papers. But I would not hesitate to criticize.*

But his main concern again, was with the nature of the practical suggestion and not with the theoretical or philosophical line adopted.

[13] *This is the case here. I hardly know anything about his views on education or what he thinks about Bruner or Piaget. I read what he has to say. If he is supporting one or the other it will come through depending on what he is suggesting. He is talking about one specific example in history teaching whereas he may have so many different standpoints. But what I am interested in is his argument. So in a sense one can say that he has got a standpoint. He thinks, for example about the less able as a myth which to me, in a sense, makes sense, because when I link it all through that could be the case. At the end of the day a lot also depends on how our teacher teaches, if the pupils misbehave or are found to be difficult to teach. And hence, in a sense, I agree to an extent with his standpoint.*

It is interesting to stress how this attitude as a reader converges with the line advocated by his tutors.

[53] *I find it difficult to answer this question because to me we are recommended reading different authors, different points of view in order to broaden our understanding and not necessarily taking them as gospel. It is there for us to read and think about, to argue against or if one finds it convincing to accept it.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

This reader did not have much to say about other possible situations of reading. He did not regard text-structure as necessarily relevant to selection of information, but useful to locate information. However, it must be stressed that he was equating the notion of 'text-structure' with the notion of layout.

He acknowledged that background knowledge facilitates expectancies about relevant issues to be selected from a text.

[600] *(...)Because, having a bit of knowledge about it, one is aware of the issues which are being dealt with and hence one can immediately highlight them out. But if you had given me this article at the beginning of the year when I had very little knowledge of mixed-ability teaching, I would have read it and perhaps marked out ways... It is very difficult to say, but I think*

that it does help because you are sensitized to it. You know what you are looking for in a sense, what are the important issues. Hence as you are reading you highlight them - this is relevant, that is irrelevant or whichever.

And he ruled out the possibility of reading texts that did not interest him, but he also stressed that he had a broad range of interests.

[209] *I would not read anything which I am not really interested in. But, thinking about it, I am unusual in a sense, because there are a lot of things in which I am interested in, issues that have to do with people, environment, etc. So there is very little in which I am not interested in.*

[202] *What I am doing now is of personal interest. I am trying to think of a situation which is not necessarily of personal interest... Whatever I have done has always interested me. I am not saying I haven't ever read articles or anything which has not interest me. I just can't think of anyone at the moment...*

5.3.1.1 d ROBERT

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING.

Robert was reading to write an essay on the use of computers in the classroom. He had interest in the topic, was concerned with his future teaching activity but in this specific situation he was mainly task oriented.

[582] *I don't read this book for fun, I don't do it for pleasure reading. The only reason I read these books is usually for an essay and sometimes for the general improvement of teaching but it is not that specific.*

In answering the initial question, he justified the notes he took from the text in terms of relevance to the essay he was writing.

[570] *Number one, the relevance to the essay I've got to write. Number two, these particular notes and the quotes to back up the essay and show that I have done the reading, this sort of thing. So the quotes that I take out would be very short ones and quite pertinent to the point I would make in the essay. The quotes remind me of the information. The third point would be when I take a quote out, I also mark a page number so that I know there is something important or probably other things in that page so I can come back and write my essay afterwards.*

Asked to further elaborate his answer, he proposed that:

[589] *There are certain ideas that I quite like and that I think I haven't come across before and some of these I am using in a particular model that is the centre of my essay. I have saved two or three references that I definitely need to read about to support an argument.*

This concern with the task to be fulfilled was reinforced by further answers given during the interview. He was aware that in this process of essay writing he must support his own position with references from text, and he also acknowledged that this was necessary due to the rules of the system.

[85] *I was looking for some back up material for an essay, to show that I have read, what I knew about, that sort of thing. In order to write an essay, you have to refer to other authors, you can't just write from the top of your head, you can't here... anyway we are encouraged to do that. So I was certainly approaching it from the point of view of substantiating things that I already knew.*

In fulfilling the requirements of his academic task, he had very clear expectancies about the type of information he must be looking for in the text he read.

[211] *I expected the text to have empirical data and I figured that the guy had done some research into the subject quite recently and he was going to present to me facts and figures, statistics to back up what I basically already knew from lectures. Being an academic he would have done some research into this and he should be writing down his own conclusions and some statistical information to substantiate it.*

In this particular situation of reading, although the main purpose of reading was task oriented, the reader did have interest in the issues dealt with due to his concern with his future teaching activity.

[143] *Some of the information contained in the text is relevant for my teaching, other than a part of the assignment I am writing. I actually learned something there that will be of practical use to me when I am in a classroom situation which is at the moment of vital importance to me. I haven't taught previously. So once I am reading, I kind of select things that are of practical use to me when I start teaching(...)*

However, he stated that if this personal interest was not present he would just guide his selection by the requirements of the task to be fulfilled.

[152] *I think the only reason to actually sit down and read a text which is not of personal interest, the one and only reason is going to be for writing an essay or something like that. I don't normally read stuff that is not of personal interest to me.*

In the specific situation being analyzed, the background knowledge on the topic - which he had acquired from lectures and previous research in the area - and the reader's knowledge about the nature of the task to be fulfilled seemed to be the main criteria guiding the selective focus adopted. In the particular situation being analyzed, the only text features mentioned as relevant to selection were the division of text into sections. Sections were seen as important to highlight the main issues being discussed, to show the steps in a process of argument building.

[392] *If there is no clear train of thought or no clear argument running through the text, I naturally find it very difficult to follow it. I am used to this structured outline, with a start, middle, conclusion and if this is not there I find it very difficult to generally read whatever is written and this affects how I select information. I like to be able to see where an argument ended and maybe just skip read what I have just read and take up major couple of points, whatever is there. So if there are no obvious breaks I am likely to read, maybe 5 or 6 pages and then think, was there anything relevant in there? I like maybe a short paragraph at the end of the article highlighting the major points. Otherwise, I've got pages of printed text and no underlining or highlights because I haven't come across to what I think are the salient points. So I like to see the salient points standing out of the page.*

This reader considered text structure as always relevant. He stressed the role of the abstract and conclusion to locate information he was looking for and also to make him aware of the relevance of some specific points.

[676] *Content wise, I think I probably read the conclusion first and I read the abstract. There is an abstract at the back with comments that summarizes all the chapters which were written by individual people. So I read that abstract first, then I read the conclusion to find if there were some points that they were talking, and which should be quite pertinent. Then I skimmed through until I found the points that I was looking for.*

Asked if the reading of the abstract and the conclusion affected the selection of information in any way, he stressed the importance of

this section in highlighting some information, although the final selection of information was determined by what he is looking for.

[4] *Yes, pretty sure, because the abstract highlighted, although I had taken my own line and highlighted certain places of the content in the whole text that the abstract and the conclusion didn't mention.*

It is interesting that this reader considered that the way texts are organized in his area of study was socially determined. In discussing the typical organization of texts and their division into sections he stated:

[12] *(...) we are certainly told as PGCE students to write abstracts. It must have an abstract, this sort of thing and I think probably the people who write these texts went through the same type of indoctrination...*

This reader perceived no conflict between the standpoint defended by the text he read and his own standpoint, and the line adopted by his tutors.

[4] *The school of thought that is being represented here is the school of thought that is being taught to me during the past term and I can associate with it, I agree with what they are talking about, I need it particularly to back up some arguments I am writing about - they are in the same line.*

This reader was conscious that to build up an argument he needed to focus on different points of view.

[350] *If I know that it is going to back up the knowledge of what I had done before or if I particularly need to look at different points of view, very often I know who holds those views and I go those texts so I can bring in different arguments.*

However, in the reading situation being discussed, the confronting of different viewpoints did not seem so essential. He was writing an essay and he expected that his addressee would hold a similar view point to his own. He was not in a position of defending a viewpoint but merely in a position of strengthening it, through the literature support. He needed to substantiate an argument on a specific topic and not to build up a debate of different ways of seeing things.

[177] *I had a pre-conceived idea about how I wanted to write the essay, of how I want to conclude my essay, because I've done some*

kind of work at this stage already. So, I am only using this text to substantiate an argument I have already formulated. (...)

[153] I have been schooled in one particular school of thought so I followed it through. The topic I am looking at and the depth in which I am looking it, I am just scraping the surface. I don't have time to look at all other schools of thought.

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

In the concrete situation analyzed, this reader stressed the role of his purpose and his background knowledge in determining the type of information selected from the text. In situations where he had little background knowledge the reading of the text demanded higher level of concentration and he tended to take more notes from it. He tended to avoid the reading of texts in which he had no interest, and only read them if it was a necessity.

[110] I find it personally very difficult to read a text when I know very little about it. I mean, I have to concentrate much more on it, because you don't know anything about what you are reading, you take on so much stuff on board... So if it is something I am not interested in - unless I have to read it - I just don't do it.

If no personal interest is involved his selection is guided by the task's requirements.

[152] (...) If it is not of personal interest, then I will only select the information which is relevant for whatever purpose I am reading the text.

[493] I have a book at home called - geography teachers going to classroom - which has a specific content. I also find information which has been underlined at certain points for certain assignments. I haven't underlined any of the pieces in there out of personal interest.

He acknowledged that a change in the purpose for reading may affect his selection of information from a text. In an exam situation, his selection would be more general and not so focussed as in the specific situation discussed. It would also be guided by the knowledge of what type of content would be of interest for an examination.

[188] Yes, if I was going to sit for an examination, I would certainly approach the whole text, because the whole point of an examination is that you don't know what is going to turn up in the examination, therefore the selection for an exam could cover any content within this particular text. (...) I would read everything

and therefore I would select parts which I did not select in my notes. Because undoubtedly there is a lot more content in this article that would be of interest for an examination.

In the reading situation previously discussed this reader was fully aware of the author's standpoint and due to the fact that he is publishing with a specific group of authors.

[38] *Particularly, I know the editor and I have met two other of the authors. I don't know this particular author, but I can see that it fits within the same school of thought.*

In situations where the author's standpoint was not clear to him, he felt that it is more difficult to follow the argument due to the lack of expectation about what he should be looking for.

[53] *I wouldn't be so sure what I was looking for, because I know what I think they will be writing about, I know what they are going to be saying next so I can follow it through. Whereas if it would be someone I didn't know writing from a different point of view then I would have to read in great detail. I would not necessarily be able to follow the argument through because I don't know anything about this topic, neither the school, the particular school of thought.*

5.3.1.1 e MARTHA

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Martha was writing an essay under great time constraint and she did not feel particularly interested in it. In this situation she was highly task oriented.

[230] *Not particularly (interested). It was ~~something~~ that had to be done, really.*

[232] *(...) because it is an assignment and I have got a deadline which is very near. (...)*

When asked why she had taken a specific set of notes from the text, her first reply was:

[33] *Well, the first note that I took, I lifted the information directly from the text. It was a quotation and I need it to use it as a general introduction to what I was talking about. It was information that was necessary. It was not background information. I then went on to do sort of a summary of the subject area.*

[58] *I was looking for just a general description of what the national curriculum was, and what it entails. I already knew before*

I went to the text what kind of thing I was looking for. So I took most of it.

Asked to elaborate on how her background knowledge to the content of the text affected her selection of information, she made reference to her classroom experience and to the guidance received from her tutor.

[69] *I had looked at it before with my tutor and he pointed me to this particular section. So I have advice sort of, from that angle. But with regard to choosing the information I am looking at the national curriculum through and in conjunction with racist education, so I need to focus on this cross-curriculum approach. So my background, from what I am doing in the PGCE course, sort of pushed me to look for that type of information.*

She was aware that in order to write her essay she must build an argument. She was also conscious that she needed to follow certain academic rules because she was in a situation in which her written performance was going to be evaluated.

[19] *Well, I don't just want to get general background information. I want succinct points and quotations that I can use to put an argument over... So I am looking for things that I understand and things that I can use directly from the text, and things that I can put into my own words, rather than just reading through it for academic knowledge. Also, it made me... more careful when I came across a few words that I am not used to. I needed to find out what they were so I looked at the dictionary if I had to. Because I knew I would be using it for something, for an assignment that would be assessed.*

In order to build an argument she was searching for opposing points of view. The text she had chosen to discuss was written by a group of authors backed up by a governmental organization. She regarded them as politically right of centre and conservative and she was trying to put forward a different point of view. So, in dealing with this text, she focussed on its negative aspects.

[156] *Well, it is a government backed organization, so I suppose it comes through right centre as far as the standpoint goes (...) that's sort of conservative.*

[163] *I am aware of how they are dealing with this education reform act, and because I am arguing against this, what this paper is saying, I am trying to pick up places in the text where they are not quite clear of what they intend to do. So I am looking for*

weakness. I suppose, because I am aware of my opinion in relation to this.

It is interesting that this reader acknowledged that her awareness about the source of material and author's standpoint was developed by her PGCE course.

[550] *Within the course, the PGCE course, particularly on the option that I do - which is race education and culture - you find that they tend to make you more aware of where the sources of information are coming from and whose opinions are contributing to these sources of information. So you begin to recognise certain groups of people who write in a certain way. (...) Perhaps, before hand I wouldn't have been so aware of the standpoint of an author, but I think they do tend to raise your awareness in general.*

This awareness seemed to have been incorporated in her reading behaviour. In answering, if the lack of knowledge about the author's standpoint would have affected her selection she states:

[173] *It might have done, it might have made it more difficult for me to understand this work if I didn't know where the author was coming from, I wouldn't be too sure of how I wanted to approach the text.*

For the sake of the argument, this reader was not just looking for negative points to criticize but was also searching for viewpoints that supported her own position.

[356] *I could refer to that second reference where I knew that the approach was critical of the subject and it then suited me to pick up on those criticisms, the critique and so on because it was coming to the argument, from the standpoint I selected. I don't know if it influenced the way I selected it, but I was more conscious of the argument they were putting forward and maybe I used this reference more constructively than the first one (the text being discussed).*

[374] *Just because it sort of improves my argument when I write up the assignment, it gives my argument more backing I suppose.*

It is interesting that in this particular situation, the reader was aware of having an opposing position but such a position was not clear cut. She did not have a clear idea as to which argument she wanted to pursue, and she was actually forming her opposition to the official line through the reading of texts. She was conscious of her lack of background knowledge and she searched for texts she considered

basic to the topic. It is interesting that her judgement of the level of the difficulty of the text was decided prior to the reading on the basis of her knowledge about genre.

[280] *I wanted, sort of, a framework of the subject that I was looking at and an argument for the subject then. I was not looking for that much of detail at that stage and I was looking for the official line on this issue.*

[289] *Because it is a government document, because it is meant for teachers and people in teaching institutions. I mean it is specific to what I am looking for and I knew I would be able to pick up some kind of framework from it, because it's got to be easy to understand. It is written in that way for anybody and everybody to read it.*

In this particular situation of reading, where little background knowledge and interest were involved, textual organization into sections and typographic resources were useful to call attention to certain information in the text. They also affected the approach to the text.

[97] *Yes, I think it might have done. Like I said, before reading, the way the text is laid out is all in units, like 3.1, 3.2 and so on and it does capture your eyes where the type set is made to look bold, and maybe it would draw me if I was looking at those phrases rather than ordinary type script.*

[133] *(...) Because everything is rigorously divided, rather than just scanning across the page and turning to the next page, I think I have taken more time reading this than I would do if it was for just a block and another block, sort of everything a bit more condensed.*

She was also aware that the sections of a text related to other sections of a text and that the text usually referred to other texts.

[110] *Probably referring and relating to other sections of the text was the way they organized this particular reference. Because they referred back to particular sections and if you want to turn back a few pages and re-read something... I was aware of that and they also refer and relate to other articles.*

However, she also considered that her selection was mainly affected by what she knew of the structural organization of the curriculum and the way this organization was reproduced in the text.

[260] *(...) I knew that the national curriculum was split up a bit in a certain way. It was re-stated in the text so that... it was*

common to my background knowledge so it was easier to understand it. So this was how it did influence me in the selection.

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the concrete reading situation discussed, this reader was reading to fulfill an academic task in which she was not highly involved and she was working under time pressure. Her reading was mainly task oriented. She acknowledged that her selection was affected by her tutor's guidance and also the background knowledge that she had acquired in her PGCE course. It is interesting that this reader did not feel that her note taking would in anyway be affected by change in study purpose. If the text was being read to be presented in her classroom, the only difference would be the language adopted, not the type of information selected.

[215] *The selection would be the same, I think. Possibly if it was something that I was presenting to others I would try to put in my own words so that I feel more comfortable when I am speaking about it. But when it is written assignment, I wouldn't simplify the language.*

The same applied to an exam situation, where the only difference would be the amount of information selected.

[222] *Basically, I would do the same but I would not concentrate on lifting whole paragraphs, quotations, simply because I wouldn't be able to memorize them and it wouldn't be of any use to me.*

However, she did recognize that if personal interest was involved, her selection would be different.

[242] *I may take more notice of the details, take more notice of the case studies in the text, if it is something that is interesting to me as an individual.*

[475] *Probably, the first reference that I brought along I read all of it. I went through it chapter by chapter even though some chapters weren't containing the information that I required, but because I was personally interested I would go through and read it all even though I didn't make notes.*

[483] *Because initially I was reading it just out of my personal reason, I wasn't using it. I didn't have to reproduce any work from the text so I didn't take notes.*

She acknowledged that because she was reading the text mainly out of her own personal interest, she tended to focus on a certain type of information.

[490] *Because it was a quite an emotional issue, I had focussed on parts of the text where it referred to individual case studies, people were often speaking about their own experiences, rather than perhaps the factual content of the text. Although both were just as interesting to read.*

In situations where no personal interest was involved, she guided her selection by the text organization and by her knowledge of the requirements of the tasks to be fulfilled.

[503] *Yes, I can think of an assignment that I had to do last term that wasn't particularly interesting to me but it had to be done. I still took notes, because again I had to reproduce some work at the end of the course. I suppose I approached it in a more formal way.*

[511] *Just the way the text was set out. I again perhaps lifted parts of the text although I did make sure that I understood them because I had to...it was about curriculum planning and I have to say which approach I had used when I was planning a particular series of lessons. (...)*

[555] *(...) The way it was written I would take that directly from the text rather than perhaps thinking about it and relate it to myself. I just made sure that I understood it and relate it to the work that I had done, but that was it, you know. It was quite formal and as soon as I made use of it in that way I didn't consider it after that.*

It is interesting to note the parallel between this possible situation of reading and the concrete situation discussed initially, where the reader was not highly involved. In that situation the task and the text seemed to have been the main criteria for selection. In fact, from this group, this reader was the only one who rated the text structure as the second main criterion that affected her selection.

5.3.1.2 FIVE READERS AND THREE FACTORS

Five readers presented their interpretation of their own reading practises in actual as well as in possible situations of reading. Their evaluation seemed to indicate that the criterion that guides the selective focus adopted varies according to individual characteristics and situations of reading. The actual situation of reading discussed

was common to all five readers. They were all reading to write an essay which was going to be assessed. However, even though the situation is the same, the reader-based factors involved vary considerably from reader to reader. Even considering such a small number of readers, it is possible to establish a continuum from a highly personal involvement with the essay topic (Sheila/Suzana/Gilbert) to a task oriented approach (Robert/Martha). The level of involvement with the topic, seemed to have affected the choice of criteria relevant to the specific reading situation.

Sheila had a high level of interest and background knowledge on the topic focussed on her essay. It had to do with her own social group experience as an Asian student in Britain and also as a teacher in a mostly white school. She was in a debate situation, aiming to argue in favour of multicultural education. Texts were used to make this debate evident, and also to elaborate and clarify the points she wanted to put across. Her selection of information in this situation was highly affected by her personal experience and the position she was trying to defend.

Suzana was also writing on a topic in which she had high interest and some background knowledge. She also came to the reading situation with pre-determined issues to be focussed on. However, these issues had been established on the basis of the back-ground knowledge acquired through the reading of a previous text. When reading the initial text, her personal interest was the main criterion for selection. However, the reading of the second text was more task oriented and her personal interests no longer so influential. In trying to write her essay she focuses on key points - determined by her reading of the first text - and does not highlight all the bits that might interest her.

Gilbert aimed, with his essay, to fulfil an assignment and to gather information that might help him to improve his teaching practice. He perceived a very close relation between his own personal aims and the goals of his PGCE course. Both are highly concerned with teaching activity. In determining the criterion that affects his selection of information, he stressed the role of his personal

interest in the matter and made reference to his background knowledge acquired through his own teaching practice, as well as to the bibliography given as reference in his PGCE course and class discussions. He used the text as a source of guideline for practical suggestions to be implemented in the classroom situation.

Robert had interest and knowledge relative to the topic of his essay, but in the reading situation discussed, he was mainly task oriented. He had been taught within a specific theoretical position in his PGCE course and agreed with such a position. His essay was based on background knowledge acquired from his lectures and he was putting forward this knowledge obeying the requirement of his academic task. He read the text because he was aware of the necessity of showing that he "had read on the issue", and also the necessity to back up his position by making reference to the literature and statistical data.

Martha was basically fulfilling the requirements of an academic task. She was under time pressure and was mainly task oriented. She based her selection on the tutor's guidance and also in the background knowledge acquired from the PGCE course. She was not aiming to acquire background information with her reading but mainly to extract points that she could put together to construct an argument which was going to be assessed.

These reports showed ways in which reader-based factors may interact with the demands of the academic task to be fulfilled. Readers have different sources of background knowledge upon which they may base their selection: personal life experience, knowledge acquired from texts, knowledge acquired through lectures, etc. Depending on the reader's level of involvement with the topic, and on their understanding about their task to be fulfilled, each one of these sources may acquire a different level of relevance in determining the information that should be selected from texts.

As an example, Sheila's involvement with the topic of her essay lead her selection of information from the text to be guided by her personal experience as an Asian student and the position that she was trying to defend. Evaluating the effect of text-based factors, this

reader indicated that the organization of the content in the text did not have a great influence on the selective focus adopted during her reading. The division of the text into sections was considered only useful to locate, in the text, the information that she was looking for. In contrast, Martha was basically fulfilling, under pressure, the requirements of an academic task. She based her selection on her tutor's guidance, and also on the background Knowledge acquired from her PGCE course. From all five readers, she was the only one who considered that the text's structural features might have invited her to extract certain information from the text. She also ranked text-structure quite high. This factor was considered the second most important factor that affected her selection in this situation (purpose for reading was the most important one). It is interesting to point out that Sheila, discussing possible situations of reading, also indicated that in situations where there was lack of personal interest in the topic, her selection might be based on the structural guidance of the text. These examples illustrate how reader-based factors may lead to the choice of different criteria to select information from a text.

Analysing the actual situation of reading described by these readers, it is possible to detect different ways in which social-factors affected their reading. Sheila, Suzana, and Gilbert stressed that they were highly interested in the topic they were exploring in their essay. Yet, their personal interest was socially motivated. Sheila's and Suzana's choice of topic reflected their preoccupation with their own social group. They were trying through their essay to clarify issues that were relevant to their social identity as an Asian student/teacher in British schools, or as a woman involved in mathematics. Both were exploring an issue that was meaningful to them due to their own social history.

Gilbert in writing his essay was also concerned in gathering information that might help him to improve his teaching practice. His preoccupation with his efficiency as a teacher lead him to be concerned with students that fail to learn in schools, because they are linguistically discriminated against. His personal interest

reflects a concern with a specific social practice - i. e. teaching - and with his role within this practice. It also reflects a political attitude in relation to social (linguistic) minorities.

Robert and Martha had also chosen a topic in which they were interested. However their responses indicated that their approach to it was more task oriented. Their familiarity with the norms of the academic discourse and genre guided their reading and selection of information from the text. Robert was writing his essay based on the background knowledge acquired from previous lectures. He was aware that his own position in the issue being discussed was in line with the one favoured by the teacher who was going to assess his essay. Having a common standpoint he was not in a debate situation. He did not need to argue in favour of a particular position, but just to present elements that would support it. Thus, his reading was mainly motivated by the necessity of (a) "showing that he had read about the issue", and (b) backing up his position by making reference to the literature and statistical data. This reflects his own perception of the norms of discourse within the context of the British academy. As he mentioned during the interview "in order to write an essay, you have to refer to other authors, you can't just write from the top of your head, you can't here...".

Martha was mainly fulfilling the requirements of an academic task. She acknowledges that her selection of information from the text was mostly based on the tutor's guidance, and also on the background knowledge that she had gathered from her PGCE course. She was not aiming to merely acquire information with her reading. She wanted to extract points that could be used to build an argument, which was going to be assessed. The way she dealt with the text, the preoccupation with a clear understanding of the terminology used, also indicated an awareness of the rules of the discourse. Her choice of text - "a text written to teachers and therefore easier to be understood" - reflect her knowledge about the genre adopted by texts directed to different types of social groups.

Discussing the construction of an academic discourse, three of the readers (Sheila/Suzana/Martha) indicated that the author's stand point

was very important if they were trying to present an academic debate, and defend a point of view. In such situations these readers tended to focus on positive points - if they agree with the author - and on negative or weak points if they disagree with the author. These choices reveal that, in constructing an academic argument, there was a difference between information that was important to the reader, and information that the text structure established as important.

Finally, data from group I offered some insights on how the academic experience of these readers might have affected their reading in general, and selective focus in particular. Schooling might affect selective focus by stressing the relevance of certain issues by the bibliography offered by the courses (Gilbert). It might provide familiarity with a particular stand point or school of thought (Robert) or might lead readers to be aware and to question certain issues during reading - such as the source of the text (Martha).

5.3.2 GROUP II - MA READERS

Group II was formed by five readers engaged in an MA course at the Institute of Education. All five readers were pursuing a higher degree qualification in Psychology, but they were following two different specializations within the area: Psychology and Education of Children with Special Needs (2 readers), and Educational Psychology (3 readers).

These courses are open to graduate students, and candidates are expected to have previous teaching experience. So, this group of readers had not only considerable academic experience, but had also experience in dealing with texts in the context of professional activities.

To obtain the degree, students are expected to attend lectures, to write a dissertation or report of no more than 10,000 words, and to pass examinations. The examinations explore issues included in the lecture program. To fulfil the course requirements and to obtain the final certificate, these readers have to accomplish different types of academic tasks.

The analysis of the previous group's data discussed how reading selective focus may vary in the context of a single academic task, due to reader-based factors. The data provided by the present group indicated how the selection of information from a text might also vary due to different study situations.

Four reading to study situations were represented in this sample:

- a. reading to write a final report (2 readers).
- b. reading to prepare an exam question (1 reader).
- c. reading to acquire background knowledge (1 reader).
- d. reading to present and discuss a text (1 reader).

Given the different reading purposes, how did reader-based, text-based, and social-based factors affect the selective focus adopted by these readers while reading? Aiming to answer these questions the

present analysis, also moved from an actual situation of reading to possible situations.

5.3.2.1 DATA REPORT

5.3.2.1 a CECILIA

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Cecilia was reading to write her MA report. She had chosen a topic that she considered relevant to her profession and which interested her for that reason. She had background knowledge of the issues discussed and chose the text to read because she felt it would be relevant to the points she wanted to make in her own report.

[250] *Yes, because my report is personal to me. I've chosen the topic because I am very interested in it. (...) I need this for my profession. The reason I chose it is because I am personally involved. It is the attitude of teachers, it is very personal.*

Her purpose for reading was pointed out as the most influential criterion for the selective focus that she adopted during her reading.

[56] *It is definitely related to why, the purpose. The purpose is directly related to what I underlined. No other reason why I'm underlining this, unless I wanted it for my report.*

Having in mind the purpose of writing an essay and defending specific points of view, she selected information from the text aiming to achieve two main goals. First, to make the information of the text more easily accessible in order to facilitate the writing up process. Second to make salient the information that she was searching for - the "important" information.

[25] *Rather than re-write the whole, I just pick up points that I want and summarize what the article has done. Therefore, when I go back to it, like if I want to quote in my report I'll know exactly what goes into it. But usually, a step before that when I'm doing my report, I usually go through the pages looking at the things I want to write, and almost I do a second analytical look at it and pull out the most important ones - the most important things underlined. So in the first place they just make smaller what the paper is about, and the second reason is that it highlights for me what I want actually.*

[63] *For instance, right here is "the attitude" of teachers towards main stream. My report is on attitudes, teachers attitudes, so*

therefore, the actual word the attitude of teacher is a trigger that this is an important part.

It is interesting that this particular reader seemed to make a very clear distinction between the main general points put forward by the text and the specific issues that were related to her purpose of reading. This seemed to be part of a reading strategy adopted whenever she read texts with an academic purpose in mind. She had also developed a special code to distinguish between the two types of information.

[219] *Well, I look at the title, I usually skim through it and look at the sub-sections. Then I read it, I asterisk things that are general points, I underline specific points and I highlight with another asterisk the important points. So the really good points are asterisked, and underlined, whereas general are not. So, I have a code, I have a system of doing it. That's the way I've learned to do it and no matter what I read, that's the way I do it. Like some people skim read.*

[212] *Yes, associated with the way I read anything related to my academic side.*

In this specific situation of reading, reader-based factors had a strong influence in determining the type of information to be selected. Her background knowledge on the issue lead her "to zero right into what she wanted". Her personal interest helped her to identify which information in the text would support her point of view.

[260] *Yes, it did. How? By simply getting the feeling from it, whether or not it would support what I wanted to put in my report. So, if I didn't get the right feeling from the text, I wouldn't have underlined it. (...)*

However, later on in the interview she specified that personal interest only mattered if it had relation to the report's topic. General personal interest seemed to be ruled out in this situation. Discussing her criteria for selecting textual information, this reader affirmed:

[326] *Yes, because it was purpose oriented, it was not interest oriented or... No, it was very focussed on what I wanted.*

In this process of putting forward a specific point of view, the identification with the author's stand point was also mentioned as one of the criteria that affected selective focus.

[190] (...) they are definitely pro main stream. (...) Did it influence? Yes, it did. And it did help me to underline the different sections because I am pro integration as well.

From the three possibilities of structural organization presented only the division of the text in sections was mentioned as relevant to her reading .

[91] (...) the different sections that were definitely related to my topic. Some sections I totally omitted in the organization and other sections, that were definitely related to me, I paid more attention to. (...)

Section headings, and the summary presented at the end of each section were pointed out as being helpful to highlight the topics being discussed in the text. The section headings were useful not just to locate the information that she was looking for in the text , but they also facilitated the apprehension of the argument put forward by the text. That is the headings in this text made more evident the logical relation between the topics and sub-topics presented.

[124] The title is ' Main Stream with the Moderate Retarded'. It says, I mean even in the title it sectioned some questions, cautions and guidelines. So, it starts off with a definition and a purpose, and then the introduction, main stream, breaks down into different sections which are related to the topic. (...) there are three things mixed in the topic, and they are brought out in different sections.

[101] Well, it helped me, I mean, the way they had it done, different steps or whatever, the 1, 2 ,3 they have done helped me to see it clearer. It clarified in my mind different things that they talked about. Therefore, yes it did. It did catch my attention and organized maybe a little better what I was looking for, which I appreciate. That is why I underlined it. Yes there is a direct relationship to that. If it wasn't so clear maybe I wouldn't have underlined it.

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

This reader considered that in other situations texts in her area of study might be structured in two ways. One was the division of a general topic into different sections. In this case, she regarded the structural organization of the text as a necessary condition for the comprehension of the text. The topics and sub-topics made evident the

author's outline and general direction of his/her argument. A well structured text in this case favoured selection of information mainly because it encouraged her to read it selectively.

[561] *Because the author was organized in his presentation of the paper, I will understand better. If an author is abstract, if he is jumping all over the place, and you can't grasp what he regards as his outline, that I would be least encouraged to underline, because I wouldn't have a clear outline of what he is heading at. In an organized paper of section or sub-section, or with an introduction that is good. I would be more willing to go through the process.*

The other possible type of organization mentioned by this reader was a characteristic of papers that deals with empirical research. In this case, the sections represent broader categories of information and not the logical flux of the general topic being dealt with by the text.

[148] *(...) an empirical research, it's got the methodology, and the findings and the conclusion. But when it is talking about a general topic, it usually does have it done in sections, like this (the text being discussed).*

In this second type of structure, the text's sections were mainly helpful to locate the type of information she was searching for. The distinction that she made between these two types of structure is made evident in the following statement:

[154] *By nature of its categorization, like if I'm looking for a result I directly go to the findings; if I'm looking for a method of doing something I would directly go to the methodology; if I am looking whatever they use, chi square, or whatever, I would go to the methodology; any opinions I go to the conclusions and the findings and discussion. Whereas in this I would have to go through each section and look at the section title and be drawn in that way. Whereas the empirical one is very consistent in each study you usually have the intro, the method, the findings and the conclusion whereas in this it is just organized in the way the author wants it organized.*

Discussing the effect of reader-based factors in her reading selection, she stated that her interest in the subject matter of the text might compensate for the difficulty of reading a text when she has little background knowledge to its content.

[300] *I take my time. I am much more careful with the text. I read it to see what is in it first then I read to understand, then I read to see what I need out of it. That doesn't usually happen, because in special needs there are not so many areas and main*

stream is a very common area. If it is new, and I am really interested, and I don't know much about it, I read it for professional and personal interest, because I want to know about it, and I want learn from it.

The lack of interest in the topic being dealt with by the text, may have a reverse effect.

[277] *Yes, it would (affect selection). I would underline less in that area, because I was not interested in it.*

[300] *But say, for instance, if it is something like which I am not interested really, I might just skim through. I might read it twice, just read it to have it done.*

Her personal interest was considered her main criterion for selection of information in situations where she was reading without the intention to fulfil any external purpose .

[601] *When I am reading to learn, when it is not associated with outside pressure source. Do you know, when you get a magazine, and you just read to learn.*

In this case, personal interest affected selection:

[611] *Because I am more relaxed, I guess, I know what I am interested in and I know how I feel about it.*

She also acknowledged that there are study situations in which the external academic demands affected selection more than her own personal interest. An exam situation is cited as an example of such a situation:

[623] *Study for exams. Because what you are going to be examined on has not to do with whether or not you want to be examined on. There is no direct relationship. Like this (article read) caters to both. Caters to my academic wanting to learn and caters to my self interest. It pleases both sides. If I am studying for exams it is just one side. I have to read, therefore, I must.*

In relation to social based factors, this reader considered that the author's stand point or school of thought had a main effect on her selection only in situations in which she was not well acquainted with the area. In this type of situation she tended to accept and follow the author's view point. However, if she had some knowledge of the

area, she tended to have her own view point, and she used the textual information only to further inform it.

[458] *In an area that I am not too familiar with, the view point of the author, plays a big part, because I am more or less leaning on him to guide me. Do you know what I mean? Like in this I have my own stand point, so it doesn't really matter to me where his is. All I want is other information. But if I am in an area that I am not too secure in I'll lean on it, lean on the author's guide lines and school of thought. (...)*

This reader was aware of the types of information that are commonly put forward by text in her area of study.

[396] *(...) The author's perception of main stream, what he thinks is important in that, has he done any research in it? or is he is just commenting in that. Any results of any test, or any study that he has done, conclusions, comments, any highlighted points.*

However she considered that her selection was not guided by these expectations, but by the purpose of reading that she had in mind when she approached the text .

[411] *Well, the information I select is definitely related to the purpose of why I am reading. I could say for an exam, it would be totally different for my report. Two totally separated reasons for reading a particular paper. So the purpose dictates what information I underline.*

She also acknowledged that different types of purpose may lead to different types of focus during reading. So, if reading for her report she focused on specific issues, whereas if reading for an exam or a classroom report, she would focus on more general information.

[366] *Can I say that from here, from the head line I wanted definitely to know the guide lines, that is why I circled it. So that was the most important part of the paper for me, even though I read the whole paper that was the most important part for me, because this was what I wanted to incorporate into my report. The guide lines that came from this.*

[347] *I would probably highlight more, Because what I want for my report is not necessarily, a condensation of things, whereas in a class report you would, that is what you're doing you are condensing it to report on a small scale. So, if it had to do with three different purposes I would overlap in what I would take out of it. Like the report would be particular sentences. The exam and the classroom would be almost similar, what I put up in a classroom is almost the same thing that I put up in an exam. Because in the exam and the classroom you need to be concerned with the whole*

paper, whereas with the report, I could be holding in two or three sentences. There are two different reasons in the three.

5.3.2.1 b TANIA

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Tania was reading to write her M.A. dissertation. The book read was indicated by her supervisor as useful material to help her in the writing up process.

[10] First of all, the text was recommended to me by my supervisor to use at this stage of writing up a dissertation. So, it is related to the kind of research I have been doing, so I was using it to help me in the writing up of my dissertation. So I was looking for specific ideas on doing research, in natural research in psychology, in qualitative research. I really didn't know at the beginning how much I was going to get out of it.

She already had some background knowledge as to the content of the text. In the specific reading situation being discussed, she was mainly concerned about gathering more information to guide her essay. Such a concern affected the selection of the chapters from the book.

[33] Perhaps, starting off I wasn't really sure what I was looking for, so the first thing I did was go through the list of contents and pick up certain chapters I thought would be useful. I mean for instance, two or three chapters which I thought were going to be useful turned out not to be useful, because they were not related to my particular work, it was another level of education, I was particularly interested in primary education, this was to do with secondary education.

[206] (...) I mean, I may have been interested in other areas of the book, but the time constraints just didn't allow me. I mean, at this stage of the year I don't have time to follow a personal interest, unless it is directly related to the work in hand, I discard it.

Her purpose for reading was also the main criterion that guided her selective focus in the chapters read. She was mainly concerned about selecting information that could be included in her essay.

[38] Once I flicked through a chapter and I noticed it wasn't relevant I wouldn't take notes. So I only take notes, if it is something that I know that I am going to make use.

[232] The notes I took, I considered as being helpful when it came to write the chapter one, general introduction, or the methodology

section. So the reason why I took the direct quotations or ideas was related to whether or not it was a good description of what I was doing, whether it gave me a deeper understanding or another angle, of what I was doing.

It is interesting, that in this situation, some information was selected due to the way it was put across. That is, the language used by the author was also a criterion for selection.

[25] *I didn't find the book particularly useful so...I mean, there were certain ideas that I've got out of it, which I was able to match to what I have already done. It was expressed in a good way, I mean the English expression is good, it is o.k., I can use this in writing up. So, I took some direct quotations which I'm going to use myself in writing up my own research (...).*

However, the influence of purpose for reading on the selective focus adopted, was not restricted to this particular situation of reading. The reader made clear, throughout the interview, that her selection of information was always affected by the purpose that she has in mind prior to reading

[395] *No, I mean, I don't think I have a different procedure for highlighting texts. I approach all texts from the point of view of picking out certain things in the text. It doesn't matter whether it is in a book or in a journal or newspaper or whatever. (...) Some of the main criterion is if it is useful for me or not and that applies to all texts.*

Inter-text relations were also mentioned as having an effect on the process of information selection.

[139] *(...) If I think it is useful I go back and read it slowly. I then generally isolate either direct quotations if I think I'm going to use them, and write up the full quotation and page number, or else a phrase or two, you know, not quoting directly. And then, after that on the margin I might take notes of something I would like to compare this to, say, another book. (...)*

In the situation being analysed, the author's standpoint was not considered an influential factor, due to the subject matter of the text.

[106] *No, I don't think so. The book is a methodology book, so perhaps if it had been more concerned with a theory, or a specific aspect of psychology it might have. But not this kind of subject.*

In relation to reader-based factors, the previous knowledge that she had on the content of the text affected the time spent on taking the notes and the quantity of notes taken. That is, she only took into consideration information that was new to her.

[164] *It did in the sense that I had read similar books, or similar papers, covering the same kind of material, so I probably took less from this book than I would if I'd come to a subject that was new, for the first time. So I only took information from this which I haven't come across before, or a different angle, let's say. (...)*

Her main interest in approaching the text was to get more information to write her essay. She had built this expectancy on the basis that the text was indicated as a very useful one by her supervisor. However, the reading of the material did not fulfil her expectations. She was clearly disappointed with it. However, the very fact that the book had been recommended by her supervisor, made her reconsider the validity of her judgement.

[25] *(...) I mean it was suggested as a useful book to me, so I took it as that. But I thought, actually, that I was going to get a lot more out of it than I did.*

[191] *(...) But I was a bit disappointed just how little I was able to get from it, considering it had been recommended to me as a useful text by my supervisor. I was wondering, I mean I may have overlooked issues, perhaps I may have a second look to see if there is anything more that I can get. Because he recommended it as a very useful text, so I am wondering that since I've got so little maybe I am just missing something and I should look it properly.*

This reader also indicated how personal interest might be affected by factors external to the text per se. The fact that the text was not a recent publication had an effect on her interest in reading it.

[191] *Yes. It wasn't -- the problem I think with this book too, is that it is quite old, so that put me off a bit as well. It was published in 1972 (...)*

Text-based factors were not considered relevant to this situation of reading. The reader mentioned that the structural aspect that she paid attention to most was the book division into chapters and the chapters into sections. However, these structural features did not have a major effect on the selection. They only helped her to locate the information that she was searching for.

[69] *No, not really. I mean, it helps me to focus on certain parts of the book, or focus on a certain page, but when actually it comes to choose the information I would read the text.*

Asked if this would in anyway affect her selection of information, she replied:

[74] *Not in actually selecting what I do.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

In reading for study, this reader tended to be mostly concerned with the academic purpose/task that she aimed to fulfil

[406] *Useful to the task which I have in the back of my mind when I am reading. I am either reading to write an essay, I am either reading for preparation of a lecture, reading for a dissertation purposes. So depending on the task I am reading for, I select. It is always - is this going to be of use to me? - this is the first question, and really the only question.*

She also acknowledged that a change in the purpose for reading would also have affected the type of information selected from the text.

[253] *Yes, I would have selected a different kind of information, obviously, if it was a very different purpose. I mean I had a very narrow reason for reading this book, it wasn't to get an overview of research, qualitative research. It was specific issues related to methodology. If it was for an exam, I would probably take less direct quotation and more just ideas, headings, single words. If it was an essay it probably would depend on the topic of the essay. It would be a different sort...*

Within this type of purpose oriented approach text-based factors, such as division of the text into sections, or the inclusion of summaries, affected the selection of the text, but not the selective focus adopted while reading the text.

[97] *It doesn't really affect the way I select, it affects whether or not I carry on studying that text.*

[370] *It (the division into sections) makes it easier for me the fact that there is an introduction, result section and discussion. The way it is divided like that means that I can use as a short cut in the length of time it takes me to get the information I need from it. In fact it makes it much easier for the reader the way research journals are organized.*

The perception of the author's standpoint was not considered very relevant to the selection of information from a particular text. It affected mostly the choice of the text per se, or the attention given to it, and not necessarily the type of information that she selected from it.

[118] *I suppose that if I could identify with that kind of theory and I read previous work by that author which I find useful I would be more inclined to take more notes, to take more detail. So from that point of view it would affect.*

[336] *I must say as a general point that often doesn't influence me either, whether I actually select a particular text or the information I take from it. It is not an important factor for me, in one way or another. As I said earlier, if I was able to identify with a certain author stand point, and agreed with it, found it useful, I would be more inclined to read it slower, more carefully, and perhaps take more from it. But in general, it will be a factor in whether or not I select the text to read I suppose, not the information that I actually take from a particular text.*

Considering possible reading situations, reader-based factors were regarded as a relevant factor in selecting information from texts. Although her reading was mostly task oriented, whenever she had personal interest in the subject matter of the text, she tended to pay more attention to it and to go beyond the demands of the task in hand.

[420] *If I am personally interested I may take more information than I normally would for future reference. So, I might go beyond the immediate task, I may want to come back to this a month later, a year later. So I will tend perhaps to take more information than I can see of immediate use.*

In situations where she had little personal interest in the subject matter of the text, she found it difficult to concentrate and this made the selection of information more difficult.

[218] *I would tend to give less attention, and I would probably find more difficult to select information.*

This reader tried in her academic work to focus on issues in which she had personal interest. However, in situations where this was not possible, her selection was task oriented.

[435] *For example, if I have to do an essay, and I am not particularly interested in the topic of the essay, obviously my*

personal interest is of a secondary importance. The main thing for me is to get the information for the essay.

[443] (...) *Depends how general and open the essay topic is for example, if it gives room for discussion, and if it is a general topic I would be drawn to certain areas which are of personal interest. If it is a very specific area, and I don't have personal interest in it, than obviously I have to select the information to answer the essay as good as possible, and my personal interest doesn't matter.*

Lack of background knowledge was seen as affecting the time spent on reading and also the amount of notes taken from a text. Lectures were seen as guidelines to reading in situations where she had little background knowledge relating to the content of the text.

[175] *Well, for the start the selection process is much more slower, I would probably take more notes. I never like going to texts knowing absolutely nothing about it. For example, if it was given a reading list before a lecture, I would always try maybe, just to get a general idea of the subject first of all, then go to the lecture and then come back to the book and go through it in much more detailed form. I am going to spend more time trying to understand it, if I can understand it, I would take notes from it. If I have difficulty because it is so new, and I have the opportunity of going to a lecture and find out something else, I would leave it and come back after the lecture.*

5.3.2.1 c FLAVIO

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Flavio was reading a paper to compare it with a previous paper read. The discussion of both papers had been previously presented in a lecture. The article read was written by the lecturer. So, this reader had not just background knowledge relevant to the content of the text but was also fully aware of the author's standpoint. His purpose for reading the text was to clarify and expand his lecture notes, in order to prepare himself for an exam question.

[120] *Well, my first reason for going through this particular article is that I have to compare that with another article. I was just interested in seeing the two arguments, the arguments these people put forward on why children may fail conservation tasks. It is the first part of a long discussion, and I was just interested in understanding it. So say I've underlined tasks, theories to present basically what this article is about, and some various*

references there that I've underlined because I think I might use them later on. (...)

[136] *I want to use it in order to make up some notes from it to clarify lectures notes that we had on the subject. What I'll do is, I'll take the lecturers' notes and I'll expand them using the information from the articles(...) Hopefully, this will fill any gaps, anything that I've missed out during the lecture.*

[153] *Yes, I first read this (referring to the article) which was a sort of standard text on the matter, and then this is a criticism of one of the lecturers.*

In this specific situation, the selection of information was based on two different types of background knowledge. First of all, the knowledge acquired in the lecture, and his knowledge about the lecturer's/author's standpoint.

[381] *Yes. We have covered this before, in knowing their stand point, knowing which factors to take into account to develop their argument I know that I am looking for those particular points in the text, I am focussing on that.*

[395] *(...) In a way it is cheating because I had a lecture on it before hand so I know exactly what I am looking for, it is more or less confirming what I have got in my notes already.*

The second type of background knowledge that guided selection, in this specific reading situation, was the reader's knowledge about the exam requirements.

[258] *Yes, I've tried to simplify, I think I only want names, points, a few references, which I wouldn't normally bother. I want the conceptual approach as well, but I am aware that I need to put a few references in, and that kind of thing that I need to just memorize by rote. Unfortunately, that is the way to get through exams.*

[399] *I wanted an overall conceptual idea of what it was about and I need a few relevant quotes, a few names to throw in and mix it all up and hopefully be able to answer an exam question. I wanted to try to broaden as much as I can, broaden the area and know as many references, and points of view as possible, because obviously in an exam, one doesn't know exactly what question are going come up. So one needs a large selection of knowledge to draw from.*

The purpose of reading for an exam affected the way this reader approached the text. He was looking for specific types of information that he considered relevant to "get through the Exams". Asked if his

reading was similar to the way he normally read academic journals, he replied:

[284] *No, as I say I've gone through this in more details specially underlining references, etc. things that I know that I will or that I may need to memorize by rote. (...).*

[291] *Normally, as I've said, I read it through just for the general argument.*

He also considered that to fulfil his purpose, he must concentrate on information (references) that are "more valued". This value is determined by inter-textual relations.

[284] *Obviously, I am going to read a half dozen articles to concentrate on and where they cross reference, those are the ones to remember more... and to forget after the exam.*

Considering that in this specific situation of reading, the text read was a criticism of another theoretical position, inter-textual relation was also considered essential to apprehend the content put forward by the authors.

[302] *I think it probably did, but if you asked how I can't say, because I don't know how I would have read if I didn't have the background information. It is criticizing certain Piagetian ideas, so if I didn't have background knowledge of Piaget's ideas I don't know whether I would fully understood it all, I am not sure. I think it must obviously have affected what I've taken from it.*

[313] (...) *I am not sure that I would have actually understood this article without any background knowledge, because it is quite specific. (...) There is no point in one reading this article unless one has read the Donaldson's beforehand.*

Personal interest in the subject matter of the text made the text more easily understood. The reader was able to relate the issues being discussed in the text to his own classroom experience as a teacher. This relation favoured the focus on specific items of information.

[332] *Yes, because it deals with children within the age range that I teach, and their concept of number which for me is very interesting. I could relate to it and the figures come to life, because I can understand the situations. Whereas if it was on a some more remote topic maybe I would just be working through the figures, without actually getting the arguments, without actually relating them to any concrete experience.*

[347] (...) it helps you to perceive certain actions that the experiments are dealing with. Yes, I was thinking of certain children or children in general that I thought, so yes, I think it would have made me focus more on certain aspects.

The division of text into sections, each dealing with a specific topic, was considered helpful to locate the information he was looking for, and that he needed to take into consideration in order to answer his exam question. So, in this situation, structural expectancy was useful aid to the selective focus adopted.

[191] *Made it easier to find. The problem was that I knew more or less what I was looking for. (...)*

[206] *I think so, first it is organized in a way, first of all the abstract gives you what the main article is about, then you know that you are going to have an introduction which is sort of a thesis which this particular text is arguing against or simply criticizing. I think I was very much aware of it.*

[213] *Yes, because I know that from my point of view I am doing this not for enjoyment, I am doing it because I want to pass an exam. Actually, it helped me a lot because I know that after the introduction, there are some studies and each paragraph is more or less to make a different point sort of related to the main thesis. So I can just quickly skim through and jump over some preliminary phrases, and that kind of thing. You do know more or less what to expect from this kind of article.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

This reader considered that text structure was generally an important factor that affected his reading. When asked to provide an example of a situation in which the way the text was structured did not affect his selection of information, he stated:

[650] *I don't think so. I think the structure is very important. I was thinking even in literature, the structure is the experience, in poetry, the structure of the words, the way the words are structured and so on... The structure is very important, it defines the use in a way that you are going to make of that particular type of writing.*

However, he acknowledged that these "uses of writing" may address more general or more specific points and this could affect, not just the way the text is but also how this text is read and information focussed.

[225] Yes, there are (different ways of organising content in his area). They are more sort of ethnographic studies which are more general. They still follow up a formula, they can be looser to begin with, but they sort of focus towards what they are looking for at the end. They start in a sort of more general sort of way, and then focus. But this is an experimental study in a way which is structured all the way through.

[233] I am not sure. If I come to an ethnographic study I have to follow in towards the conclusion at the end. I think in a way one would be reading more loosely to begin with, and slowly be lead in, one wouldn't be picking out in the same sort of way. Here I know that point a, point b, point c, can be picked out in a particular order. (...)

[245] (in an ethnographic study) things are not so precise to begin with. So you sort of focus more on everything trying to get the flavour of the things as a whole, another kind of study. Whereas in this, you are just going through it in a very methodical sort of way.

The way the content is organized might have an effect on selection, because it made evident the line of the argument, the "clarity" of the text.

[620] Yes, the way it is set out, the clarity, must certainly affect in any kind of article.

He also pointed out that text structure was particularly important in situations of reading when he was aiming to locate in the text very specific types of information.

[585] Particularly a manual like that, because it is structured to start from basic procedures going towards more complex ones. One actually uses it more like a dictionary in a way. Come across a problem and very quickly look it up and find the answer to the problem.

[607] Well, statistics type of books as well, but this is a similar case of the computer manual, isn't it. You are able to look up exactly what you want and go straight to it.

Again, stressing a strong relation between the type of issues being discussed and text structure, he affirmed that in reading manuals, the text structure was particularly important.

[206] I think so, first it is organized in a way, the abstract gives you what the main article is about, and you know that you have an introduction which is sort of a thesis which this

particular text is arguing against or simply criticizing. I think I was very much aware of it.

Structural aspects were also considered important when he was reading a text in which he had little interest in the subject matter being discussed. In this situation he tried to follow the logical rational and concentrate only on the general gist of the book.

[357] *If I had to read the text that wouldn't be interested in I think that I would just try and look for the logical argument just picking out the main points of the logical rational, and maybe some of the asides, the interesting little angles that one might be able to go in for, something that you are interested in, I wouldn't bother with that, I would just go for the straight argument and that is it. (...)*

Later on in the interview he mentioned a work situation, as an example of a reading situation in which his personal interest was secondary.

[688] *In a study sense, a lot of the documentation on the new national curriculum, is just very boring for me, but I have to do it. As a deputy I am having to implement a lot of it, although I find it extremely boring and difficult to get the outline. But I have to do it, because it is imposed, I had no choice.*

[3] *In this situation, much of the information is already sort of given to you in headings and sub-headings. So it is a matter of picking out the specific points that they really made for you. It is a matter of trying to generalise to a teaching situation some of these attainment targets. (...) To pick those out, and then with the staff try to work out how we are going to include them into our project in our school, because I work in a primary school and we are very keen in keep up the project that we are doing, integrating a lot of the subjects. The problem is the other way around, it is not to pick the bits out, but to include them in a more broad general education for the children.*

In relation to social-based factors, this reader considered that the author's standpoint was a factor that affected his selection of information in the concrete situation, previously discussed. However, it was totally irrelevant in texts like computer manuals, or statistics texts which are written mainly to provide a certain set of instructions. Asked to give an example of a reading situation in which the author's standpoint would affect his selection of information from a text, he replied:

[527] *The computer text was basically just learning how to use it, so really there is no stand point, it is just the way of doing it... in the statistics texts...*

This reader also acknowledged that different purposes for reading may lead to different types of selection.

[267] *Yes, I would have gone just for the overall impression, the overall main points, main point, maybe one or two points. And then I would, if it was, say, for my own research, I would make a note of the sort of area they operate, maybe the main point of the thing and come back to it later if necessary. Whereas for an exam you've got really know it more thoroughly than that, because you are focussing on a small area, really. At least you are going to be asked questions particularly on these few articles, whereas in doing your own research you would just look through to see whether they are relevant or not - I think that is the difference.*

5.3.2.1.d ELISABETH

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Elisabeth was reading to fulfil a classroom task. She was asked by her lecturer to read a text - which was part of the course's selected literature - and present it orally to the class. Such a presentation aimed to promote open discussion on some of the issues dealt with by the course.

[31] *I think to some extent it had to do with the task at hand which was that this is part of a model that we are doing in the class, and a group of us, individually, were asked to present synopsis in the class of literature relevant to this particular issue. So that was the brief under which I was working, so my notes were really made to serve as a hand out to be given along with the verbal discussion.*

So, in the reading situation described, this reader had two purposes in mind. First of all, to reproduce the gist of the text, and second to present it in a way that would promote classroom discussion.

[537] *Because I felt that in order for it to be a meaningful discussion, I would have to come to grips with what the writer was trying to convey, with a certain constraint of time in mind also. I don't know if I am very secure about this.*

She wanted her notes to be used as a hand out to be given along with her own oral presentation and to be used as a base for the general discussion. In fact she was seeing her own synopsis as a

"text" about the text, which should be concise enough to be read within the time constraints of a classroom discussion. However, being a "text" her summary should be coherent and informative.

The preoccupation with the coherence of the information put forward by the text, and the information included in her own synopsis is made evident by the following statements:

[78] *I think to the continuity aspect, because there were times when I was reading and re-reading the text, when I felt that somewhere I was not keeping up with the writer's method of continuous progression of content. So, I was paying particular interest to the continuity element, because it was causing me problems to read.*

[89] *Yes, I think so, because particularly with one or two bits, I felt I need to reorganize it in my own mind for it to be a continuous report in terms of the synopsis that I was making. So it did affect my organization of content.*

The concern with "being informative enough" lead this reader to adopt a much more detailed focus during the reading. This affected the time spent on reading and also the level of detail included in the final synopsis.

[239] *(...) to some extent the purpose of reading the text, which was to make a presentation in class, did create a certain feeling of anxiety, or a better word would be a greater sense of responsibility. And I probably did expend a lot more time on it than I would normally do with something that I was reading as reference for my own work. But because it was something that I had to make a synopsis of, to make a formal or informal presentation within a group of people, it probably did affect to a certain extent. I think I did give it much much more time.*

[265] *I don't know if it would really affect the type of information I selected, I would say it probably affected the quality of the synopsis that I finally came out with, in the sense that if I hadn't given it this much time, the synopsis might have been a lot less detailed than it is.*

The information selected from the text was based on two criteria, which were directly related to her purpose for reading. She looked for the main point raised by the author's general discussion -i.e. the gist of the text - and also focussed on issues relevant to the class as a whole-in order to stimulate the open discussion.

[49] *The selection of the text was really to do with what I felt were the main points of the general discussion in the text, and also what I felt was most related to the kind of work that we do in our field of work, in the sense of, I mean the text is on support to the teacher in the classroom. And we are all of very varied background, but what is of general interest is the feeling that we do need some kind of support in the classroom. And so, my choosing of the main points apart from the fact that I felt that it had to be of thematic relevance to the chapter that had been suggested for my reading, and I also picked out various issues that I felt were specially relevant to the question of support to teachers in the classroom.*

[446] *Well, I think I did consider factors that would be relevant to the group as a whole, and I did select what I felt would be relevant to the discussion at hand, and that was on classroom management. I think I kept the topic and the interest and background of the group in mind when I selected.*

To apprehend the text's main points, she guided her selection by some of the text's structural clues. As a consequence, she paid greater attention, and selected more from the parts of the text that she considered better structured.

[98] *It probably did in the sense that perhaps I had given more weight, unconsciously given more weight to the bits that I felt were better organized than the ones that weren't.*

She also acknowledged paying special attention to the hierarchical organization of the text and the division of the text into sections.

[117] *It was a bit of both. The first one, the hierarchical one, where there is a central theme of support and all the issues related to support were sorted out. And there was a bit of the last one, were after the general theme was introduced, it is spread out into definite sections.*

The headings of the sections lead this reader to focus on certain issues, on themes that the author was trying to convey.

[167] *Yes, I guess it did in the sense again, it did sort of help me to focus on the main kind of themes that the author was planning to convey.*

She re-inforced the importance of such a structural guideline to grasp the text's general thematic and argument by stating:

[175] *It is very, very common to have certain sections within the chapters. But if it is not there, I would sort of try to read and re-read the text and try to focus into my own section headings*

almost - what I feel are the major themes that the writer is trying to convey. (...)

In this situation, the reader had some general interest in the matters being discussed by the text, because they could be related to her work.

[337] *(...) I wouldn't say it is critical at this moment of time, in terms of what I am doing. But the issues of support to teachers and classroom management is something I think that is of great interest not only on a personal level, but in terms of the quality of the work that I do.*

[352] *Yes. While I was reading the text I kept thinking of ways in which I could organize certain, some of the ideas that was coming across in the text, in terms of my work. And also trying to work out sort of concrete ways of implementing some of the ideas that were coming across, of organizing support to teachers. (...) As I was reading it, it was making a lot of sense to me, there were times when I was almost nodding or sort of overtly I could feel myself nodding in agreement or disagreeing with what he was saying in a quite overt way. I think this can only happen when there is a personal kind of identification or interest in a certain topic, or text.*

However, in spite of the text's topic being of personal interest, her personal interest was not included as one of the main criteria that affected her selection of information to elaborate the text's synopsis. Answering the second section of the questionnaire she stated that her personal interest in the subject matter of a text would be secondary in importance in situations of reading such as the one described.

[84] *Well, I would say if it is for a group discussion which is of relevance to the group as a whole, and to the course of study that you are doing, but may not be of primary interest to your personal... primarily relevance to your personal interest, but is of general relevance to the course of study you are pursuing, and of interest to the group as a whole, keeping in mind all the different kinds of interests.*

The topic read was not new to this reader. Before approaching the text she had some background knowledge on the issues discussed by the text

[281] *To some extent I think it helped me to validate some of the hunches that I had about this topic, and also puts into*

perspective the discussions about this topic that I have had with people who are in this field.

Such a background knowledge facilitated her selection of information from the text in two ways. First, it made her expect some information, and therefore be more alert to them when they appeared in the text. Second, it helped her to understand better the text and she tended to select information that was most meaningful to her.

[291] *(...) if I had no background knowledge, or very little background knowledge, I think it would be a much much more difficult process of selection, than it would be when there is certain amount of background knowledge to help me through, in the sense that my predictive capability would be much more...like even when I am reading I could use a lot of my background information to predict what the outcome may be. I may be surprised if the outcome doesn't follow in what I believe it should. But then the background knowledge helps you to interpret what you are reading much better, rather than if I had no background knowledge than I would be just reading and taking it at completely face value.*

[318] *Oh! yes. I think that to a large extent one tends to highlight things that are most meaningful. And so, when you have no background knowledge, I think it would affect what you do select for highlighting. I think that one's own perceptions and opinions, sometimes interfere in the sense that you often resist looking at the point of view that is being put across. But most often I think it helps you to interpret what you are reading far more critically and rationally, rather than if it is a new text that you are not familiar with.*

In this situation of reading, the knowledge about the author's standpoint or school of thought did not have an important effect on the selective focus adopted. The reader's knowledge about the author's line of thought was too general to provide her with a strong expectancy about the textual information.

[208] *Well, I really thought of his work as being sort of in line with approaches to staff development, and people who are thinking about staff development and teacher support as a very important feature in curriculum decisions, or about organization of special needs at all. But this is a very general kind of feature.*

[198] *While I am familiar with the author's area of interest, I haven't read all his work, or a lot of his work, which would be influencing the way I think. So to that extent it didn't apply to this particular case. I think it would apply if this was one of the various papers written by him that I had read. It would possibly communicate to me much more.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the concrete situation discussed, some of the text-based factors were pointed out as having a strong influence on the selective focus adopted. In discussing general reading situations, this reader acknowledged that the focus on the text and its structural guidelines tended to be very important if she was reading to fulfill academic purposes. The way the text was structured helped her perceive the topics that should be focussed on during her reading. It facilitated the selection of the relevant information and also diminished the time and effort required by the reading act.

[239] (...) *It (the approach to the text) was normal to the extent that my strategy of doing it remained the same, in the sense that I did want to get the major points out of it, the way I normally do for any other piece of text.*

[38] *Well, when it is for a discussion or when it is for something that I am researching on, with specific questions in mind. I think those would be the situations when the way the text is structured would influence my selection.*

[49] *I think it does both. I think it helps one to focus on relevant stuff, and reject what is irrelevant, and maybe that makes the whole process of selection from text faster to that extent.*

The way the text was structured might not be important if she was reading a text with a non-academic purpose in mind, i. e. if she was reading it out of personal interest.

[58] *I think when it is for general reading. For example, if I am going through a journal and I find an article that looks interesting, and it is something that I am generally interested in, but I don't really have to use it for anything specific, well I think the way the text was structured wouldn't really make tremendous odds to me.*

In relation to reader-based factors, this reader acknowledged that previous background knowledge on the topic tended to always have some effect on the selective focus adopted. Background knowledge gave her expectations about the information to be found in the text and to focus more on this when it appeared in the text.

Personal interest facilitated the reading but it might or might not have a major effect on the selective focus adopted during the reading. It might be central if she was researching in a particular topic.

However, it might be secondary in importance if she aimed to accomplish other academic purposes such as exams or the class discussion mentioned above.

[71] *If you are researching into that particular topic, or subject, or if you are using it to highlight something that you want to highlight.*

[390] *(...) if I wasn't really interested in doing something, I would have to make an almost conscious effort to concentrate on the text and try to select what is relevant. And I think it is the process and the strategy that I use that would be qualitatively different, for whatever the purpose might be. I am sure if I was to do a piece of text that I had to do for an exam, I would attend to it whether I had personal interest in it or not, in quite a different fashion to what I do if it was purely in terms of getting an information base, or just for discussion.*

The quotation above indicates that within situations of reading to study, purpose for reading was regarded as a fundamental criterion for selection. In fact, the reader did recognize that she searched for a different type of information if she was reading a text with different purposes in mind. If she was reading to write her own research she would only focus on issues relevant to her research topic. Reading for an exam, on the other hand, would lead her to focus on general information, as in the synopsis writing situation. However, she would avoid going into such deep level of details.

[470] *Yes I think so, because if I was doing it say for my research, I would be really focussing on the factors in the text which were completely relevant to what I was doing. It would be much more selective, rather than a general synopsis.*

[479] *In an exam situation, maybe I wouldn't do such a detailed synopsis, I would be much less specific, maybe. I think to some extent, if I was doing it for my research I would be looking for something, if I found the answer I would just be keeping that aspect in mind. In terms of an exam, if I had to think about this topic, this would be only one of the things that would be considered as a part of this very general topic. So probably I would sort of not read it in this much depth as I did for a classroom discussion and the synopsis dealing with all the main points. I don't think I would read it with this much depth, I would read it far far more generally about it.*

The author's standpoint only affected her selection if she was familiar with the author's work, or his line of thought. This

familiarity made her expect certain pieces of information in the text and this affected her selection.

[223] *Yes, in the sense that I would probably weigh up what I was reading with either work that I had read, illustrating a similar stand point, or philosophy or whatever. And if I hadn't read anything, I would probably use what I was reading as a base line to try and get some more information on that same philosophy.*

[1] *I would look in the text for the author's philosophical orientation in the text, because I would have his background in mind. So, in a discussion on objectives if it was on a Skinnerian line, very, very rigid Skinnerian line, I would be looking for expressions or view points which convey that to me.*

5.3.2.1.e EDWARD

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Edward was reading a text to acquire necessary background knowledge, that is, he wanted to clarify certain concepts that had been discussed in lectures. As these concepts were also involved in a class assignment, he felt the need to have a better understanding of them in order to accomplish two purposes to follow the classroom's discussion and to accomplish his classroom assignment.

[154] *It was to clear up something that was coming up a lot, and I wasn't clear in my own mind, coming a lot in lectures and I was not very clear what it was about. It was also part of a class assignment, and sort of, it was sort of laying a background to it. I felt I needed to know about it a bit more before I could approach the class assignment.*

So during his reading, he focussed mainly on the two concepts that he was aiming to clarify, and issues related to his class assignment.

[52] (...) *I was trying to understand more global concepts so - they are talking about information processing, factual intelligence. First of all I'd tried to clear those up in my mind (...) I want to clear these two issues up, what they are talking about. So, I had that in the back of my mind anyway (...)*

[161] *Yes, I want a clear idea of these two things, so anything that referred to those I tended to put down. (...) I did have a second purpose, then, if I felt that it was something that I could write in my write up that went down as well. You know, if I could*

refer to it. Because what I am trying to write is a piece of experiment, so I kind of think, well, does this come into the experieement? And, if it did, it went down (...)

The previous background acquired in his classroom experience helped him to focus on specific information.

[360] *We've done an experiment in the classroom that was about small things leading on to big concepts, and I knew that was going to be important to my writing up. And as soon as it came up I thought, ah! this is why I am reading it, it makes sense. And I knew it had been pointed out that that was what the experiment, the lecture was on (...).*

However, as he was having problems grasping the issues put forward by the lecturer he was aware that his classroom experience was not enough to provide him with the necessary background to understand the text. So, prior to the reading, he read a more general and basic text. His understanding of this previous text, also had an effect on the selective focus adopted during his reading.

[67] *Yes, and before I read it I actually went to a really general text book and actually got what they thought was information processing, and I actually made notes on what a general A level or first year graduate before I went to an article that was going to go into a lot more detail (...)*

The initial text read fulfilled a very specific goal: it provided the reader with standard definitions which were necessary to understand the author's standpoint on the matter.

[399] *I wanted definitions, and I want sort of standard definitions to start with, and think that was why I went to a general text book first. (...) He's got an idea within that, and I want to know what was beyond that, what was sort of dry academic definitions. So I think that was what I did, why I went to just a general text book, before I read it. (...)*

This reader's interest in the author's stand point was mainly due to the academic status achieved by the particular author read.

[206] *I knew he was important and his ideas were very vogue. But I wasn't quite sure why and that was one of the reasons I read him, really. He was definitely in a school, or perhaps one of the founders of the school(...)*

[215] *I think because I felt he was important I may have given him more weight. He wasn't just yet another researcher, or whatever that I had to read in the course of things. This was somebody who*

was obviously very popular for one reason or another. Yes, I gave him more attention, because of that.

The importance attributed to the author lead this reader to be highly concerned with grasping as much information as possible from the text. Such a concern affected his reading in three distinct ways: First of all it influenced the adoption of a specific study skill during reading

[276] *I started thinking that I could just underline salient points, like I have done, and it became quite clear to me that that wasn't going to be enough. (...) I had to adapt, and think oh! no I have got actually to write notes on this, or I am not going to understand it fully. (...)*

[33] *I find writing clears up things for me. It sort of clears up issues for me, actually drawing out like salient things in a paragraph, in a sentence. (...) And then, sort of, perhaps going back to the text then to sort of say, all right! now what are his examples? I think what I've particularly done in this one, because it was quite difficult (...) My notes now is just a precis(...) of his thinking.*

Secondly, it affected the level of specificity of the selective focus adopted during reading, leading the reader to pay special attention even to the terminology adopted by the author.

[222] *(...) he was putting forward different terms and different sub-theories. (...) If it was somebody else, who I was just happen to be reading, I might just pass over the actual terminology. But I am aware that this may come again, or somebody else may develop it in my readings. So yes, I think I've chosen terms, that may be specific to him, but I think other people may regard them, use...*

Finally, it promoted an approach to reading very tied to the text. The structural organization of the text in sections and paragraphs was considered relevant to selection, since they highlighted the steps of the general argument just put forward by the author.

[81] *I was aware that he was developing an argument. Yes, I was aware that he was actually going to develop an argument (...)*

[92] *Yes, it was sectioned and that was how he developed his argument. So it was in sections and that again helped me as I was trying to get salient points (...)*

[100] *I think it almost gives you a point to that there should be something, because a 10 pages document may give one point, but you almost feel that if someone sections it into 10 sections there*

should be 10 points. And it almost points you to think oh! there is going to be a point in this section, he's made a division. So if I haven't got it, I go back and read the section again to try and get it. I would almost look again if I haven't got the point because I would also think that I wouldn't get the next point, if I haven't got this one. (...)

His personal interest in reading the text was mainly connected to his purpose of filling the gaps in his previous background.

[317] *(...) It made me think about the argument. I think, because I was interested, I was more aware of the argument as opposed to the content. I was interested to see where it was going (...)*

[431] *I think that sort of old argument of how you test and what is a valid sort of testing in intelligence. And I knew I was going to find that, but I think that was all I knew, and I think I needed sort of then just to see why there was the argument. And when he puts it down, it was all so obvious anyway. I have heard it before, but I think I needed somebody to clarify it for me. And in that way his clarification of why people argue, or what people feel are the most important things was more important than his development in a way to me, because I wanted that sorted out. (...)*

But he also acknowledged a more broad type of personal interest which also led him to focus on specific issues not so central to the text.

[303] *I like the ideas of things like the practicality of certain behaviour and IQ test or testing (...) I like the aspect of the cultural aspect of speed. And probably looking at them they are terribly important. I think they just interested me.*

It is interesting that his personal interest was, in part, related to his own social experience.

[303] *(...) I am working in a multicultural environment and I think it just makes you clued in this sort of Oh! Yes! that is an interesting way of looking at it.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the previous situation of reading mentioned, the division of the text in sections was considered an important factor that affected the selection of information from the text. This reader considered that, in other possible situations, summaries, titles and sub-titles do have a similar function, i. e., they highlight the ideas that the author

regards as central to his argument. So, they may function as a guideline to apprehend the text argument during reading.

[607] *I think that kind (sections) affected me a great deal actually. The first text, it affected me a great deal. (...) He helps you through that by structuring it, and it certainly helped me. Just going on and on, just makes it so much difficult to get what the salient points are (...) because they are not giving you any guide lines on what they think they are, whether they may have said it in the way they have said, but they have not shown in their structure (...) Somebody who summarizes something at the beginning you know they are going to come to that hopefully. But when there is no summary or clear identification in title, or anything, it does not encourage you to read, or to look for the salient points and get them. It might encourage you to look, but you don't always get them, or at least the same points.*

As mentioned in the quotation above, this reader considered that the lack of structural guideline made it much more difficult to perceive the most relevant information to sustain the author's argument. So, this could be a factor that deterred him from reading a text. However, if the author of the text was highly regarded within the academic circle, he would read his/her text in spite of its structure.

[668] *I think some authors get away with it, because they are who they are. And their style... because of who they are they have to be read, and the points they make are very important. (...) And I think that there are some authors that if I'm not interested I can't be bothered, I won't try. Again, some authors you've got to try again, they are very important, and those you've got to put up with their style.*

Reader-based factors were regarded as an influential factor affecting the adoption of specific focus during reading. Issues that he could directly relate to his personal life, tended to attract his attention during reading.

[692] *(...) I like things that... very quickly plotted in real life terms and make that point and make it again perhaps with some kind of everyday relevance or with an example.*

[9] *I deal with quite complex learning difficulty children and that interests me. When I am reading anything about them I take notes (...) thinking in the classroom, that means to me that I could do "X" (...) If something like this suddenly became relevant to my classroom, then I would select it. It may not appear in my M.A. psychology notes, but I certainly sort of refer to it later on.*

In situations where there was little interest or background knowledge involved, the selection of information tended to be much more difficult. In such a situation, the selective focus was mainly guided by the purpose of reading and by the structural guidelines provided by the text.

[377] *I think that sometimes a summary helps. It sort of lays out what they have done and what they are trying to prove, and that sort of helps (...)* Without that I suppose your purpose, what you think your purpose is in reading it - you know if you've got a question for an essay, and the essay question comes up that brings in your attention. (...)

[33] *Like some aspects of psychology not relevant to me as a teacher (...)* it wasn't interesting to me at that time and I think your notes are a very blunt precis of what somebody else has said (...)

Again, he asserted that if he had no interest in the content of the text, his selection was mostly text-based.

[44] *I think in those situations you have to jump on it... the salient sentences, or you desperately look for something. If reading is that much of a duty, I think you just look for the summary or the salient points... the beginning or the end sentences just hoping that that will be it, and underline it. (...)*

In relation to social-based factors, purpose for reading was pointed out as one of the main criteria affecting selection. This reader stressed that the type of information he selected from a text was directly related to the use that he intended to put it to. In the concrete situation of reading previously discussed, he aimed to apprehend the general line of the argument presented by the text. So his notes focussed on more general information that sustained the text's main argument.

[161] (...) *But also I want my notes to stand on their own on this subject, so I did not get too specific.*

However, if he was reading the same text to write an essay, he would be searching for specific information that would give support to the argument he aimed to make.

[161] (...) *If I was reading it for an essay, I may actually put the argument that upheld what I wanted it to (...)* the argument I was trying to argue. I took a lot more generally, I wasn't very specific, what I would have been in an essay. If time is short and

you are reading for an essay you feel oh! I write that down because it helps my essay, whether in this one I wanted I bit more understanding.

An exam situation would demand yet another type of selection of information from the text.

[189] *(...) If I was thinking in exams I think I would have gone more general (...) but the development of the argument would have been more important to me, because I may have to then change it in an exam, and change my information to fit the purpose. But I know the purpose in an essay, I actually know what I was going for, Whereas in an exam I need to play around with it a bit and I couldn't have too detailed notes, you can't hold too detailed notes.*

In relation to the author's standpoint this reader stressed that he would only be aware of it when he was able to perceive the existence of conflicting arguments on the issue. The awareness of differences allowed him to adopt a more critical position towards the text.

[242] *I think only if he was in contrast with something else that I had read. So, if I previously read something from another school, or I realized that there were two conflicting arguments, I think I would be more careful to weigh them up, and more careful of writing down their words and theories. With him I wasn't sure, so I accept ... a lot more on face value. But if I was sure that there were two schools, and I don't think I would have given it so much weight. I would have allowed him to develop his argument, taken a few notes and then gone to something else and seen.*

In situations in which he knew the author's standpoint, his selection was guided by what he considered the tenets of the author's school of thought. However, a critical attitude was only possible if he was familiar with the area discourse, and the conflicting positions in the field.

[518] *Before I did psychology, I was actually a history student, and obviously you are very aware of people's school of thought, be that Marxist or... and yes, certainly then I would be very aware of it as I was reading it.*

[568] *I think I needed a clear idea of what I thought that school held up, and I didn't know why - I don't think I still know what a cognitive psychology is. I am still trying to sort those kind of things out. I feel I do know or perhaps naively what, say, an economic historian will go for. If I feel I know, or I think I know, what their school of thought thinks, then I am more careful.*

But if I am not sure, you've got to go into it on face value, really.

[527] I think because I didn't know much about that particular article, he probably got away with an awful lot on face value. In my further reading I may do a lot of questioning. And also I didn't really question while I was reading it, because I wanted information from him. If I was reading like a history text, where I might have known the general happenings, the general events, and then read somebody else interpretation and knew his school of thought, I think I would just be more careful. And I would be careful about what I select - particularly if I was going to reproduce it.

5.3.2.2 MULTIPLE READING SITUATIONS AND THE THREE FACTORS

In the analysis of Group I, it was pointed out that the criterion that guides the selective focus adopted varied according to the reader-based factors and also according to the situations of reading. The actual reading situations described by group II provided better insights into how the selection of information from a text may vary due to situation and purpose for reading. The actual situations of reading discussed by this group could be linked to four general study purposes:

- (a) reading to write a report
- (b) reading to prepare an exam question
- (c) reading to acquire required background knowledge
- (d) reading to present and discuss a text

Each of these situations seemed to favour the adoption of different criteria for selecting information from a text.

(a) Reading to write a report

Cecilia and Tania were both reading to write their final report. However, even though the reading purpose was the same, there was a difference in the subjective factors involved. Cecilia had chosen the text to read due to relevance to the topic she wanted to discuss. She was interested in defending a specific standpoint and selection was guided by what she was looking for prior to her reading. In contrast, Tania was reading a text that was indicated by her supervisor as a useful text that could help her in the writing of the methodology

section of her report. Her selection was basically task oriented. She was aware that to fulfil her task she had to develop certain concepts and she should follow the norms and rules of the academic discourse and genre.

Therefore, in selecting the information from the text, she focussed on information that could expand the content of her essay, i.e. information that provided a "deeper understanding" of qualitative research in psychology. She also gave special attention to, and selected information that was helpful to establish the academic genre in the writing process. That is, she selected some information on the basis of the language used by the author, i.e. information written in "good English".

So, although both readers acknowledged that their selection of information was purpose oriented, the uses they wanted to make of the text differed: Cecilia wanted to use the text to support her own position; Tania aimed to use the text as an aid to her written production task. Within the context of these specific uses of texts, the importance attributed to the author's standpoint varied. Cecilia, for instance, recognized that her identification with the author's standpoint affected her underlining of certain information. Tania, on the other side, considered that the author's standpoint was not relevant to her selection. She was not familiar with the author's previous work, and she considered that the author's standpoint would not matter in the specific subject area read, i.e methodology.

Both readers did not attribute a great importance to the effect of text-based factors on the selective focus that they adopted in this specific situation. From the three possibilities presented to them, they only recognized to be aware of the division of the text into sections. Yet, this structural feature was only considered helpful to locate, in the text, certain pieces of information that they were looking for.

(b) Reading to prepare an exam question

Flavio was reading to fill up gaps in classroom notes in order to prepare an exam question. In this situation of reading, his selection

of information from the text was mainly affected by four different types of background knowledge:

- (1) his background knowledge on the topic of the text, which was acquired through classroom discussion.
- (2) background knowledge on the topic of the text acquired through a text previously read.
- (3) his background knowledge of the author's/lecturer's view point.
- (4) his knowledge on the topic of information display expected in an exam situation.

Flavio stressed that he approached the text in an unconventional way due to the fact that he was reading it to prepare an exam question. In a normal reading situation, he tried to focus on the general argument presented by the text. However, having an exam in mind, he adopted a much more detailed approach to reading. He justified this approach by saying that in an exam situation, as the questions are unknown, one needs a broad selection of knowledge to draw from. This knowledge should also include a few quotes, names and references, specially references that are often mentioned by the text that deals with the topic studied. He felt that these types of information were just relevant to the exam and might be forgotten after the exam is over.

He recognized a personal interest in the general topic discussed by the text, and he acknowledged that such an interest lead him to select from the text information which was in some way related to his own teaching experience. However, in this situation, the effect of personal interest on selective focus adopted was considered secondary in importance. The structural guideline provided by the text's sections was only considered helpful as a means to locate the information necessary to complete the classroom notes.

(c) Reading to acquire general background knowledge

Edward was reading to acquire the background knowledge necessary to follow the lecturer's discussion and also to have a better understanding of an experiment being conducted in the classroom. He

was mainly concerned with clarifying two broad theoretical concepts that had been brought up during lectures. He was also particularly interested in fully grasping the author's point of view on the issue. The importance given to the author was mainly attributed to the academic prestige achieved by the text's author. This prestige was made evident by the emphasis given to this author during lectures and also by cross text references. Due to the academic importance of the author, he read the text in a much more detailed fashion and also paid special attention to the terminology adopted in the text.

In this situation of reading, in which the reader was trying to apprehend the main argument and concepts presented by the author, structural guidelines were considered to have played a relevant role in the selection of information from the text. Edward stated that the division of the text into sections helped him to locate and pay more attention to the points that the author considered central. This was an important step in understanding the text as a whole.

His selection of information was also affected by the previous background knowledge on the topic acquired through two distinct sources. First, the experiment being conducted in the classroom, and secondly, the more general text that he had read, aiming to have a more solid knowledge base upon which he could support his understanding of the text being discussed- which he considered much more specific in nature. Personal interest also affected the selection of some side information. Issues related to his teaching experience were selected, even though they were not central to the text. However, in this situation of reading, personal interest was not among the main criteria that guided the selection of information.

(d) Reading to present and discuss a text

Elisabeth was reading a text to write a synopsis. This synopsis would be given to her classmates to be used as a base for a classroom discussion. So, while taking notes from the text, she had in mind two related purposes: to reproduce the gist of the text and 'to raise' issues that could promote further discussions. In this particular situation of reading, her knowledge about the class's general

interests and textual guidelines were pointed out as the two main criteria for selecting information from the text. She pointed out that she had a personal interest in the topic being discussed, but in this situation her own personal interest in the subject matter was relegated to a secondary place.

To grasp the gist of the text, two structural factors were taken into consideration, the division of the text into sections with section headings which helped her to be more aware of the themes being discussed, and the hierarchical organization of the textual content which made more evident the author's viewpoint on the issues being discussed, i. e. how he conceived the logical organization of the arguments being presented. Because her notes aimed to be presented as a written synopsis of the text to her classmates, the selection of information from the text was much more detailed than it would have been in a normal reading situation.

The actual reading practices described by these five readers indicated that selection may be affected by certain constraints imposed by the situation of reading. Specific situations of reading seemed to favour the adoption of specific criterion for selection. For instance, reader-based factors may be the most important criterion for selection in a situation of reading to write a report in which the reader is interested in defending a specific standpoint (Cecilia). However, it was not so important in situations such as reading to prepare an exam or reading to write a synopsis of a text (Flavio/Elisabeth).

Text-based factors acquired special relevance in guiding the selection in situations in which the reader was reading to reproduce the text read (Elisabeth) or was trying to grasp the author's standpoint (Edward). In situations where the reader was reading the text with a task oriented approach (Tania) or with a precise idea about the type of information they were looking for, text-based factors did not have a major effect on selection. Structural guidelines were used as mere short - cuts to reach the required information - which was determined prior to the reading (Cecilia/Flavio/Tania). Prior knowledge about the requirements of the

task to be fulfilled induced the selection of a specific type of information in situations where the reader's knowledge was going to be accessed (Flavio/Tania).

It is also interesting that within reading situations readers may attribute importance to the same criterion for different reasons. Cecilia acknowledged that her own identification with the author's standpoint lead her to focus on specific information in a text. To Flavio, the knowledge of the author's standpoint was an important factor that affected his selection of information from a text. However, in his case, the importance attributed to the author was linked to the fact that the text he read was written by one of his lecturers and he was aiming with this reading to prepare for an exam question. Edward also gave considerable importance to the author's standpoint when selecting information from the text. He had acquired general knowledge about the author's point of view through the lectures and also through the reading of a more general text. He gave special attention to the author's viewpoint, not due to his identification with the author's position, but mainly because he recognized the author as an author with prestige in the area.

The discussion of possible situations of reading also indicated that the choice of criterion for selecting information from a text is affected by the situation of reading. All the five readers acknowledged that their selection of information from a text tended to vary according to their purpose for reading. Reading for exams might encourage the selection of very specific information, such as references, that needed to be learned since they were regarded as important within this situation (Flavio). However, most of the readers acknowledged that when reading for exams they tended to adopt a more general focus while reading. That is, they tended to read the text as a whole and they tried to focus on the main points put forward by the author (Cecilia/Tania/Edward/Elisabeth).

The readers offered different explanations to justify why they tend to focus on the gist of the text when reading for exams. One of the explanations given, referred to memory limitations. It was necessary to restrict reading to general information in order to make the

storage of information feasible (Edward). The second one, referred to the relative importance of the text read within the situation. A text read for an exam was just an item of a broad literature given to be mastered (Elisabeth). The third explanation indicated the use of the knowledge expected in an exam situation. In such a situation the reader needed to demonstrate their knowledge by answering the questions presented by the examiners. A general type of information could be more easily adapted to fulfil the requirements of different and unpredictable questions (Flavio/Edward).

The focus on the text as a whole was also pointed out as an ideal type of focus when readers were reading a text to discuss it in a classroom situation (Cecilia/Flavio). However, all readers agreed that reading to write an essay was guided by a more specific type of focus. That is, when reading in this situation, they tended to focus just on information related to their research topic or very specific information to back up the argument being presented (Cecilia/Tania/Flavio/Edward/Elisabeth).

In relation to reader-based factors, these readers considered that both their background knowledge and personal interest facilitated the comprehension of a text and the selection of information from this text. Where there was a lack of background knowledge relevant to the content of the text the focus during the reading might be guided by the knowledge of the text (Edward). Issues related to their personal experience tended to attract their attention during reading. However, they also pointed to situations in which their personal interest did not have a major influence in the selective focus that they adopted during their reading: reading to study for exams (Cecilia); reading to fulfil some work requirements (Flavio); reading to present and discuss a text (Elisabeth). In situations where there was lack of interest in the subject matter of the text, structural guidelines were considered very helpful to select information from the text (Flavio/Edward/Elisabeth). Section headings highlighted the central themes explored by the author and also make more evident the general logical structure of the text (Cecilia/Edward/Elisabeth).

These examples illustrate how selective focus is affected by the readers' interpretation of the uses of knowledge favoured by different social situations. These choices of criteria may vary between readers, and it is not neutral to social influences. For instance, these readers indicated that they were aware that, within the academic context, they were involved in situations in which they need to read to display knowledge. Yet, to write a report, or to take an exam are two different situations of assessment. These situations involve different social norms, and they impose different types of constraints on the reader. The choice of different types of information when reading for an exam or reading to write a report reflect the effect of these norms.

Another illustrative example in the same direction is Elisabeth's and Edward's description of their actual reading situation of reading. Elisabeth was reading a text to present it in a classroom discussion. Edward wanted to be well acquainted with the theoretical concepts proposed by a "well known" author in his field. Both readers acknowledge that their selection was highly affected by the structural organization of the text. Yet, Elisabeth's selection of information from the text was not solely based on what was structurally important in the text. She also focussed on issues that she considered relevant to her class discussion. Her knowledge of the audience to whom she was going to present her synopsis had an effect on what she considered relevant in the text she read.

Edward stated that his reading of the text was not typical one. He was paying extra attention to the concepts proposed by the author and also to the terminology adopted, because the author he read had prestige in the field. He was frequently mentioned during lectures, and also referred to by other academic articles. It was this social importance attributed to the author's ideas that lead Edward to read the text as he did. These two examples illustrate how social-based factors can interact with text-based even in situations of reading that favour the latter.

The data provided by group II indicated that within a single situation of reading, more than one factor may affect the selective

focus adopted by readers. The readers' descriptions of their reading practices also highlighted that different situations of reading may lead some factors to have a greater effect on selective focus than others. That is, there are situations of reading that are more reader-based - as writing a report - and situations of reading that are more text-based - as the two last examples explored. However, both "reader-based" and "text-based" situations are affected by social factors.

5.3.3 GROUP III - PhD READERS

The final group was formed of five students engaged in a Ph.D. course. This group consisted of students who had had some previous research experience, and aimed to achieve intellectual independence as researchers. In contrast with the two initial groups, this last sample was selected from five different colleges of London University. Five academic areas were represented in this sample: Mechanical Engineering, Psychology, Economics, History and Computer Science. In order to fulfil the registration requirements of London University, they all had to produce satisfactory formal evidence of the standard they had already achieved.

The five students were facing a similar reading situation, i.e., they were all reading to write a PhD thesis. However, they varied in the area that they were investigating and also in the phase of their own investigation at the time of the interview. Two of the subjects were beginning the course and were still specifying their research questions. Three were in the stage of pursuing a specific thesis. Taking account of their similarities and differences, how was their reading affected in a research situation by text-based, reader-based and social-based factors? The last section of the present study searches for insight that may offer some answers to such a broad question.

5.3.3.1 DATA ANALYSIS

5.3.3.1.a ALFRED

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Alfred was beginning a research in the area of Mechanical Engineering. He had selected a specific problem to investigate, but was still specifying the focus that he would give to his problems.

[36] *Mechanics, but I am in the first year and I don't know exactly what I am looking for. I am starting, and that is my problem. In this book I am trying to understand what I am going to do.*

[48] *This is just a small portion of my work, o.k.? This is not my main work, because I don't know exactly what my main work is.*

The notes he took from the text were directly related to the problem that he was aiming to investigate.

[462] *And I read the example in order to understand the initial theory. That is an example for the author, but I use that because it is something that looks like my model. My model is something like that: this is a space and we load this space with something. (...) And when I see that I cannot understand, but I can see something that resembles my model.*

[79] (...) *as I was looking at this book I saw something that resembled, it looked like my problem, and I decided to look at it further.*

[85] *Because I saw some figures here and this was something I was looking with another method, and so I'd like to connect these two methods. This is an analytical method, I was doing numerical method and I would like to connect these two methods. Actually I'd like to see if my numerical method accomplishes the same as the analytical method.*

In this situation of clarifying research questions, reader-based factors had a prominent role in determining the type of information selected. The reader acknowledged that he would not read any text that was not related to his topic of interest. He also affirmed that his selection of information from the texts selected was highly influenced by his personal interest in his research problem.

[647] *Everything that I read is relevant to my personal interest, I mean to my PhD.*

[304] *Yes. I answered. There was something my research was on, and I tried to connect this with what the book was saying.*

The role of the content knowledge was stressed throughout this interview. This reader specified that his main purpose for reading the text was to acquire the theoretical background knowledge necessary for further readings and also to apprehend inter-textual connections. The text read was a chapter in a book, and he stressed that in his area books were the best source of theoretical information.

[99] *I think this is a book, and a book is much easier to be read than the papers, because, if I want to read many papers, first of all I would like something to connect them, I would like a theory. And only in books one can find the theory. I've got many papers, but if I don't know the theory, I cannot go on. That is the reason*

why I wanted the book, I wanted to understand the book, so that I could read the papers.

[163] (...) *These papers are applications, they assume that you know before hand the theory.*

[364] (...) *I use this book for broader information, to cover a broader area, in order to make me able to concentrate on more specific areas.*

The theoretical information acquired through books made inter-textual relations more evident.

[230] (...) *before I have read this book, I was looking for papers that seemed to be irrelevant between them. But I read the book in order to connect all these volumes of information. (...) I mean, this text helped me to connect the information that I had selected from other sources.*

However, as he stressed, even though the theories contained in books were necessary to understand the specific problems raised by papers, the acquisition of content knowledge in his area did not occur in a linear way. It involved a complex inter-relation of texts, a constant feed-back process between more general and more specific types of knowledge.

[400] *Ok, this a book... I am reading what... here it says, the Mathematical Treatment assumes that the users of this book as graduates in Engineering. That means that one, the reader has read a lot of books in general Engineering, and then goes into more specific areas with this book. And if one has read this book, then one can go into a more specific area than that. It is like a pyramid. You have read on the ground floor and the basement, and then you go up and up reading various books. And when you go to the top you can find the papers that are more specific.*

[240] *There is an inter-relation. I read the paper I didn't understand, I read the book I understand something, and then when I go back to the paper I understand much more this paper. So I come back to the book, and this is feed back between the general text and the book, and the specific text and the papers... a continuous feed back.*

The selection of information from the text was directly linked to the previous knowledge that this reader had on the problem he was investigating. He took notes of information that he had not previously acquired, or information that he was not very familiar with. Asked if

his background knowledge to the content of the text affected his selection of information from the text, he answered,

[261] *Yes, if you mean something I consider as very easy, and I skip them. Others I did not know and I had to write them down.*

[265] *New or not easily understandable.*

Text-based factors were not pointed out as important for the selection of information. The reader was aware that the text followed a general pattern, but this only affected the sequential way in which the the text was read, not the selections of information.

[146] *Yes, there is the general area and then some kind of examples, some kind of application for this general area. I mean, in the first few pages you read about the theory, and then you have to apply this theory to examples. I think it is the second category.*

[158] (...) *if you want the particular, you have to first read the general.*

In this specific situation, social-based factors were intimately related to reader-based factors. As the reader himself had chosen a topic to investigate, it was not possible to dissociate his purpose for reading from his personal interest. The choice of topic was related to his background knowledge of the area, and such a background was highly influenced by his previous university experience. He was able to associate the author of the text with a specific line in Engineering, but he considered this as a factor not important to his selection. Selection of information was highly influenced by his previous background knowledge relating to the content of the text.

[189] *Listen, in Engineering there are some authors who pioneer the way engineers think- like Timoshenko let's say - and this book follows this way. But it depends on what you learn in the university. I mean what your teacher, your professor in the university said, which way he followed in order to teach you Mechanics, because this is a book in Mechanics.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the actual reading situation previously presented, purpose for reading, personal interest and familiarity with the content of the text were pointed out as the main criteria affecting selection. Great

stress was given to the role of the content knowledge in the process of reading and selecting information from the text. A similar pattern of response may be identified in the possible reading situations discussed.

The reader rejected the possibility of reading a text in which he had no personal interest. However, he strongly linked personal interest to his capacity for understanding or not understanding a text. In fact, when asked about the fact that he selected information from a text in situations in which he had little personal interest in the content of the text, he asked for clarification :

[312] *You mean if I don't understand it?*

[313] *(little personal interest) ...and I have to read it? Why?*

The importance attributed to content knowledge was also stressed in the answers to questions meant to focus on text-based and social-based factors. Asked to provide an example of a situation in which his selection of information was mainly affected by the way the content of the text was structured, he replied:

[606] *I look at the contents, and if they are according to the idea I have for a book, then I go on reading the book. If they are not familiar to me I don't.*

He also pointed out, that understanding the content of the text was his main objective in reading, in spite of what his reading purpose was.

[349] *Look, first of all I like to understand what I am reading, irrelevant of what my purpose is. Irrelevant if that is for examination or for research. I like first to understand what the text says. I think, no it wouldn't affect (selection).*

Content understanding was also stressed when this reader was discussing the effect of the author's standpoint on his selection of information from the texts. The fact of having read many papers from the same author affected his selection because:

[568] *Yes, because I can understand better, because I had read something written by the same author, and so when I see a new paper by this author, I can understand it better.*

Further on, elaborating on the same issue, he affirmed that :

[663] *You were asking me about the view of the author, ok this is Engineering, Engineering is neutral. All the authors write the same equations (...) But there are not like a Freud, or Jung or Adler, to look for a school. Even in Engineering there are some schools like Timoshenko but I don't look for the name of the authors.*

[11] *(...)if I can understand it, if I can perceive the scope of the author, what the author wants to do with those equations, then I read no matter who the author is.*

Familiarity with the type of knowledge conveyed by the text was considered essential to the reading process in general.

[274] *Even if something is completely new to me, I can recognize from the style, that it belongs to something that is familiar to me. If my background is relevant to what I am looking at in the paper, then I can understand it ... If I cannot then I skip it, because it is useless. I am accustomed to some way of thinking. I can't afford at this stage to start from the beginning, so I skip it.*

[290] *That is a broad area that is getting every day broader. The area that is familiar to me is getting every day broader, but if it is something miles away from what I already know, then I skip it.*

However, he stressed that his way of thinking was shaped by previous academic experiences.

[10] *It is according to my previous background, what I have learned in the University or in my previous life. Some people can't understand what I understand, I can't understand what other people can when they see an Engineering text.*

[189] *(...) it depends on what you learn in the university, I mean what your teacher, your professor in the university said, what way he followed in order to teach you Mechanics...*

So, the way he was socially introduced to his own subject, determined his familiarity with certain contents. Such a familiarity would affect the type of texts that he was able to read and also the direction in which he would develop his further specialization in the field.

5.3.3.1. b ANNA

(A) AN ACTUAL READING SITUATION

Anna was in an initial stage of her PhD research. She had defined in broad terms the problem that she was going to investigate, but had not yet specified all the issues that she was going to explore within the chosen problem. The text that she had selected to discuss was on holding. She was interested in the topic and considered the possibility of including it as part of her research.

[330] *I am researching emotional and behavioural problems, and I am looking into assessment, and this (holding) is a treatment. But I am in general interested in treatments, and next step of my research might be treatment. I am still exploring. This is one of the therapies, if I read more on this maybe I can pick it up as part of my research. But I am definitely not researching it at the moment.*

Her aim of specifying a possible research question lead her to focus mainly on information related to theoretical and methodological issues.

[287] *This is an article on holding, and I have been very interested in researching into behavioural problems and emotional difficulties of children. Holding is one of the possible therapies that are coming up for children with behavioural problems. And since this article is on holding I was trying to read what the different ways are in which holding can be given and also how holding works, what is the basis, what are the theoretical orientations, and all those things. That's why I was underlining whatever I underlined here.*

[672] *All the time when I was reading I had this in mind. Can I put it into a model that can be tested? So, I was trying to select information in terms of how it goes, how it is supposed to be carried out, who carries it out, for how long can it be carried out. Always trying to visualize can it be done in a exclusive situation, can it be done without parental involvement...*

In this situation of reading, reader-based factors also had an important effect on the selective focus adopted during reading. This reader acknowledged that her interest in the text was motivated by the previous knowledge that she had on its topic. This knowledge was acquired through a television program on holding therapy for children

with behavioural problems. During her reading she gave special attention to information that explored such a possibility.

[322] (...) *I had seen a television program some time back on holding, and it appealed to me. They were using it with autistic children, and in the program they mentioned that it can work with children with behavioural problems as well.*

[589] (...) *from my previous knowledge I knew that it had mainly been tried out with autistic children. Whereas, I am interested in children who have behavioural problems, normal children. I was trying to pick up whatever they were saying about normal children, because I knew enough about autistic already.*

She also stressed that her personal interest had an important effect on determining the type of information that she selected from the text.

[630] *Yes, because I wouldn't sort of really attend to things which I am not interested. I would pick up the most relevant information to my interest, that would be in terms of how holding actually works.*

This reader was fully aware that the issue that she was studying was a source of academic controversy. Since she intended to include it in her own research, she was reading to be better acquainted with the different positions defended in the existing literature.

[24] *I am aware that holding has different opinions. There are people who condemn it, others that say it is stupid, it doesn't work. Others that say, no it does. I was keen to find that out, because I would like to use it, as I want to know how people feel about it.*

She also knew that authors who adopted a positive attitude towards holding therapy explained its benefits through different theoretical perspectives.

[456] *Attachment theory says that when a child has got problems, it is an avoidance reaction. (...) They look at the behavioural problems as something wrong in the parental relationship. Through holding you improve that relationship, because the parent is insisting in comforting the child. There are other explanations in terms of behaviour therapy. They will say that the child is being flooded with contact and that is why it is helping. There are explanations like, because the parent is trying to exert control which the parent might not been able to exert otherwise. Through holding you sit down with the child and make the child feel that you will not let him go. In the routine of the child you may not*

have been able to exercise the control, and that is why the child is showing problems.

Although she was conscious of more than one possible theoretical explanation, she indicated a preference for the attachment theory. The text being discussed seemed to have such a theoretical orientation. Even though she was not very clear about it, she assumed that her identification with the authors' standpoint might have had an effect on her choice of information from the text.

[432] *I think they were trying to relate holding therapy with attachment theory, so probably that is their orientation.*

[440] *It is hard to say. I mean I haven't read much of this author before, so it is probably hard for me to say anything. But considering that I personally feel that behavioural problems could be explained in terms of attachment theory, I was impressed with their way of explaining it. So probably it did affect my choice.*

In this situation of reading, the organization of the text into titled sections was considered helpful, to call her attention to certain parts of the text. However, it seemed that titles and subtitles affected her choices of the sections to read more than her choices of information from the sections actually read.

[361] *Yes, it was. By organization I mean organize under subtitles. As I told you I picked up this, how does holding work, this appealed to me, I was keen to find out, so, I picked up this information.*

[344] *The way the content was organized has given here 'How does holding work' they were trying to explain the techniques, the theoretical background. So, it did sort of attract me to the technique of holding... the titles and the subtitles.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the actual reading situation previously analysed, purpose for reading and reader-based factors were pointed out as criteria that highly influenced the choice of information from the text. Discussing possible reading situations, the reader acknowledged that within a situation of reading with a research purpose in mind, personal interest is always a fundamental criterion to select information from text. In fact, personal interest seemed so essential for this reader, that the very question on the issue seemed illogical to her.

[645] *I would not read it, first of all. Why should I read it if I am not interested in it?*

Later on she stated, that it would be difficult for her to point out a reading situation in which her personal interest was secondary in importance.

[173] *I think that this is a bit difficult to say, because at the moment whatever I am reading I am interested in. Because I have picked up an area that I am interested in. So whatever I am reading I am interested in, I have a focus.*

Discussing the concrete reading situation she affirmed that her previous background knowledge related to the content of the text affected her selection of information in two distinct ways. It made her aware of issues that were relevant to her own purpose of reading, and it lead her not to pay much attention to information that was already known. In situations in which she had little background knowledge of the content of the text, her lack of knowledge made the selection of information more difficult. In such a situation, the main criterion adopted was purpose for reading. That is, she selected information on the basis of the reading task that she had in mind.

[606] *When I don't have any previous knowledge...well, in that case I always read twice. (...) When I am reading it again...again it is affected by why I am reading. If I am reading for my research I would pick up information that is related to my research. If am reading to write some article, or prepare for a lecture or something...it is affected by what I am expected to do from that text.*

However, purpose for reading was not only considered relevant in this particular situation. In fact, it seemed to affect her reading on a much more general scale. She considered that reading a text with a different reading purpose in mind would induce her to focus on different types of information. For instance, reading for an exam would lead her to focus on a more general type of information in order to be able to answer possible exam questions. In this situation her predictions about the examiner's interest would have a greater effect on selection than her own personal interest in the subject matter being studied.

[1] *For example, if I was reading for an exam I would try to think of the exam questions, not only of what I am interested in, but*

also what the examiner would be interested in. And also the general field, what sort of questions can be asked, and in general get an overview of the holding therapy, so as if I have to answer a question on holding I should be able to see, given an overall picture of what is holding, and everything.

In the previous reading situation discussed, this reader was not very sure to what extent the author's standpoint had had an influence on her selection. Although she was associating the author with a specific theoretical line, she was not very familiar with their work and such an association was a vague one. In situations in which she knew the author's work well and had strong expectancy about his/her standpoint, she tended to look for information in the text that was in accord with the expected point of view.

[91] *Yes, specially in this article I knew the author's stand point, so I was trying to sort of look into the article with that point of view. I had some expectation, of what I would find.*

[98] *Because these authors I have read a lot of their work. Whereas in the previous example I felt that the author's stand point was not affecting. I haven't read their work, I don't know their theoretical orientation, their stand point. (...).*

If she was totally unable to apprehend the author's theoretical orientation, then she tended to select information on the basis of her own personal criterion of relevance.

[483] *(...)Then I would probably go by what I feel about the article, and then try to pick up relevant information.*

In relation to text-based factors, she acknowledges that the structure might guide her through reading, but her selection of information is mainly affected by her interest and purpose for reading.

[137] *There is a structure and it would affect, because you are reading always with a focus, and the structure affects your selection.*

[560] *(...) See, in a journal article, that is what I would do, if I chose to read the text I would pick up information that was relevant to what I am doing or what I am interested in, and mark that particular information.*

5.3.3.1.c MARCOS

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Marcos was enrolled in a PhD course in Economics and he had previously gained an MSc degree in Production Management. His original academic background was in metallurgy, but he had shifted his main area of interest.

[84] *Well, I moved to this because I thought that my previous study was very arid to me, and I opted to get rid of it. I got a degree in metallurgy. I must say that I like this Social Science approach, it is actually very new to me. So you can see the benefit of something that has to do with Social Science. The benefits are very close to your study. There is also a benefit in studying metallurgy, but you cannot see the benefit of it right there.*

His PhD dissertation was on Mineral Economy, which combined his previous academic background and his new area of interest. He had already specified his research problem and was now in the stage of gathering new elements to develop his thesis.

[238] *Well, now that I have been working six seven months in this area I am quite confident. Generally speaking, not going just through this paper, but going through references, I am looking for something new. So I pay little attention to something that I have already read.*

The text he had selected to discuss was on forestry. It focussed on a different topic, but dealt with a problem similar to the one he was investigating. His main aim in reading this text was to analyse whether the solutions found to the forestry problem could also be extrapolated to his own research problem.

[221] *(...) I am trying to read papers that deal not only with the metals, not only with the applications related to my own research. This is one of them. This is an application to a forestry project and I am working with mineral resources.*

[399] *First, I selected this text because I am working with applications to minerals, natural resources. Coming across a paper like this in forestry, I was looking for similarities. Both of them are natural resources. I think I was very much expecting an application ready to be transferred to my problem. Because the paper proposes an application. I was probably hoping to find something that could be directly, without a lot of work, transferred to my problem.*

In this situation of reading the selective focus adopted was mainly guided by the attempt to find a solution to problems that he had in mind, due to his previous reading. He also underlined information that raised new problems, or information that well represented the area jargon.

[31] *I think that studying, you develop some questions, and they may be implicit or explicit. Sometimes if I don't understand something I write it down and go and look for the answer. You may not realize that you have this background but it is there. So reading a paper you may solve it, and when you solve it, I think that this solution you underline. Most of the time you underline things that are solutions to previous problems that you had, or going through my underlining I discover that sometimes I underline something that is not important but it is a key word or something that is just a jargon that I like, or some nice English expressions - not being an English speaker - I like. Sometimes I don't understand something and I hope to find later an answer, so I underline - like in this case here.*

Reader-based factors were also pointed out as having an important effect on the information selected from the text. This reader made it very clear that in this situation his reading was by no means dissociated from his personal interest.

[319] *I think since I selected the papers myself, I was not forced to come here for the PhD, the interest must be there.*

However, it should be pointed out that he seemed to establish a very close link between his personal interest and his previous background knowledge. He was not very much impressed by the text read, mainly because it did not add much to what he already knew on the subject.

[52] *(...) I found that the only thing that I have been really underlining is short sections, and actually this is because this is something I didn't come across before - it is sort of a new approach.*

[293] *(...) the lack of interest comes from the lack of information. I am interested in my project and everything, if I am not interested in a paper it is because it doesn't have the information I am looking for, or it doesn't give me any new side.*

He also affirmed that the text read did not appeal much to him due to the fact that it did not give to the subject a quantitative treatment. He was more familiar with this latter type of approach due

to his previous academic background. Even though he had chosen to change areas, his previous background knowledge was still biasing his interest towards issues that he was familiar with.

[132] (...) *This text is probably the only one that talks very much but doesn't go to facts. The other ones are organized in a way that they propose a methodology or a technique, and they show an application.*

[68] *Looking at the things that I have been reading this week and previously, I have seen that I do like and underline very much things that have to do with quantitative approach. This is because of my background which was scientific before. I can get on in my subject avoiding let's say Math but because of my background I do like that typical kind of approach. I sometimes find it difficult to see the other type of approach, the Social Science approach. I think that I am very much affected by ten years of studying Math all that stuff.*

[325] *I said that I am very much affected by years of studying Math. So, when I go through I am affected by this. This text was boring to me, as I told you, probably because of the lack of this information.*

[654] *I must say that even if I try not to do it, I am really affected by ten years of work with these stupid formulae.*

Personal interest affected selection:

[642] *In the sense that I probably don't pay too much attention to the discussion and I go straight to the facts.*

Considering text-based factors, this reader was aware of the organization of the text into sections. Such an awareness was attributed to his own experience as a producer of texts. However, he did not consider that the division of text into sections affected the selective focus that he adopted during the reading.

[114] *Actually I am aware of this because I've been working before, so I had to prepare reports, to write papers, so as far as I am concerned I like the last one. A sequential approach, you know section by section is easier to follow for me. But I don't think that while reading I pay attention to the organization.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO THE POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the actual situation discussed above, this reader acknowledged that his selection of information from the text was highly affected by his purpose for reading, his interest and his background knowledge

relating to the issue he was reading. Discussing possible reading situations, purpose for reading was again identified as a criterion that affected the way he selected information from text. He compared two reading situations : reading for an exam and reading for his own research. The former was highly affected by constraints externally imposed. He was aware that he needed to select information that was expected by examiners, that was within a given program, and that could be reproduced as a short answer. The latter is a situation of reading in which external constraints are not so evident.

[255] *When you prepare an exam, you select information that can be useful for the exams. You select things that impress in an exam, and that show your knowledge in the area. Reading for your research you are more relaxed, you have more time to study. I am sure that you look at things that you don't take time to look if you are preparing for exams.*

[275] *I mean that the result of an exam depends, well you have to show in an exam that you have read (...) you can study a lot and absorb a lot of information, but then you need to be within the structure of the program that is needed to write a short answer in an exam.*

Previous background knowledge was considered a fundamental criterion that affected the underlining of information in the previous text discussed. However, in situations in which the content of the text was fairly new to him, he felt it necessary to read the text in a linear and detailed fashion, and thought it difficult to discriminate the important information.

[349] *I see that if something is new to you, and if you reckon that this is interesting, you cannot do a screen of it. (...) If you don't have a previous knowledge of the subject, you study the text instead of screening out a few things that you reckon important. (...) You must study, and pick up information that later on will let you screen.*

In situations in which he had problems in grasping the content of the text, structural guide-lines were considered helpful. However, in regular reading situations he did not consider this factor to exert a major influence in the way he selected information from a text.

[580] *I don't think the structure of the text affects me, but I must look at the structure if I cannot follow the content of the text. So at that point I must stop, and look at the structure to organize myself, to try to see what the people who have written the*

paper think. So I must take this overview, and try to get in that way. But in general I don't do this.

At the time, most of his reading was guided by his personal interest in his research questions. He tended to choose texts that were in some way related to his research. However, he also acknowledged the need to go through the reading of certain papers, in which the connection with his own work was remote. These readings in general aimed at the acquisition of an overview in his own research area, and he did not feel as interested in them.

[672] Yes, sometimes I realized that I have to read something that is not exactly related to my research, but I read to pick up the background of the area. Something that is related, but is not directly useful, I won't have any direct benefit from reading it. So in that case my interest is not there, it is very arid, but I realize that I have to do it.

Even though he acknowledged that the fact of having less interest in the subject matter of the text might in some way affect his selection of information from the text, he was not very clear on this issue. He suggests that in such situations he tended to look for key words and short statements.

[693] Yes, I think it does, I don't know. Well, if I read something that I know from the very beginning that it won't be directly useful to my work, I still look for key words, and short statements.

He stated that in situations in which he could identify the author's standpoint, his selection of information was easier because he had stronger expectancy about the content of the text.

[172] Yes, like I told you, I have three or four of them that I like. I think that by now I know the work they have done so well, that reading their paper I know more or less what I can expect. I know what is coming in the next paragraph.

[520] To give you an example, this author, I read about 25 papers from the same author. I know what I can expect, and probably I am affected by it. I know very well the stand point of this author, that incidentally is always a mathematical approach to the problem. It is a quantitative approach to the solution of the problems. (...)

5.3.3.1.d JOSE LUIS

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Jose Luis was doing a PhD in History and his investigation was at quite an advanced stage. He had specified his research questions and was already writing up the chapters of the thesis. At this stage he had very clear what his research topic was and how he intended to explore it.

[34] *What I am trying to do in this part of my thesis is... I probably should say that in general I am talking about Crusade propaganda in the thirteenth century. I am interested in some religious orders that are involved. What I am trying to do is to establish a chronological and geographical pattern of Crusade propaganda that was going on in those orders throughout the thirteenth century. And the way to find this information is to go to letters written by the Pope, because it was the Pope who had to declare a Crusade, and it was him who organized the propaganda. So what I am looking at was the commands given to people to start the propaganda for the Crusade. So I look at these letters and I say, what are the reasons, and what exactly does the Pope want to do. And thirdly, to what area, to which people does this order apply.*

His note taking procedure made very clear the focussed way in which he was approaching the text to read.

[12] *They are the types of information contained in the text that I need for my research, that is the minimum information that I need.*

[19] *They are all letters that I work with. What I am interested in, in the first place, is the date of the letter. And this is simply the reference, which tells me where this particular letter was found, meaning where it is edited, in which book it is in. Number 3 is specific to my research topic, which tells me which Crusade we are talking about. Number 4 is the addressee of the letter. Number 5 is the information contained in the letter. Number 6 is the area to which the information applies.*

In the specific reading situation he was describing, he was reading a text written about the Crusades, which made reference to and analysed letters sent by the Pope. He was reading this text with two major purposes in mind. First of all, he needed to have access to data, i.e., the letters written at that time which were quoted in the literature. As he mentioned, to have access to data is a major problem faced by a historian in general. Secondly, he wanted

information about how different historians analyse the letters, in order to shape and make very clear his own position on the issue.

[91] *It is mainly a process of looking for information, or data. I mean this is probably, just to say a general problem of historian specially in more remote times - is to be able to find information about the time that was written at that time. So, it is simply a way of finding my way to the sources. That is why I refer to various studies that had dealt with problems in the same field. The second one is to help me shape my own opinions about my own subject, to control my own thoughts.*

He expected prior to his reading to find this type of information in the text due to his previous knowledge about similar texts and also others written by the text's author.

[351] *I expected to find first of all, references to sources of material that I myself do not know. And secondly I expected an interpretation of that, or a discussion of the sources mentioned.*

[404] *I have a certainly knowledge of the author's work as written in other articles and books. It is my knowledge of other texts, yes. Of texts of similar type, and other texts by the same author.*

The two major factors that affected his selection of information from the text were his purpose for reading it, i.e. the development of a specific research topic that he had pre-established and the background knowledge and interest that he had on the topic chosen.

[258] *Yes, it has in the sense that I was looking for specific points that are important to my own approach to the subject, whereas I left out points of information that seemed unimportant to my own approach. My own approach, in this sense, determined which type of information or what information I selected from the text.*

This reader stresses that personal interest always had a fundamental effect on the way he selected information from a text. He acknowledged that his reading tended to be biased towards things that he was interested in.

[665] *I think it is quite vital, in the sense that not having a conscious interest you are not aware of certain problems and the way in which things are discussed, so it is less likely, that you pick them up. In the sense that you have areas of sensitivity, areas of interest in some ways that comes into your reading.*

However, he stressed that in this situation in which he was reading to develop a thesis, his personal interest was much more constrained.

That is, it only affected his selection if it also related to his research aims.

[299] *Only in as far as my personal interest concurs with my interest in my thesis.*

Neither structural factors nor the standpoint adopted by the author were considered as criteria that affected the selective focus adopted during reading. This reader was able to identify the author with a specific school of thought.

[111] *Definitely. The author belongs to a modern group of Crusade's historians that take a much wider view of Crusades in general than people used to think about at the end of sixteenth, seventeenth century.*

However, when asked if his knowledge about the author's standpoint had affected his selection of information in any way, he replied.

[120] *No, straight forward, no.*

He then claimed that the author's standpoint would not matter in this situation due to his aims for reading the text. He was trying to cover the topic as comprehensively as possible, and he was, in fact, looking for all types of interpretations that he could find. His second aim for reading the text was to use it as a source of factual information. As he pointed out, in the second part of the interview, the author's standpoint was not fundamental in situations where he was using the text as a source of references.

[122] *First of all, because what I am interested in is factual information, which has got nothing to do with the interpretation. On the other hand, I am interested in every single type of interpretation that I can find, so, the criterion for selection is to be as comprehensive as possible in whatever opinion I can get in the sort of terrain that I am interested myself.*

[543] *Yes, if all I want from an author is a source of reference, say if an author talks about a historical fact that I don't know, and if all I want is his source of reference for that fact, it does not matter what he thinks about that fact.*

Text-based factors were also not considered relevant to the selective focus adopted in this situation of reading. This reader was

aware that in history, texts tended to be divided into two broad categories: narrative texts and thematic texts .

[224] *In general terms, most history books in my field are either a narrative which follows closely chronology, or else they are studies of various historical phenomena, or synchronic studies that take example of the same phenomena from different periods of time comparing them. So, one approaches purely chronological ideas, others, thematic ones.*

The chapter that he was discussing followed a thematic organization. However, he did not believe that either type of organization would have affected his selection in the reading situation being discussed.

[246] *Not in my case, for the type of information that I want to get from it.*

He also pointed out that he was aware that the book was divided into chapters and that the content of each chapter was organized into sections. He even suggested that he himself could have given to the topic a different treatment, highlighting different issues.

[167] *To the way in which the study was broken down into different chapters, and the reason for selecting certain aspects, those specific aspects that were treated in each chapter, in the sense that one could have made different choices, one could have highlighted different aspects. So the choice of those specific aspects was quite interesting.*

The division of the book into chapters and the way each chapter was divided into sections was considered useful to locate the information he was looking for. That is, the headings helped him to verify the availability of his target information.

[192] *Yes I was, first of all because the different sections are titled, so you can't help realizing it. Secondly, because the availability of the target information that I was looking for would be determined by whatever the paragraph or the chapters were about (...).*

However, such an organization did not determine the way he selected information from the text read. Asked if the division of the chapter read into sections had had an influence on the selective focus that he adopted during reading he replied:

[177] *No, it did not, not in the sense of what I've picked out.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

In the previous reading situation analysed, the purpose for reading was pointed out as one of the main criteria that affected the reader's selection of information from the text. This reader affirms that, in general, his selection of information was linked to his purpose for reading.

[532] *The needs of my own study questions. The points of information that help me to answer the questions that I have elaborated during my early research.*

Such a purpose might be a more general one or very specific as it was in the case of his research.

[143] *No. The way that I read this text was geared towards finding the type of information that I needed for my own work, whereas a similar type of study which would not be directly related to my own field of research I would probably read in a more open way, more or less trying to absorb whatever information there is, but not actually looking for only specific points. I would probably look at overall results, overall, general points, rather than specific points of information.*

[285] *It depends on what I use, why I want the information that I select. If it is for my thesis it is very specific, and if it does not relate to my thesis, if it is to gain or enrich my knowledge, I pick out many more types of information.*

He also pointed out that his selection of information from a text would differ if he was reading it with different research topics in mind or if he was aiming to fulfil another purpose - such as reading for an exam.

[330] *Yes, I would have picked up different types of information that I would want to memorize or use in a more general purpose, or use for the discussion of the topics that are different from my thesis.*

Purpose for reading and personal interest were also the two criteria that guided his selection of information from a text, if he had little background knowledge relating to its content.

[272] *It means that I select various types of information, that I pick up points of general interest to me, that might not be connected to my research, or to my thesis. In general I like to*

copy or underline information that I find interesting or relevant in the article.

The lack of personal interest would mainly affect the amount of information that he apprehended from a text.

[307] *I select fewer points of information, if I am not interested in the text, or if I am interested in a lesser degree. It is a matter of quantity.*

In relation to the author's standpoint he stressed that in general it did not guide his selection of information from a text, but it might affect the use that he made of the selected information.

[487] *It may help me in the sense that knowing the author's stand point will make the information more reliable if I was in a position that I can not check the information, or that I cannot go through the whole process of re-thinking what the author is saying. Simply, I believe him more readily if I am convinced about his general approach and stand point. So if it is a matter of taking on board more general interpretation, I would make this a criteria*

[516] *I would not determine my selection as it were, it might determine the use of that particular piece of information in my own research.*

In the actual situation discussed this reader did not attribute a great deal of importance to structural factors. Discussing possible situations, he stressed that a not well structured text was more difficult to understand. As a consequence he tended to select less from that text. So, according to this reader, structural factors tended to affect the quantity of information that he selected from a text, but not necessarily the type of information selected.

[569] *(...) selection of information from a specific text would be influenced by my assessment of the quality of the interpretation, meaning that I would select more information if the text in my opinion had high quality, and I would select fewer information if it had low quality.*

5.3.3.1. e WILSON

(A) AN ACTUAL SITUATION OF READING

Wilson was doing research in Computer Science. He was part of a research group which was investigating probabilistic and logical neuron nets. The text that he had chosen to discuss was a particular

type of text: printed lecture notes (classroom handouts). He also interacted with the text and took notes in a way that did not follow a pattern adopted by the previous readers. Adrian was describing a note taking procedure that occurred at different times, and was also motivated by different reasons. Due to the particularity of the text selected, his notes were more often an expansion of certain information presented by the text than a selection of information from the text. In spite of its uniqueness, this interview was included in the present study for two main reasons. First of all, it does represent a reading to study situation. Secondly, it gives some hints about how complex and diversified are the ways in which readers interact with textual information.

The text that Adrian had chosen to discuss was very succinct, and most of its arguments were mathematical arguments, i.e. equations. Asked if he tended to read this type of text, replied:

[250] Yes, quite a lot. There are some more which I have read before this one, which were a tutorial, and they talk about the work of a lot of people, and summarize them in a couple of pages.

His notes, more than just being a selection of information, represented a complex process of studying and grasping the content of a text. Initially, he read the text while attending lectures and part of his notes were taken then. Later on, he went back to the text and took some more notes.

[6] I wonder whether this text is right. In a way it was some lectures and I was taking notes during the lectures, but there were some times later when I went back and looked to specific parts of the text because I was trying to answer some questions. So, the first was my reaction during the lectures, to what he was saying, have some little proof to myself of what he was saying, or applications of what he was saying, or just reminders, because what is in the text does not necessarily correspond to what he said sometimes.

He was asked by the interviewer to focus his discussion only on the second set of notes. He was reminded once more that the aim of the present investigation was to analyse how readers select relevant information from a text. So notes that were not a product of his reading of the text were not relevant to the present study.

Discussing his second set of notes, he described how he went back to read the text because he wanted to clarify some issues relevant to his thesis. The text discussed a specific type of neuron that differed from the one he was at the moment researching. However, he was trying to investigate if the technique proposed by the author could in any way be applicable to his situation.

[28] *My thesis now concerns logical neurons, and this kind of neurons are not logical neurons, and I was trying to see if this technique could be used to my neuron.*

[117] *The text describes a certain way of training neurons nets. I wanted to see whether the basic idea of locating an error, could be applied to the nets of the kind of neurons which I use.*

Different factors guided his selective focus in the reading situation. He admitted that most of the information that he gave attention to was directly related to the specific research question that he had in mind.

[17] *That was probably in answer to a specific question, that I had in mind. (...) I was trying to see whether this technique could be translated to our kind of neuron. So I look at the derivation of the technique of his kind of neuron, I looked to see if I could generalize the derivation, for any type of neuron, to make it specific to our type of neuron.*

However, such a research question, in its own turn, had been influenced by previous reading of academic discussions that he had experienced in a previous conference and also by the lectures that he had attended.

[39] *There was also curiosity, and the fact that I'd happen to be talking to someone. This actually has something to do with another paper, and a guy that I met at the conference, and it turns out that he's done something very similar. In fact, just this morning I have been looking at this paper to find that he has done more or less the same I was doing. Answering the same question. (...)*

[59] *It was probably the result of talking, discussions, and the result of sitting in the lecture. These notes were made by me, but also while I was talking to someone, I went away made things clear and came back, after talking to him. So this was in response to my way of talking, and I went away and looked up the information, and made the notes. These notes expand what is here. (...)*

It is interesting that the response above indicates that this reader's notes were mainly an expansion on the original text. It is not possible to establish if this particular type of notes was motivated by the succinct nature of the text per se, or merely exemplified how this reader studies text in his own area. His main purpose for reading the classroom handout was to investigate if theoretical findings applied to different kinds of neuron that his group was working with. In this situation his knowledge of the author's standpoint was an important factor that guided his selection of information from the text. He explained that in his area of research there were two main schools of thought, and they differed mainly in the way they understood how neurons should fire.

[324] *(there are) two huge schools of thought, one is overwhelming and popular, and the other is very minor and growing.*

[354] *Well, one says a neuron fires, if the signals coming in if you add them up and they are above a certain number, then the neuron will fire. We say, the neuron will fire for certain patterns of signals, and not for others, and you can chose which patterns. (...)*

This reader recognized that in spite of their intrinsic theoretical differences, the two lines of thought aimed to solve similar problems. Sometimes the solution proposed could be incorporated into a different theoretical framework. The interpretation might differ, but both lines still have some points in common.

[421] *Yes, I suppose so. I am looking for evidence of which side he is on. In some ways it does not have to matter, he prefers this interpretation, and I prefer this interpretation but we still speak English, I can still find out something. Let's put it in another way, I quite don't like that. That is a difficult one to answer.*

However, the extrapolation from one theoretical line to another one was not simple or always feasible. This reader was aware that different conceptions of the nature of the neuron nets, might lead to different possibilities for solving practical problems. Therefore, it was not possible to consider the knowledge produced by an opposing school of thought without keeping in mind their theoretical differences.

[436] (...) maybe they have a network which can balance a broom. (...) This is a big problem for us, and for them. If they have an idea of how to solve this problem I am interested in it. If their idea depends on the fact that it is their kind of neurons, then I am not so interested. I try, when I look to see the solution of their idea, I try to disregard reference to that kind of neurons.

[332] Yes. I was looking here for evidence, here is a symbol this is evidence for his stand point. And I was trying to see whether I could get rid of that and replace it with either evidence of my stand point, or else a stand point above both, an abstraction. So, he says that in order to find out what these neurons do, you have to add things together. That is what this symbol means, add things together. And I say, you don't have to add them together, you can do anything, you can multiply them, square them, not just add. You can do other things with them. So I want to replace this sign which a sign that means any possibility. And we have ourselves a specific possibility, so either to replace it with our specific possibility, or any possibility. Our possibility is multiplying

So, the responses indicated that the reader's knowledge of the author's standpoint had an important effect on selection. Previous background knowledge relating to the content of the text was also pointed out as relevant to the selective focus adopted during reading. This reader had knowledge of the issues being discussed by the text.

[592] *From having sat in a lecture.*

Asked if this knowledge affected his selection of information from the text, he replied,

[597] *Yes, I knew what I had to look for.*

Very little can be said about the way text-based factors affected selection in this situation. This reader pointed out that he was aware that the text that was read was organised in terms of a broad argument, followed by a specific applied example. However, considering his response, such an organisation seemed to affect more content apprehension than the selective focus adopted during reading. In fact his responses were directed more towards amount and type of information provided by the author and not towards the structural issues raised by the questions.

Asked if the way the content was organised affected his selection of information from the text he replied:

[163] *Yes it does. It helps me to understand, mainly because I find it a lot easier to get information if I can think of an example. Problems sometimes arise, when people give you the information, in an unstructured way. If someone gives me information about a specific kind of neuron, and he tells me we are using this kind of neuron to try on this problem, then I can see what is going on. But if he says well we will take a kind of neuron and a question, and no example, I find it hard to see exactly how the training is working, even though the principles may be there. It also make it more interesting to see what he is saying, what are the real applications.*

(B) FROM THE ACTUAL TO POSSIBLE SITUATION

In the actual reading situation discussed text-based factors were not identified as having a major effect on selective focus. Analysing other possible reading situations, this reader acknowledges that structural (and graphic) factors might call his attention to issues that he was interested in. They might also help him to identify sections in the text relevant or necessary to his reading.

[391] *Yes, it does (affect selection), because I look for things in the abstract that interest me, and I search for them in the paper. There is an introduction here, and if I know roughly what he is saying, I don't need the introduction on the back ground. The heading tells me whether to look or not. I didn't look at this at all. (...) I saw this diagram, I look down here and I saw the word RESET. As it was in capitals maybe is the name of a kind of network, sometimes they do that. So, I look it up to see what was going on and I saw that reset is actually the name for an action.*

[427] *Here the information is telling me where not to look. Sometimes the same information will tell me where to look. If I am reading a paper and I am reading without knowing the background then I should read the abstract. If I discover that I don't understand a word, I don't understand the argument and I haven't come across this problem before, I would have to read the introduction, and then I would obtain a lot of information from the introduction about what to do next.*

In relation to reader-based factors this reader recognized that his background knowledge relating to the content of the text tended to affect his selection of information. In situations in which he needed to read a text and he had little background knowledge relating to its content, he found it very difficult to select information.

[685] *Then I usually underline or highlight too much. I have a book at home in Quantum Mechanics that I read long ago and I*

highlighted. I was trying to read when I was an undergraduate, and I ended up highlighting almost every second line. (...)

But such a situation was not common. In general he had some background knowledge related to the content of the text, and he tended to focus on information that he identified as controversial or information which could be in any way related to his research interest.

[706] *Statements which are controversial, statements which make me think, statements which are an answer to a question that I had, statements which I disagree, controversial ones. (...)*

Personal interest was also identified as an important criterion that affected his selection. He tended to select information related to his personal life, even though they might not be central to the text or directly related to his work.

[13] *(...) doing the kind of things that you are doing in this interview which is finding patterns in data points, I mean how people are clustered. And also analysing tactics, which are the important tactics in peoples understanding of the world. Those kinds of problem I think are important, pure personal curiosity, how do we make sense of our world when we have a lot of data coming in, which we don't understand, how do we cluster things into groups. Of course I think those things are important for me politically, why do we cluster people in groups, because of the skin, things like that. (...).*

[49] *I supposed it has to do more with personal interest because it was not directly involved with my work. (...)*

Lack of personal interest might have led him to avoid reading a text.

[474] *(...) if it is too boring, I stop looking at it.*

Even though he recognized the importance of personal interest to his motivation in reading and also to the way he focussed on certain information in a text, he admitted that, due to his job requirement, he needed to read texts in which he was not very interested.

[72] *Yes, my job is called optical neuron nets. I am not interested in the optical side personally, but my job says I must be. Sometimes, for instance, there have been paper which I had to read for my job on implementing neuron network using optical things.*

Personally I don't care how they implement it, professionally I have to know.

In this situation it was more difficult for him to select information, mainly because he tended to ignore issues that he was not particularly interested in and focussed on the ones he was. Also, as his job required that he should have background in optical matters, he tried to gather the text's basic idea.

[80] *I find it quite hard, because I tend to ignore things. What I tend to do is for instance, ignore the details. For instance, it talks about a thing, loss of lenses, and amplifiers and things like that and I tend to ignore the details and look for those parts which do interest me, such as the flow of the information. And perhaps try to get the basic idea behind, so I can lock it away in a compartment and forget about it. So, if someone asks about it I can say, this is the basic idea.*

Asked how he could identify the 'basic idea' in the text, he made reference to the expected use of the obtained information. He identified ideas that were related, understood them in a superficial way, and tried to give special attention during his reading to the attributed function and use of the information selected from the text.

[90] *(...) I suppose that if I can understand it and I can see that my understanding relies on certain ideas, and also I have to compartmentalize my understanding, to say I understand this, but I don't understand this, and stick it in a box and take it for granted, and another time I will look at that. And when someone asks me, I would say, well I don't know the content of this box, but this is its function. I am talking about a box as an idea, not a real box. So, I don't know how this actually works, but this is what you must do.*

In relation to social-based factors, this reader acknowledged that his purpose for reading had a fundamental effect on the selective focus that he adopted during reading. The adoption of a different purpose would lead to a different selection. So, if studying a text for an exam, he would be highly concerned with reproducing the acquired information. Therefore, he would focus on the argument presented by the text, without having much preoccupation with considering its implications.

[134] *I suppose I would have looked at it far more specifically. If I was for instance, taking an exam, I would be more or less learning the arguments. (...) I wouldn't have been interested in*

the implications, the other ideas, I know would just be interested in repeating the argument.

[142] (...) *The actual specific line by line of the text and I would focus on repeating, how can I repeat that in an exam. (...)*

He also acknowledged that readers from different areas of knowledge would search for different types of information in a same text.

[142] (...) *I could have been looking at it from the point of view of programming in a computer, in which case I would be looking at it in terms of what I will use as a variable on a computer. For instance, there is this dy/dx , things which you can't you won't use as a variable. You want to use the Y or the X, but not the ratio.*

In relation to the author's point of view, he regarded it mainly relevant to be considered in situations in which his personal standpoint differed from the one adopted by the author. If the theoretical positions were different he tried to verify how much of the author's proposal could be generalized to his specific situation.

[436] (...) *can I use those kinds of ideas with my kind of neurons?' and 'how useful are they?' So what I have to do is to get the ideas, not the references to their neurons, to their model of neurons.*

He considered that the author's standpoint did not affect his selection of information in situations in which he was reading the text only for pleasure. In this situation, his personal interest guided his selection of information from the text. In the example he gave, he was only interested in learning about certain facts and he did not consider that the author's position in relation to these facts was essential to the selective focus that he had adopted.

[331] *Yes, a book which I have been reading. It contains a lot of facts on quantum mechanic physics, and I am reading it from a personal interest. The author's stand point is... first of all I know he is an atheist, so I know that if it came to question of politics and science, he would be very much in favour of science, and I know a few other things about him. And yet, this does not matter, because I am trying to find some information, and anecdotes about scientists as well, which he has written. For instance, things about how people decide that atoms were small little things. At the turn of the century they did not believe in that. And it was basically Einstein who said that about atoms.*

5.3.3.2 FIVE READERS, ONE READING SITUATION AND THREE FACTORS

Group I indicated that personal involvement with an essay topic may affect the choice of criteria for selecting information from a text. In contrast, Group II provided some evidence that different task requirements may have an effect on the selective focus adopted during reading. Group III revealed variations within a situation in which both variables - i. e. task to be fulfilled and personal interest in the text's subject matter - were maintained constant. All five subjects were reading to write a thesis, and all of them were recognized to be highly interested in increasing their knowledge on a particular chosen topic. In fact, personal interest was considered so obvious that these readers considered odd the question items that explore this issue (Alfred/Anna/Jose Luis/ Marcos)

As mentioned earlier, even though all five subjects claimed to be highly motivated to pursue their research questions, the investigations they were conducting were at different stages of development. Two of the subjects (Alfred/Anna) were still specifying their research questions, while three of them (Marcos/Jose Luis/Wilson) were well advanced in their investigation. So it is possible to say that these subjects varied in the level of background knowledge they had on the issue that they had chosen to investigate.

As might be expected, the stage reached in their investigation affected the way they selected information from texts. Initial stages seemed to be characterized by a more general type of focus during reading, guided by the reader's interest in a specific topic. This reading may follow two different directions: more theory or method oriented. In the actual situation being discussed, Alfred was reading the text because he was aware that he needed basic theoretical knowledge - 'provided by books', to understand the application of the theory - 'discussed by academic papers'. In other words, he was aiming to acquire theoretical fundamentals necessary for a better understanding of his research topic and also to further access the existing literature which discussed the application of these theoretical problems.

Anna was reading a text with the objective of being well acquainted with a topic that might be included in her research. However, her reading was not solely affected by theoretical concerns. In fact, her reading was mainly guided by methodological questions. That is, she read the text, trying to verify if the issues being discussed could in any way be translated in experimental terms.

Considering the three remaining readers (Marcos/Jose Luis/ Wilson) at more advanced stage of investigation, reading tended to be highly focussed on specific research questions. Readers approached texts with a more precise notion about what they are looking for. At this stage, the researcher's chosen perspective and the issues that he/she had elected as central to the development of his/her thesis were the main factors guiding the selective focus adopted during reading.

(a) reader-based factors

Purpose for reading and reader-based factors were pointed out as having a very important effect on the selective focus adopted during reading. Since the research topic was chosen by the reader, it was not possible to clearly discriminate the role of personal interest and research aims within this situation of reading for research. In fact all five readers claimed to be interested in issues related to their PhD. Reviewing the mentioned data, it seemed that within a reading for research situation, personal interest had a fundamental effect on the selective focus adopted during reading. However, the responses also indicated that within such a situation the reader's personal interest was given different degrees of freedom. At a more advanced stage in research, personal interest might be constrained by the research focus. That is, readers avoided information that interested them, but that was not related to the specific issues that they were discussing (Jose Luis). The degrees of freedom of the reader might also be limited in situations in which the research topic was not solely determined by the reader, as in a job situation. One of the readers (Wilson) pointed out this possibility. Faced with the conflict between personal and external interest, he avoided details, and tried to apprehend the gist of the text. In such a situation, the selective focus adopted during reading was highly determined by the expected use

of the information. As he stated, 'he put the information in "boxes", he did not know what the "boxes" contained, but was aware of their function'.

Background knowledge relating to the content of the text affected the selection of information from a text in many different ways. Readers tended while reading, to pay little attention to information that was known to them, and to focus on information that was new and/or difficult (Alfred/Marcos/Wilson). Their previous knowledge relative to the content also helped them to establish the ideal reading focus to be adopted prior to the actual reading act. That is, they approached the text knowing what they were looking for (Anna/Marcos/ Jose Luis/Wilson).

Some of the responses also indicated that, due to their previous knowledge, readers might be more familiar with certain topics or approaches. Such a familiarity made them perceive certain issues as more meaningful, and they therefore selected them (Alfred/Marcos). The background knowledge mentioned by the readers, when analysing the actual reading situation was, acquired through different sources; printed texts (Alfred/Marcos/Jose Luis/ Wilson); lectures (Alfred/Wilson); academic discussions (Wilson); or even through the media (Anna).

(b) Text-based factors

Considering the text-based factors, it seemed that the structural factor most salient for all the five readers was the division of text into sections. These readers seem to have a fair idea that texts might be organized according to different principles. The two subjects from the Exact Science area (Alfred/Wilson), for instance, stated that texts in their area were organized according to two broad categories of information: theory and application/example. Anna made a distinction between two types of text in Psychology: journal articles and theoretical papers. Journal articles tended to be organised in terms of broad categories of information, each fulfilling a specific function such as: abstracts, results, discussions, etc. In contrast, theoretical papers tended to follow a thematic organisation, with

titles and sub-titles marking the development of the theme. Jose Luis proposed that history texts tended to be organised along two broad lines: a thematic and a chronological line. The first one analysed an issue across different time periods. The second discussed an issue taking into consideration its development in time.

However, in spite of having a quite elaborate conception of textual organisation, structural clues were not regarded as a very important criterion for selecting information from the text. Only one reader (Anna) stressed that the text's titles and sub-titles made her more aware of certain information in the text. A similar function was also fulfilled by the texts abstracts (Anna/Wilson). Structural clues were also pointed out as being helpful in a situation where the text content was not clear to the reader. In such a situation, the reader might make use of structural guidelines to follow the text content and to perceive in a more clear way the author's point of view on the issue (Marcos). However, this situation was stated by the reader as being very uncommon.

(c) Social-based factors

In relation to social-based factors, purpose for reading was pointed out as a criterion that highly affected the selective focus adopted during reading. The data indicated that different purposes for reading might be associated to different situations of reading. For instance, a research and an exam represent two different social situations in which a student is asked to display knowledge within a specific social institution, i.e. the school. These readers perceived them as different situations, and such a perception affected the type of information that they selected from a text. Reading for a research was considered a very focussed type of reading, guided by some questions that the reader had in mind previous to the reading. These questions might be of a different nature. The reader might be reading to (a) clarify research questions (Alfred/Anna); (b) acquire basic theoretical knowledge (Alfred); (c) access data and theoretical positions (Jose Luis); (d) obtain new insights from a different theoretical perspective (Marcos/Wilson).

All these possible questions indicated the type of knowledge that might be required in a research situation. They also have in common the fact that they are motivated by the reader's interest in a specific topic. In contrast, in a situation of reading for an exam, the reader's own questioning is relegated to a secondary place. In such a situation selective focus might be guided by the reader's conception of examiners, or the nature of the questions that might be raised within the scope of a specific academic field or the course's program (Anna/Marcos).

All these purposes for reading illustrate that reading to study is a social act, and thus is affected by social norms and rules. Reading for a research illustrates well the effect of these rules. Reader-based factors were regarded as having a very important effect on the selective focus adopted in a situation of reading to write a thesis. However, it is interesting to notice that the degree of freedom that these readers had in this situation is not necessarily a characteristic of any research situation. As Wilson indicated in his interview, in a work situation, the researcher's interest in a topic is socially constrained by the employer's interest in specific issues. This reader was working with optical neuron nets, 'he was not personally interested in the optical side, but his job said he must be'. A close analysis of the situation of writing a PhD thesis may reveal that the stress that these readers placed on reader-based factors was, at least partially, a requirement of the social situation in which these readers were involved. Readers at the doctoral level are expected to present an original thesis and to show intellectual independence. The rules stipulated by the system require a more reader-based use of knowledge. Furthermore, the stress on data, theory, method, and different theoretical positions, indicate that these readers' freedom of choice occurs within the limits of the uses of knowledge that are privileged by the academic discourse.

The notion of discourse seems also to be involved in these readers' descriptions of the types of text that are typical in their area of study. The five readers interviewed belonged to five different academic areas. The text organizations that Jose Luis predicted to

history texts did not follow exactly the same type of distinctions pointed out by Anna when discussing Psychology texts. It was also different from the content organisation proposed by Alfred and Wilson. The examples described above indicate that reader-based and text-based factors are not neutral to social norms and expectancies.

5.4 SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

This empirical investigation must be understood as exploratory. It aimed to analyse the effect of social factors on selective focus. However, to offer a broader perspective of the issues involved, it also included the effect of reader-based and text-based factors. The investigation was restricted to the constraints of a single reading situation - i.e. reading to study in higher education. Fifteen expert readers have analysed and discussed their own reading to study practices. The particularity of the data required by this study made the choice of a methodology for data collection very difficult. Some of the problems involved have already been discussed in chapter 4. In spite of its limitations, the data obtained by the main study supports the methodological procedures adopted as useful to exploratory investigation. The expert readers' analysis of their daily reading practices did offer new insights to further explore the effect of different factors on selective focus.

The sample selected for this study was classified into three groups. Each group varied in academic and/or professional experience. Even though the characteristics of the present empirical investigation demanded a choice of a small sample, a broad range of possibilities was covered. All together, fifteen actual reading situations were discussed. The readers evaluated the role of reader-based, text-based and social-based factors in relation to these situations, and also ranked them according to the list offered to them in question 7. Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 show how each of the three groups ranked the importance of each one of these factors to the selective focus adopted in the actual situation of reading. Five factors are represented in these tables: text structure (T); the author's stand point (A); purpose for reading (P); the reader's personal interest in the content of the text (PI); and finally, the reader's background knowledge of the content of the text (BK). In these tables (1) represents the most important criterion that affected selective focus and (5) the least important one.

Table 5.1 GROUP I - Scale of factors that affect selective focus

SUBJECT	RANKING				
	1	2	3	4	5
SHEILA	BK	P	T	PI	A
GILBERT	P	BK	PI	T	A
SUZANA	P	BK	PI	T	A
ROBERT	P	A	BK	T	PI
MARTHA	P	T	BK	A	PI
GROUP MEDIA	Purpose	Background knowledge	Text	Personal interest	Author
	1.2	2.2	3.4	4.0	4.2

Table 5.2 GROUP II - Scale of factors that affect selective focus

SUBJECT	RANKING				
	1	2	3	4	5
CECELIA	P	PI	T	BK	A
TANIA	BK	P	T	PI	A
FLAVIO	P	A	T	BK	PI
ELISABETH	P	T	PI	BK	A
EDWARD	P	T	PI	BK	A
GROUP MEDIA	Purpose	Text	Personal interest & Background knowledge	--	Author
	1.2	2.6	3.4	--	4.4

Table 5.3 GROUP III - Scale of factors that affect selective focus

SUBJECT	RANKING				
	1	2	3	4	5
ALFRED	P/PI	BK	T	--	A
ANNA	P	BK	T	PI	A
MARCOS	BK/PI	P	A	--	T
WILSON	BK	PI	A	P	T
JOSE LUIS	P	PI	A	--	T/BK
GROUP MEDIA	Background knowledge	Purpose	Personal Interest	Author	Text
	1.4	1.8	2.0	3.8	4.0

Table 5.4 shows the interviewer's evaluation of the readers' most important criterion for selection (explored in question 1).

Table 5.4 Relation between the researcher's evaluation and readers' ranking

GROUPS	AGREEMENT	SECOND MOST IMPORTANT	OTHERS
GROUP I	2	2	1
GROUP II	2	2	1
GROUP III	4	--	1
TOTAL	8	4	3

As table 5.4 indicates, the interviewer's evaluation tended to be very close to the one that the reader chose as important in the rating task presented in question 7. In most of the cases, the researcher's evaluation either corresponded to the reader's own evaluation or coincided with the second most important criterion chosen by the reader.

The reader's scale of factors that affected selective focus in the actual situation of reading indicated that purpose for reading is a very influential factor. The tables above also point out the fact that the importance the readers attributed to different factors may vary. This variation may be attributed to (a) social constraints imposed upon the readers by reading situations, or (b) the way individual readers deal with the constraints imposed upon them. Instances of both - reading constraints and readers' degrees of freedom may be found in the data. These issues are better illustrated by the reports offered by Group I and Group II.

Group II, for example, provided some evidence on how the requirements of different reading purposes affected the selective focus adopted during reading. Readers tended to guide their selection of information by different criteria if they were reading to write a report; reading to prepare an exam question; reading to acquire different background knowledge; or reading to present and discuss a text. Yet, within a single purpose for reading such as reading to write a report - variation on the choice of criteria may be found due to subjective factors. Cecilia's and Tania's interview reports indicated such a possibility. The data provided by Group I point even more directly in this direction. All five PGCE students were confronted by a similar reading task, i. e. reading to write an essay. All these readers had the freedom to choose their own essay topic. They knew they were going to be assessed, and that their essay should fulfil certain requirements. For instance, they all acknowledged the necessity of developing their own opinion with inter-textual references. They were also aware that an academic argument is constructed by opposing different scholar's views on an issue. Yet, being exposed to similar constraints and degrees of freedom, all five

readers opted for very personal ways of dealing with their tasks. Some chose to discuss a topic in which they were highly involved. As a consequence, their selection of information from the text was mainly affected by their personal interest and their background knowledge relating to the content of the text. Others were more task oriented and their selective focus was mostly guided by their knowledge of the task's requirement.

The data provided by this group indicated that the constraints imposed by reading situations might favour, but not determine the choice of certain criteria to guide the selection of information from a text. Thus subjective factors should also be considered when interpreting the selective focus adopted during reading.

Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 show the effect of different factors on the actual reading situation explored by these readers. Considering the possible reading situations discussed during the interviews it may be suggested the following:

(a) structural issues in general tended to be a relevant criterion for selection within four specific reading situations : reading to reproduce a text; reading to apprehend the main concepts of a text; reading with lack of background knowledge; reading with lack of personal interest.

(b) Reader-based factors affected the selective focus adopted during reading. Two reader-based factors were investigated here : background knowledge relating to the content of the text, and personal interest. As might be expected, these readers stressed that background knowledge was essential to the apprehension of the semantic content of the text. Some of the readers pointed out that their previous knowledge relating to the content made them read the text searching for specific points that they already had in mind.

Personal interest in the topic of the text was acknowledged as a very influential variable affecting the selective focus adopted during reading. However, these readers also offered examples of situations in which their personal interest was placed in a secondary position. The two main situations mentioned in the data were exam situations and

some job requirements. In these situations the selective focus was mainly guided by the readers' expectations about the type of knowledge required by the task to be fulfilled.

Degrees of freedom of personal interest might be constrained by task requirements - such as the need for focus in a writing process. This issue, made evident by the PhD group, was actually pointed out by Suzana from the PGCE group, when comparing the reading of two texts. In the initial text read, her choice of information was based on her personal interest and background knowledge of the subject matter of the text. From this reading, she defined certain issues to be explored in her essay. In the second text read, her selection of information was 'constrained' by the issues selected in the reading of the first text. Her general personal interest became secondary. In relation to reader-based factors, lack of background knowledge or lack of personal interest on the subject matter of the text may lead to serious problem of content apprehension. Readers tended to adopt the surface approach to reading predicted by the Gothenburg studies.

(c) In relation to social issues, the discussion of the interview reports of individual groups highlighted different ways in which selective focus might be affected by social-based factors. Group I illustrated how the reader's involvement with a specific topic might affect the choice of specific criteria to guide the selective focus adopted during reading. The discussion brought to the fore how the reader's personal interest and perception of task's demands are not dissociated from their own social experience. Group II highlighted how selective focus might be affected by the reader's perception of the uses of knowledge expected within specific situations of reading. The analysis of group III illustrated how the choice of criteria to select information from a text might be affected by norms of discourse. Unfortunately, the question items that aimed to explore the notions of genre and discourse were too general. This is certainly a weakness to be mentioned about the questionnaire elaboration. A more specific type of question might have offered further insights into how reading might be affected by the social uses of language. Purposes for reading and situations of reading were the

social issues more directly probed during the interview. The great majority of the readers reported choosing different information when reading a text with a different purpose in mind. These responses offer support to a claim made in the introduction of chapter 2, i. e. selective focus must be understood as a process distinct from content apprehension. If the same reader can read the same text and choose different information in different situations of reading, then the selection of information from a text involves more than the apprehension of its semantic content per se. It involves another cognitive process, which is being labelled here as selective focus.

The data collected in this study also support and illustrate another claim made in the introduction of this thesis, i. e. selective focus is affected by social-based factors. These readers' descriptions of their own reading practices strengthens the notion that social issues should not be ignored by studies that aim to investigate reading. Chapter 6 discusses possible ways in which social-based factors could be included in theories of reading. It also offers some examples to illustrate the role of ideology on selective focus.

CHAPTER 6

6. THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON SELECTIVE FOCUS IN READING.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter aimed to exemplify variation in reading, by taking into consideration the effect of reader-based, text-based and social-based factors on daily life practices. As mentioned before, these social-based variations can, at times, be attributed to certain constraints imposed by reading situations on the reader. Other times they may be attributed to the degrees of freedom that individual readers have within a situation of reading. To describe reading practices in the most comprehensive way, the present investigation has focussed on three major groups of factors that could have affected selective focus. Nevertheless, the main theoretical interest of this thesis is to highlight the necessity of including social-based factors in reading models. So, this chapter gives special emphasis to effect of social influences have on selective focus.

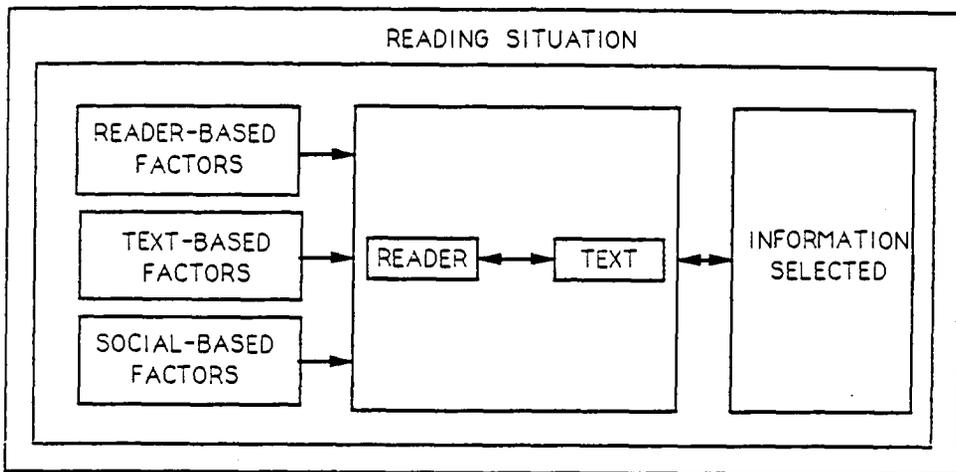
This chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 6.2 discusses three different ways of including social factors in reading models : a weak social version, an inter-relational version and finally a integrative version. The latter is developed to include the role of ideology. Section 6.3 shows, through some illustrative examples, how ideologies may directly or indirectly affect reading in general and selective focus in particular. Attempting to cover this issue as broadly as possible, the discussion focusses on examples from both the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. The aim of selecting these examples was mainly to show that knowledge production in general is affected by social factors. Finally, section 6.4 presents some general comments on the issues covered by the chapter.

6.2 THREE VERSIONS OF A SOCIAL-BASED READING MODEL

The data presented in chapter 5 indicated that within specific reading situations readers may guide their selective focus by reader-based, text-based or social-based factors. Considering that the data provided elements for the three variables investigated, it is possible to propose that social factors should be added to reader-based and

text-based factors in order to overcome the limitations of the existing theories. This would offer a more comprehensive view of the issues involved in a reading act. Within this version - a weak social version - the social variable is considered a variable among three, as is shown in figure 6.1.

Fig. 6.1 Selective focus - weak social version

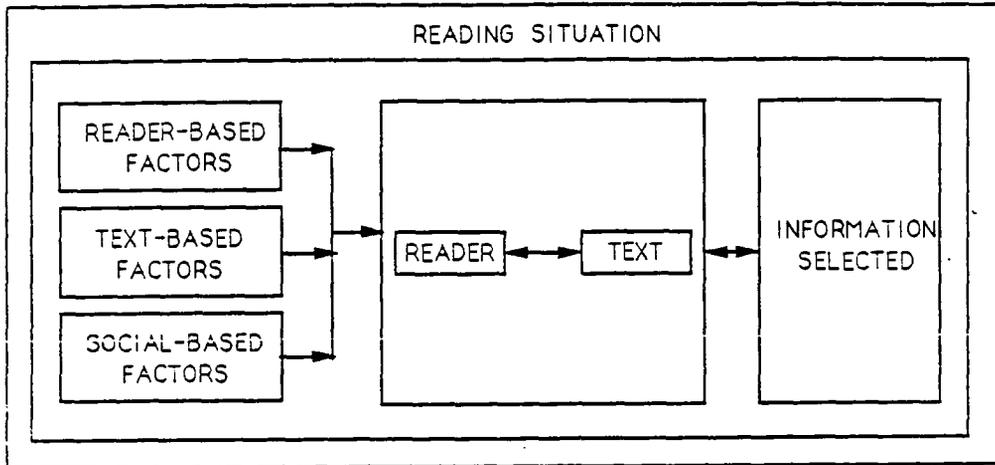


However, a weak social version does not rule out the danger of a compartmentalized conception of reality. It certainly stresses the need to consider social factors in reading models, but it maintains the notion that the three factors may be investigated in isolation and theoretical findings adjoined one to the other. The description of individual reading acts described in chapter 5, showed that certain situations of reading may lead certain criteria to be more predominant. Yet, the data does not present a single example that could be interpreted on the basis of one single factor. That is, there is no example that could be labelled as 'pure' text-based, reader-based or social-based.

Considering that there is such a strong link between the three factors, one could consider a modified version of the initial proposal, which would mark the interdependence of the three factors. This second version - an inter-relational version - gives equal status

to the three factors and highlights their inter-connections as shown in figure 6.2.

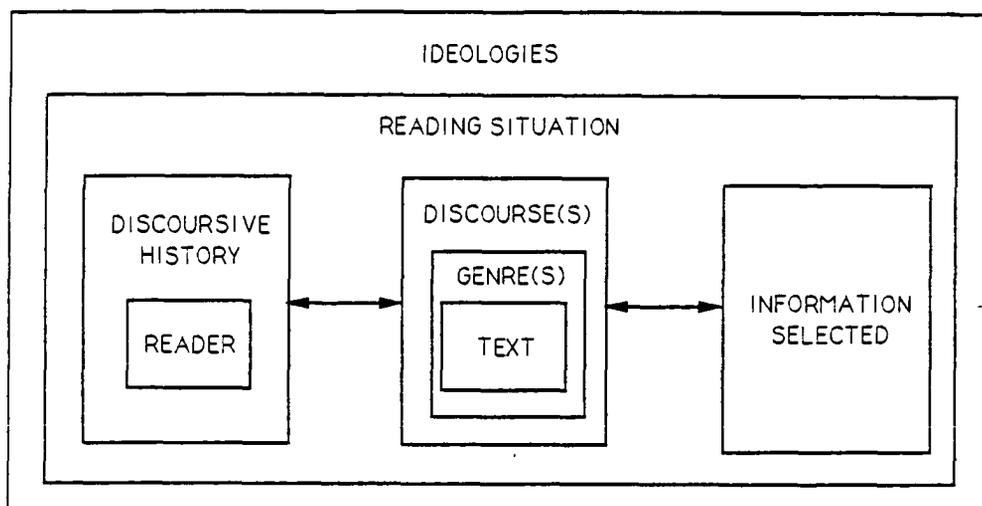
Fig. 6.2 Selective focus - inter-relational social version



This version, however, has two major problems. First of all, by giving equal status to all the three factors, it masks the fact that society is more encompassing than the individual reader or text. Secondly, it distinguishes situations of reading from social based factors, a theoretical distinction difficult to be maintained in practise. The reading situation per se is also affected by social values. Let us consider one example from chapter 5 to illustrate this point. Flavio (see page 197 to 203) was reading to study for an exam. His selective focus was directly affected by his own conception about the type of information that was required by an exam question. So, he tried to focus on issues stressed by the teacher in a previous lecture. He aimed, in his reading, to clarify and expand lecture notes by using information provided by the text. During his reading he also paid special attention to some references and quotes, which he found useful to include in an exam answer.

Flavio's expectations reflected his own experience with a specific social practice, i.e. assessment procedures. Thus, the factors mentioned above may be included under the category social-based factors. However, these factors are not merely affecting the reader's interaction with the text. They are also a constitutive part of a specific situation of reading; namely, reading to study for an exam. The inter-relational version is not adequate to represent the fact that reading situations are practices affected by social beliefs and value systems. This leads us to a third model, in which the social factor is understood as a broader framework in which practices of reading are embedded, thus integrating the situation of reading, the reader and the text.

Fig. 6.3 Integrative social version



This model is a better representation of the central argument of this thesis, i.e. reading is a social practice. Situations of reading, readers and texts exist within a society and they are impregnated by social values. In this version, which is an integrative social version, the concept of 'social' includes beliefs and values entailed in the notion of 'ideology'. The latter term is used in figure 6.3 to represent the social notion that is underlying

this thesis. In fact, what has been so far labelled 'social' refers directly to values and beliefs that social groups and individuals have about literacy and its use, i. e. ideologies about written text and their social functions. Any reading situation is ideological in nature.

This model also includes the notions of 'discursive history', 'discourse' and 'genre', to stress the social nature of both readers and texts as discussed in chapter 3. So far, this discussion has given emphasis to the effect of ideologies in reading acts. The next section will describe through some illustrative examples how ideologies may directly or indirectly affect selective focus and reading.

6.3 THE EFFECT OF IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS ON SELECTIVE FOCUS : SOME ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES.

This section aims to provide illustration of some of the theoretical issues previously discussed. Four distinct issues are being explored here. The first example illustrates how readers learn through socio-ideological practises to give more importance to specific types of information in a text. Peter's report on his experience as a law student in Austria and England well exemplifies this process. The second example attempts to illustrate that all areas of knowledge are subjected to theoretical interpretations of reality. Wilson indicated how the choice of different theories may be affected by affiliation to specific research groups. This example was included mainly to question the common belief that mathematical language being 'neutral' prevents the possibility of different theoretical interpretations. The third example highlights how the school curriculum makes certain types of knowledge more accessible than others. Alfred discussed how engineering thinking may be constrained by the school curriculum. Finally, Marcos offered an academic example that changes in reader-based factors occur, but they are not dissociated from personal history.

6.3.1 SELECTIVE FOCUS IN LAW TEXTS : A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

The data discussed in this section was provided by Peter, an Austrian lawyer who was a subject in the second pilot study. When interviewed he was engaged in an MA course in International Law offered by the University of London. Prior to his studies in England he had obtained an Austrian degree in law, and also an MA and PhD title in the field. This example shows Peter's understanding of two different legal systems : the Austrian and the British. Both systems aim at the same social function : to defend the law established by the state. In spite of their common social function, they are structured in different ways : the former is based on the principle of the law, and the latter on the practice of the law. He explained these differences. He also pointed out how they are stressed by the assessment procedures adopted in Austria and in Britain. Finally, he indicated how the two different legal systems attribute importance to different types of information.

Describing the two legal systems, he stated that :

[139] *In Austria you know the facts, the naked law. But in England it doesn't exist, because in England, the court decides and that is the law basically - except that you have statutes. But again, even with those statutes, the different opinions that the court says may form the law, may develop the law(...). On the continent, lawyers out of all the different principles of the law form an answer. Here, you need a bunch of judges to decide.*

[140] *We try to give abstract principles, which you apply to the facts. Here in England, the facts, and the answer of judges to the facts you use for other facts.*

These differences in the legal structure directly affected the type of texts relevant to lawyers in both countries.

[60] *In Austria a section in a statute consisting of 100 words if it is a lot, 100 words - will give you an answer to a legal problem. It will answer your legal question. The same problem set in England you have to read 50 pages on a decision on the House of Lords. Because in England, since you have no statute like on the Continent, you must rely on judges decisions or judgements. And that could be, if it a House of Lords decision, 500 pages in which different law lords are expressing their opinions. So you don't even get one opinion, you might have one leading opinion but you might get other opinions. In a statute on the Continent, you don't get it. You might have a similar situation in the interpretation*

of this very section of the law, but it is normally very narrow. So, it doesn't make much difference.

[139] (...) *So, in Austria, I would just read the text of the law, the text of the statutes. (...) Here I have to read all sorts of interpretations.*

The two legal systems support themselves on different ideological bases. As a result, the importance and use of statutes within the context of legal practice differs. The Austrian system gives priority to the principle of the law. Within this system, legal statutes do have a greater power in the sense that they may be applied across different situations. In contrast, the British system favours the practice of the law. As a consequence it gives greater importance to previous legal decisions and it diminishes the power of the legal statutes by making their use less flexible. Peter offered some examples that highlight these differences.

[78] (Discussing air transport convention) ...*In England, if you apply the same section of the same convention, you won't get interest because the English law, the English judges interpret statutes in a very narrow sense. So, if in the whole convention you don't find interest mentioned, you won't get it. The judge will say it is not in the statute. In Austria it doesn't matter, because it is in other statutes and the other statutes say you get interest. That is what the law is saying.*

[93] *You can't (use a statute) unless it is written in the law itself - in the statute itself - or the law is saying it is applied to this convention as well. If it not expressly mentioned in any other law, or in the convention itself you won't get it (interest)*

[103] (...) *In England it must expressly be mentioned either in a statute or in a case. If there is no precedent case, you can't use it. It won't apply.*

Due to the difference between the two legal systems, an Austrian lawyer in England must learn not just the content of British law but also its structure. In other words he/she must acquire a new criterion of relevance. Discussing such a situation he suggests:

[121] *First he has to study English law as such, and he must get rid of the whole structure of law he learned at home. He must get rid of it because you can't apply the structure we learn on the Continent in England. The English law is a mess. There is no structure. There is no hierarchy of law, there is a certain*

hierarchy but it is not that clearly structured like on the Continent.

[128] *For example, if he doesn't know the principle of indistinguishableness here in England, he would be lost. Because, here in England what you do, you apply older cases to your fact situation and the opponent will try to distinguish. He will say, you can't apply this case, because I have brown eyes and not blue eyes. So the case doesn't match. In Austria you wouldn't do it. The difference is that in England you are going to the very situation, the fact itself. In Austria you would try to abstract. So there is a different method.*

As is to be expected, these different criteria of relevance are transmitted especially through schooling. The study of law in Austria and in England gives emphasis to different issues.

[132] *It is a completely different way of studying in England or at home. At home, I would study facts, what must be in the agreement, how it must be drafted, so on and so on... What is the law. Here you must criticize the law. Should be that way, that court said this, that court said that...*

Assessment procedures reinforce the social value of specific information. Peter pointed in this direction when he discussed the way he was studying for his MA exams.

[31] *Because when you are studying for exams you can't study everything(...) you should have an idea about what questions are coming up. Especially the English way of doing exams is that you must answer in 45 minutes a question. In order to answer a question in 45 minutes you have to write one and a half pages, not more. So you must have a crystallized version of what you want to say. So you underline what is really important, that you know might use in your answering.*

He then exemplified the type of information that he considered to be expected by his British examiners.

[103] *Because the exams, what they want is not just facts of the law, they want critiques, like different opinions. So, I try to get out of the article as much as I can in respect to that. So, I try to identify different opinions.*

This cross-cultural comparison between two legal systems makes evident how different social practises lead to different criteria of importance. Both British and Austrian systems are informed by written legal texts. These texts tend to deal with similar type of information. A typical legal article, according to Peter tends to

quote the law, to interpret the law, and tries to give an answer and a conclusion. However, as he pointed out, the British and the Austrian legal systems are structured by different ideological principles. Due to the different structures - and the legal practises made possible by these structures - a lawyer reading a text in Britain or in Austria must give special focus to different sorts of information. Peter's report exemplifies an earlier statement of the present thesis, i. e. the criterion of importance that guides the selection of information from a text is affected by socio-ideological factors.

6.3.2 THEORETICAL INTERPRETATIONS : NOT A PRIVILEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

This section aims to show that this thesis applies equally to the Social and Natural sciences. More precisely, it aims to argue that mathematical language does not prevent the possibility of theoretical interpretations. Furthermore, it tries to point out that the choice of a specific theoretical interpretation may be linked to the reader's affiliation to a specific research group. The formation of different research groups reflect not just the material conditions, but also the nature and values of specific social organizations that support the existence of those groups.

Wilson, discussing his questions on neuron nets, made explicit the existence of two different theoretical arguments which proposed different ways of seeing the same reality, i. e. the operation of neuron nets. One accepted as a basic axiom that a neuron will fire if the addition of the signals exceeds a certain number. The other holds that a neuron will fire for certain patterns of signals and not others, and it is possible to pre-establish the pattern. Wilson made it very clear that this distinction established a division between two groups of researchers. In fact, during his interview he made such a division by explicitly contraposing my/our kind of neuron versus his/their kind of neuron.

However, he also stressed that in spite of their difference, it is possible to 'translate' the solutions posed within one perspective into the second perspective. But such a 'translation' is only possible if the derivation of those equations that constitute the

solution of a specific problem is not dependant on the axiom chosen. Only in such situations can abstractions from one approach to the other be made without theoretical conflicts. In case of conflicts he proposed a search for a broader solution that could accommodate both theoretical possibilities.

[332] (...) so, he says that in order to find out what these questions do, you have to add things together. That is what this symbol means, add things together. And I say, you don't have to add them together, you can do anything, you can multiply them, square them, not just add. You can do other things with them. So I want to replace this sign with a sign which means any possibility. We have ourselves a specific possibility. So, either to replace with our specific possibility, or any possibility. (...)

Wilson was mainly talking about equations and equation signs. However, his example indicates that within Natural Sciences - as in Social Sciences - different axioms may lead to different ways of understanding and dealing with reality. In both areas, i. e. Natural and Social Sciences, conflicts tend to appear whenever a reader is exposed to texts written from a different perspective than the one chosen. The use of mathematical language may be helpful to make explicit the existence of conflicts, but it does not rule out the possibility of different theoretical ways of explaining a reality. The argument being made here is that the use of mathematical language per se is not a sufficient condition to avoid theoretical interpretations. Wilson pointed out that the reality of neuron nets is investigated within the framework of two different schools of thought. He made clear that he belonged to a research group that had opted for one of them. It was within the framework of this perspective - and not the other- that he was trying to solve neuron net problems. This example from Natural Sciences can be likened to knowledge production in Social Sciences. This leads one to question any view that the Natural Science field is 'neutral' and clear of any social effect.

6.3.3 THE 'NEUTRALITY' OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The 'neutral' character commonly attributed to Natural Science is based on two central arguments :

(a) Natural Science texts are based on mathematical arguments. Mathematical language aims at precision and therefore is not subject to the same type of interpretation as natural languages.

(b) Natural Science is constructed on the basis of natural laws which are not socially affected.

Alfred's report highlighted a very close link between schooling and thinking in engineering. Technological development may follow many different trends. However, the choice of a specific trend may be directly affected by the university curriculum, which makes specific types of knowledge more accessible than others.

Discussing engineering texts, Alfred pointed out that, due to the use of mathematical language they are neutral. That is, they are not a product of the author's point of view.

[663] *You are asking me about the view of the author. O.K. this is engineering. Engineering is neutral. All the author's write the same equations(...). But they are not like Freud, Jung, Adler to look for a school.*

However, he stressed that engineering thinking is highly dependent on previous content knowledge. As he pointed out, written material in his subject area is organized in a pyramid structure. So, a reader, to grasp the content of more specific texts, must have previously acquired a vast background knowledge on general engineering. Such a basic knowledge is initially acquired at university through formal training.

[189] *In engineering there are some authors who pioneer the way engineers think (...). But it depends what you learn in the university. I mean, what your teacher, your professor in the university said, which way he followed in order to teach you Mechanics, because this is a book on Mechanics.*

[696] *(...) you relate either with your previous knowledge what you were taught, what you were used to work with, the way you were used to work.*

Thus, the access to certain information within the field of mechanical engineering is not just made possible, but it is also constrained by formal education. The curriculum adopted by a specific university leads students to be more familiar with specific topics.

Such a familiarity has an important effect on the way these students will further develop their knowledge in the field.

[290] *That is the broad area that is getting everyday broader. The area that is familiar to me is getting everyday broader. But if it is something miles away from what I already know, then I skip it.*

[274] *Even if something is completely new to me, I can recognize from the style, that that belongs to something that is familiar to me(...). If my background is relevant to what I am looking for in the paper, then I can understand - if I can read and understand it. If I cannot, then I skip it, because it is useless. I am accustomed to some way of thinking. I cannot afford at this stage to start from the beginning, so I skip it.*

As mentioned earlier, there are many possible ways of developing engineering thinking. However, the knowledge provided by the university in a way guides the students towards specific trends. As - Alfred stated:

[10] *It is according to my previous background knowledge, what I have learned in the university or in my previous life. Some people can't understand what I understand. I can't understand what other people can when they see an engineering text.*

Therefore, it is possible to say that the university curriculum - by making certain types of knowledge more accessible than others - plays an important role in shaping 'neutral' engineering thinking. In other words, the understanding of engineering texts is based on a complex network of basic engineering concepts. Those concepts are mainly acquired during the first university degree. As Alfred pointed out, it is easier for an engineer to follow the trend he/she is familiar with, than to opt for a new trend which requires a different set of basic concepts. So, as stated above, a link may be established between the university curriculum and trends of specialization. The elaboration of any curriculum is never neutral. It is a product of social values, beliefs and needs that ultimately determine the type of knowledge that is 'relevant' to be taught. So, even a technical subject area like engineering is not totally free from constraints of broader socio-ideological factors.

6.3.4 CHANGES IN PERSONAL HISTORY

Marcos offers an interesting example of how changes in reader-based factors are affected by personal history. After obtaining a degree in metallurgy he decided to change his area of study. He opted for the Social science field, mainly because he regarded his previous academic background as very arid and not meaningful to him. Even though his academic interest changed, his personal academic history made him very familiar with mathematical arguments. As a consequence, when reading social science texts, these arguments tended to be more salient to him and he paid more attention to mathematical information.

[325] *I said, I am very much affected by years of studying math. So, when I go through I am affected by this information(...)*

[615] *(...) Within this interest, I am interested in a quantitative approach. So, I am sure that I always look for papers, like here, and within the paper I am very much concerned with the quantitative approach.*

[654] *I must say that, even if I try and don't do it, I am really affected by ten years of work with these stupid formules.*

Marcos was aware that texts in Social Science may be approached in a different way. However, his familiarity with a specific perspective, made it more difficult for him to read the text from another possible perspective, i.e. a perspective giving greater emphasis to linguistic arguments.

[642] *(...) I probably don't pay too much attention to the discussion and I go straight to the facts.*

[68] *Looking at the things that I have been reading this week, and previously, I have seen that I do like and underline very much things that have to do with quantitative approach. This is because of my background which was scientific before. I can get on in my subject avoiding let's say Math, but because of my background, I do like that typical kind of approach. I sometimes find it difficult to see the other type of approach, the social science approach. I think that I am very much affected by ten years of studying Math, all that stuff.*

This example highlights how selective focus may be affected by values and beliefs about literacy and its use, acquired through past reading practices. It also shows an interesting transition in personal interest, which indicates that changes in reader-based

factors may occur, but they are not dissociated from a history of reading. Readers are affected by the reading practices they have been exposed to.

6.4 GENERAL COMMENTS

Chapter 5 has stressed the reader's conception about the social influences within situations of reading to study. It has shown that these are not deterministic, i. e. readers do have degrees of freedom. This chapter aimed to further explore the notion of social influences on selection in reading. Initially, it discussed how social-based factors should be incorporated into reading models. Three possibilities were suggested : a weak social version, an inter-relational version and finally an integrative social version. The latter was favoured as the one that better described the data analysed by the present investigation. The integrative social version considers the reading situation, the text and the reader within a broader socio-ideological framework.

This chapter also discussed some selected examples to illustrate that reading in all areas is directly or indirectly affected by socio-ideologies. These examples were included to indicate that knowledge construction is not neutral. The search for ideologies that lie behind knowledge production, reproduction and uses may be a way to promote social awareness and to favour individual/social group struggle for freedom. Following the Gramscian line defended by Guiroux and Aronowitz (see chapter 1) 'ideology' is not a mere limit of social action. It is also a source of agency, since it has the transformative potential of alternative discourses. Considering reading, the concept of 'ideology' makes it possible to explore the interface between the individual and the social.

CHAPTER 7

7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

7.1 FINDINGS AND APPLICATIONS TO THE TEACHING OF READING.

This study aimed to analyse reading within the guidelines offered by critical education (chapter 1). Within reading it explored the effect of social factors on a specific process involved in reading, i. e. selective focus. This issue was discussed on theoretical grounds (chapters 2 and 3), and further explored on the basis of empirical data (chapters 4, 5 and 6). The empirical evidence considered here was expert readers' evaluation of factors that affected their selective focus in situations of reading to study.

It is possible to argue that in a normal reading situation, readers are not consciously aware of the value criteria that guide their selection of information from texts. The readers that participated in this research may have become aware of certain factors due to the fact that they were specifically asked to consider them during the interview. If so, there is much more to be said about how selective focus is affected in the context of social practices. Many relevant issues may not have been detected or explored by the present discussion. The author believes this to be the case.

The investigation conducted here in the thesis was exploratory in nature. It aimed not to provide final answers, but to offer elements to elaborate new and more interesting questions about reading. The theoretical reflection and the readers' insights into their own reading practices certainly offers new direction to rethink concepts about reading. The readers responses highlighted the fact that readers and texts exist in a social environment and both are affected by it. In fact, the data suggested that the readers' interpretation of a situation of reading affected the way they relate to texts. The selective focus adopted in situations of reading to study was embedded in the practices of the academic discourse. The readers' responses also indicated that readers may select different types of information from a same text if they read it in different situations of reading.

These data provided grounds to state that selective focus should be considered as a process distinct from content apprehension.

These findings have three major applications, to the the teaching of reading. First of all, they stress that the knowledge of social norms is part of the reading expertise, and hence learners should be made aware of them. The readers' focus on 'irrelevant' information does not necessarily indicate that they have failed to understand the content of the text, or that they are not aware of the text's structural organization. The choice of 'secondary' or 'irrelevant' information from a text may be an indication that these readers were not familiar with the social use of knowledge promoted and expected by the school.

If the knowledge of discourses affects selective focus, then reading should be taught across the curriculum - an issue stressed by the Bullock report as far back as 1975. Teachers in different subject areas might contribute to the teaching of reading, by making explicit to the learners the norms and values that are characteristic of the discourse they teach. Finally, the teachers' stress on different social uses of knowledge, and on the ideologies that shape these uses, might provide students with elements to understand and question their own reality.

7.2 CLOSING THE CIRCLE.

This research started by discussing educational issues, and it concludes with some considerations relevant to the educational discourse. The general discussion developed in this study placed a great emphasis on the notion of ideology. This stress aimed to highlight to teachers that their teaching practices are never neutral. They are informed by and they contribute to the propagation of specific ideologies. Critical teachers must become aware and question the ideologies that they help to promote through their own teaching practices. In this way they may become agents within history.

In the initial chapter of this thesis, reading was discussed in the framework of an educational proposal. Accepting the ideological

guidelines of Critical Education, this study described an ideal type of reading to be promoted in classroom practices - i.e. critical reading - and types of reading to be avoided - i.e. naive and passive reading. The discussion then shifted to the notion of selective focus. Three possible approaches to selective focus were explored: reader-based, text-based, and social-based. To conclude it is interesting to strengthen the link between the two central issues being explored by this analysis.

The conceptions of schooling discussed in chapter 1 mainly differ in the emphasis that they give to the social structure, or to the individual. The same emphasis may be detected in pedagogical practices that favour the stress on reader-based, text-based or social-based factors. The present thesis argues that such a stress does not determine, but it certainly favours the development of reading attitudes that may be passive, naive, or critical. The excessive stress on norms of text construction may lead readers to regard as secondary their own interests, needs, and goals. By doing so they may passively undervalue their own discursive history. In contrast, an extra stress on reader-based factors may lead readers to be naive in their reading. They may over estimate the value of their own discursive history and under estimate the power struggle that may exist within situations of reading. A critical attitude to reading may be favoured by placing a stress on social factors. Thus if the selection of information from a text is to be critical, socio-ideological issues must be taken into consideration.

APPENDIX 1

CHAPTER 2: FURTHER COMMENTS

1(A) Meyer(1975) considered nine role relationships :

Role Relationships	
Agent	Investigator of an action - previously also called agent
Instrument	Something used inanimately by an agent to perform an action - previously also called an instrument
Force	A causal relation devoid of responsibility - previously called noninstigative cause
Vehicle	Something that conveys a patient or moves along with it - previously called noninstigative cause
Patient	Who or what is directly affected by an action or what is in a particular state - includes previous patient, experiencer and essive roles
Benefactive	Someone or something on whom an action has a secondary effect, good or bad - previously also called benefactive
Latter	Where the patient is headed or where it ends up - includes previous goal and factitive roles
Former	Where the patient begins a motion - previously called source and material
Range	Path or area traversed, a static location, or the limitation of a process to a specified field or object - previously also called range

It is out of the scope of this discussion to analyse these categories in depth. However, it is necessary to point out that these types of categories may pose problems for a linguistic analysis. As an example, it is possible to consider the following sentence: "the door smashed the boy's finger". It would be very difficult to classify the semantic role of 'door', taking into consideration the nine categories mentioned above.

In this work the author also considered sixteen rhetorical predicates (see page 287). Meyer(1984) considered much broader categories. In this work the author considered that five major relationships form the content structure: description, collection (grouping), causation, response (e.g. problem/solution, question and answer), and comparison. Her conception of structure in this work is much more sophisticated than the one presented above. In spite of this

change in concept, the notion of hierarchical organization of the content structure is maintained in the author's work.

Rhetorical Predicates	
<u>Paratactic Rhetorical Predicates</u>	
	<u>Description</u>
Alternative Response	Equal weighted alternative options Equal weighted Question(s) and Answer(s), Remark and Reply, or Problem(s) and Solution(s)
<u>Hypotactic Rhetorical Predicates</u>	
	<u>Description</u>
Attribution	Describes qualities of a proposition
Equivalent Specific	Restates same information in a different way Gives more specific information about something that was stated in a general manner
Explanation	Previously stated information is explained in a more abstract manner (for example: relating the information to a general principle) or more concrete manner
Evidence	Evidence through perception of a situation to support some idea
Analogy Manner	Analogy given to support an idea Way an event or event complex is performed (examples: slowly, carefully)
Adversative Setting time	Relates what did not happen to what did happen Gives time of setting in which information being related occurs (often in narratives)
Setting Location	Gives location of setting in which information being related occurs (used particularly in narratives)
Setting Trajectory	Gives changing background of location and time that occurs in a narrative when characters travel through various places
Representative Identification	Singles out one element of a group and makes it stand for the group as a whole
Replacement Identification	One thing standing for something else
Constituency Identification	Identifies a part in relation to some whole
<u>Neutral Rhetorical Predicates</u>	
	<u>Description</u>
Collection	List of elements related in some unspecified manner
Covariance	Relation often referred to as condition, result or purpose with an argument serving as the antecedent and the other as the consequent or result of the antecedent

1(B) Lunzer & Gardner (1984) describe ten types of textual organization:

(1) NARRATIVE (biography and fiction material)

Generic labels that cover most significant segments in a passage of this sort :

setting description(of individual)

goal character(of individual)

obstacle or problem options

event or action outcome

interpretation

(2) STRUCTURE OR MECHANISM(usually requires the support of illustration)

(a) STRUCTURE - a static configuration adapted to a function but is itself unmoved.

(b) MECHANISM - interacts with the outside world in the course of its operation(structure plus)

Generic labels : part function
 location mode of action(mechanism)
 appearance effect(mechanism)
 composition

(3) PROCESS

Phases in the production of something

Generic labels : phase action
 place mechanism
 initial state(of a product) by product
 final state

(4) PRINCIPLE

A generic explanatory rule, often in science, with examples of its application and implication.

Generic labels : statement application
 example(s) advantages how these are overcome
 evidence disadvantages

(5) THEORY

Statement of a theoretical problem and the consideration of alternative solution.

Generic labels : statement of problem example
 solution(number...) evidence
 objection

(6) PROBLEM- SOLUTION

Similar to theory save that the problem is an applied one and the solutions are alternative forms of action.

Generic labels : statement of problem example
 solution(number...) advantage
 objection disadvantage

(7) HISTORICAL SITUATION

Differs from problem-solution since problem-solution stresses actions to overcome a problem while situation is more concerned with the origin of the problem.

Generic labels : antecedent conditions circumstances)
 cause(s) of change problems
 effects action(s)
 outcome

(8) CLASSIFICATION

Usually found in the opening section of a book or chapter where the writer is trying to map out a field of study by drawing the readers attention to the most important variations, how these can be recognized and what their effects are. In this type of text more specific labels (related to the topic) tend to be better than the generic ones as the following generic labels : class
sub-class
criterion

(9) INSTRUCTION

Often recognisable by the use of imperative presents a series of ordered steps each consisting of an action that ends in a result. Generic labels : steps caution
action (additional) requirements
result

(10) THEME

If a writer has something worthwhile to say then what he/she writes will hang together. It will be coherent in some way and the above classification shows a number of different ways of achieving coherence. Each shows particular kind of information often arranged according to a characteristic structure.

Sometimes this coherence derives only from the fact that the writer decides to tell his/her readers several things about some common theme. Several points are made about a theme, each of them appropriate and all of them disparate. In empirical work, notion of weighting would be useful.

APPENDIX 2

CHAPTER 3: FURTHER COMMENTS

2(A) Vygotsky explains different levels of generality, existing in word meaning, in terms of a geographical metaphor, i.e. concepts are correlated to the notions on longitude and latitude. The longitudinal coordinate indicates the location of a concept between extremes of maximally generalized abstract conceptualization and the immediate sensory grasp of the object. The latitudinal coordinate indicates the objective reference of the concept, the locus within reality to which it applies. So, concepts such as 'plants' and 'animals' vary in latitude, but have the same longitude (Vygotsky 1962, p.162).

2(B) It has been observed in developmental studies that young children go through a phase in which they talk to themselves. Piaget has label this talk 'egocentric speech' and explained it in terms of lack of socialized thinking. The author conceives egocentric speech to be the genetic link between autistic thought and logic direct thought. Autistic thought is the original form of thought not adapted to external reality. Logic direct thought is a conscious and social thought, which develops influenced by the laws of logical and proper experience and can be communicated through language. To Piaget the line of development goes from the individual to the social. Egocentric speech indicates that the child thinks egocentrically, even when he/she is in society with others. Vygotsky predicts an inverse line of development. He proposes that the egocentric speech is a transitional stage in the evolution from vocal to inner speech. It emerges when a child transfers social collaborative forms of behaviour to inner-personal psychic functions.

2(C) The functionalism's thesis may be better understood if we take into consideration the work of Lee (1985). Lee discusses the convergent points between the work of Marx and Vygotsky. The functionalism's thesis is one of the points that the author discusses. As the author stresses, Marx's analysis of production involves showing that production and consumption cannot be defined separately. Marx points out that there are at least three levels of inter-functional connections between production and consumption. First, " production mediates consumption; it creates the later's material; without it consumption would lack object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products". (Marx(1973), quoted in Lee 1985 p.69).

Second, although production and consumption depend and presuppose each other, they are still independent as sub-systems: "Production creates the material, as external object, for consumption; consumption creates the need, as internal object, as aim, for production". (Marx 1973, quoted in Lee 1985 p.69). Finally, " each of them, apart from being immediately the other, and apart from mediating the other, in

addition to this creates the other in completing itself , and creates itself as the other. Consumption accomplishes the act of production only in completing the product as product by dissolving it, by consuming its independently material form, by raising the inclination developed in the first act of production, through the need for repetition, to its finished form; it is thus not only the concluding act in which the product becomes product, but also that in which the producer becomes the producer. On the other side, production produces consumption by creating the stimulus of consumption, the ability to consume, as a need. (Marx 1973, quoted in Lee 1985 p.69)

Lee points out that Vygotsky, also adopts a functional explanation to account for the interrelation existing between consciousness and all psychological states. Within Vygotsky analysis, consciousness is not an attribute of any particular state or process such as attention or memory, but rather an attribute of the way in which such states are organized and functionally related both to behaviour and each other. "Memory necessarily presupposes the activity of attention, perception and comprehension. Perception necessarily includes the function of attention, recognition or memory, and understanding". (Vygotsky 1965, quoted in Lee 1985 p. 70).

Vygotsky stand is a counter proposal to the atomistic study of psychological functions, which not only does not investigate consciousness, but also fails to see the very processes it studies depend upon the integrative characteristics of consciousness " In the old psychology the unchallengeable premise was combined with a set of tacit assumptions that nullified it for all practical purposes. It was taken for granted that the relation between two given functions never varied: that perception for example was always connected in an identical way with attention, memory with perception, thought with memory. As constants, these relationship could be, and were, factored out and ignored in the study of separate functions. Because the relationships remained in fact inconsequential, the development of consciousness was seen as determined by the autonomous development of single functions. Yet, all that is known about psychic development indicates that its very essence lies in the change of the inter-functional structure of consciousness. (Vygotsky 1962, quoted in Lee 1985 p. 70-71).

Similar to Marx's analysis of production and consumption, and Vygotsky's analysis of the relation between consciousness and psychological processes, the present research is understanding the reading act as made up of inter-functional connections.

APPENDIX 3

EXPLORATORY STUDY 1: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

3.1(A) Illustrative examples of interview effect on the interviewer

Comparing the interviews it was noticed that issues raised in one interview tend to be brought up in the following ones. For instance, reader(B) mentioned during his interview that his newspaper reading was affected by his trust in the source.

(B68) Well, if I already have some preliminary knowledge of that particular story and I find that the author is either giving only one side of the story or interpreting it in a narrow way, I am put off and end up disbelieving in everything he says.

(B93)(...) Of course, there are some newspapers that one can sort of think as belonging either to the left or the right direction. So you have some already preconceived ideas about where they want to go(...)

In the following interview, when the reader was discussing her reading of press material, the interviewer asked:

(i422) and how about types of newspaper.

Another example to illustrate this issue is the discussion about letter reading. Both readers A and B point out that they associate letter reading with a more personal type of interaction.

(A124) I read through them(letters) quickly because it is as though you are hearing the person speaking.

(B329) Well a personal letter is usually different because you know the persons who have written the letter. So everything that is said is loaded with meaning(...) When I read a letter it is like chatting with somebody(...)

Reader(B) compares how this interaction differs from the way he relates with academic material written to a broader audience.

In interviewing reader(D) the following question was raised :

(i127) Considering the five types of texts that you have mentioned, do you think you could establish a difference between the way you interact with them? Does the type of text affect the way you interact with the text?

3.1(B) The example below illustrates questions that raised more than one issue:

Q You gave me two situations in which you read a newspaper, one of them you already have questions in mind, right? The second situation is, you bump into an article that you were not expecting and you decide to read it. Do you think that in this situation, when you already have a purpose, some questions in mind, and the other situation in which the article is just there... do you think that there is any difference in the way you read them?

This specific question was coded in table 4.1 as:

- . introducing a topic by comparison
- . reading strategy/type of material/newspapers
- . reading strategy /purpose

3.1(C) Illustrative examples of questions shown in table 4.1 and types of response elicited

(1) Choice of material to read.

Q : First, focussing on reading to study, how do you usually choose a paper to study - imagining that you are looking for papers.

R : (A12) Well, it is often that some papers that have been indicated to me or a name, a reference from another paper or just a title, a clue from the title. I am looking at clumsiness and if I have clumsiness in the title or motor problem or else the name of the author and I know that that particular person has previously worked in that.

(2) Reading strategy

2.1 Type of material

(a) Personal letter

Q : When you read a letter... which is the way you read letters, is it different?

R : (A124) Well, I tend to read them quite fast and re-read them rather than re-reading sections. I read through them quickly because it is as though you were hearing the person speaking.

(b) Academic material

Q : When you study a literary criticism book what type of strategy do you use? Is it a similar strategy or is it different?

R : (B46) I read and underline the main points and I try to write on the left key words so that when I go through the book I can find the information easier and after I finish if I have time, I don't read it again, but I take some notes based on what I have underlined and on the key words that I have written on the left.

(c) Press material

Q : When you read a newspaper, do you adopt any specific strategy that you can identify?

R : (B23) Yes, basically when I pick up a newspaper I have some new events in mind, something. I don't know, either politics or whatever...which I need more clear guidance(...). So I pick up the newspaper and try to look for them. But if in the process I bump into something that I am also interested(...), I kind of have a quick stop at it, look at it for a moment and see if it is worthy of reading more. Usually after reading a short title and three first lines, I make up my mind whether I am still interested in it or not.

(d) Literary work

Q : In which way is your reading different when you read a short story like the one you have just mentioned or when you read a text on literary criticism.

R : (C570) The expectations are different. I don't suppose that a book on literary criticism will use metaphors or these sort of literary devices.

Q : You have mentioned, for instance that you have read many chapters of a novel, how do you read novels?

R : (D210) I don't see much difference, only in the sense that perhaps it is the same as with the letter. I read it more relaxed and I stop sometimes and this stop could be in the middle of the chapter instead of reading all the way through the next chapter. Because it is a novel I start at the beginning and finish it at the end because I want to know the end most of the time.

(e) Instruction manual

Q : You've mentioned that you read a computer manual and an article.

R : (A154) It was very specific. I needed to find out something specific about the computer.

Q : In some ways it is reading to study. Are there are any similarities between this reading and your reading about clumsiness.

R : (A159) No, I think it is different, because I don't question what the computer manual says because I take it as being correct. Whereas when I am reading an article I don't take it as correct because this area of research is very new and I don't think that people really know it yet. So, in that case, that is why I question it and go back and think more. But a computer manual I take it as gospel and I re-read it to make sure I have got it right, and not to question it. I think about it, but just to make sure I really understood it.

(f) Leaflets

Q : Try to think when you approach a leaflet, which is a different type of written material, what is the strategy that you use? Is your strategy similar to the magazine reading?

R : (D148) It is more like approaching the magazine than the academic literature.

Q : This means to read the initial sentences to see if you are really interested...

R : (D153) Yes, Yes, otherwise I just skip through and turn the leaflet around to see what is in the back of it.

2.2 Purpose for reading

Q : Do you really think that there is any difference in your reading to study when you are reading in your own specific area or when you are reading a text from a different area? Did you have this experience before?

R : (A174) Probably yes, I tend to question and therefore to reflect more and re-read articles that are in my own area, whereas an article in another area which I don't know much about, I often don't question so much because I don't know so much about them, perhaps... I sort of take them to be true.

Q : Do you think that this 'fight back' (reaction to the text) is due to the fact that you are analysing the text and are aware of what the author is actually doing, or is it something you do when you read. Like, if you were reading this book just for entertainment would you do the same?

R : (C528) No, I don't think so because I know there is a sort of aprioristic knowledge. I know the author is playing tricks on the reader, and I don't want to be trapped by the author. So I have to be 'on guard' all the time what I don't want to do when I read for pleasure or when I read other writers.

Q : We are analysing two different types of text and basically one purpose : the purpose for studying. When you are studying a short story to know more about the author or to have concrete examples of

writing techniques or style, how do you proceed, how do you read the text?

R: (16) If it is a short story I usually read it first, just for reading, trying not to be conscious about it. Then I read it again and try to think about it. Sometimes there is a sort of theme that I have to look for, a question that I have to ask. If there is any specific question, then I have to think about it, how the text is written, how it is connected with other texts, if there is something different, if it raises another point that the author is making.

2.3 Inter-textual relations

Q : This type of reference to other texts or to previous knowledge, is this a type of strategy that you relate to study or is it a general strategy that you adopt when you read?

R : (A344) I think it happens more in the study work because you are trying to build up a general picture of an area and you are reading for that purpose - to build up your knowledge of a particular area. So you constantly make links. But it also happens in reading other texts(...) I was reading "Out of Africa" last week, there might be a quote or something that just reminds you of something else or you think you could apply to something else. I would say that it is a cross reference in that way(...) But I don't think in that type of reading I am trying to make the cross refence.

2.4 Trust in source

Q : In what way does the type of newspaper affect your reading?

R : (C431) Some magazines and newspapers are silly, they don't have the information I am looking for or their views do not correspond to mine. So I do a vertical reading, pass the eyes. I think the amount of time I spend has to do with my interest. I read more carefully.

(3) Purpose for reading

Q : Why do you think you read newspapers?

R : (D129) Simply to know what is going on in the world and to keep in touch with all the different things that go on.

(4) Subjective factors

4.1 Personal interest

Q : Do you have this interest previous to reading or is it something you find while you are reading?

R : (A254) It is usually, I think, while I am reading that I realise that there are some parts of the article that interest me and others that I don't bother to read very well.

4.2 Involvement with text

Q : Considering the five different types of text that you have mentioned, do you think that you could establish a difference between your interaction with them? Does the type of text affect the way you interact with the text?

R : (D433) Yes, I think... like in the personal letter, the interaction is different than reading an academic article. In a personal letter you get more emotionally involved - I would like to say - while in an academic text you look at it more from a distance. I think it is an interaction but you feel more at a distance... So I am sure that you interact with the text in a different way.

4.3 Background knowledge

Q : When you do this type of questioning, do you think that this is due to your interest in certain issues or is it because you have more knowledge about them?

R : (A189) I think it is both. Yes, probably because you've got more knowledge if something is said, you might remember another article that contradicts it. So you would probably read it again to make sure you have got it right. Whereas, if I am reading about something I didn't know, something physiological or something I am reading because I don't know any alternative theory, I just read it because I have no other article to compare with it.

(5) author's intention/text structure

Q : When you read to study do you search for the author's intention or for some specific problems that you have in mind? To what extent does the author's intention matter when you are reading to study?

R : (B432) When sometimes you have a lot of work, if you want to understand more about the reasons of that particular work, then I think it is useful to check, to try to find out about the author's intention.

Q : When you are reading in general or studying, to what extent do you consider the author's intention?

R : (D360) Yes, I do, But I think that it comes from experience and once you have read ten articles of the same author you know how he thinks about it, why he does this kind of research, why he writes this review, and you keep that in the back of your mind and you

start reading and combining the information you already knew from this man or from this group of researchers.

(6) Selective focus

Q : You have mentioned here notetaking. This type of strategy implies certain selection. You don't copy the text, you get some information. I am trying to know if you can give me any type of information about what makes some pieces of information more important.

R : (A298) What, like the ones I am noting down for example?

Q : Yes, because I am pre-supposing that you note down just what you think is more relevant in the text.

R : (A302) Well, I could be noting down everything from a particular part of the text. I will copy down, I will take the key word or something that refers to it, but I don't really know how I decide. I mean, I know, I can't really explain.

Q : When you underline, you are using a criteria of importance. What are the clues or what are the elements you look for. How do you know that some information is more relevant, what is the criterion you have?

R : (B381) Let's put it this way. If for example, I am working as an advisor for a school to help children with some specific needs, or a kind of handicap then I pick up a book(...) while reading the relevant book I should pick up the relevant chapter. And when I am reading this chapter I will have in mind, for example, a certain child, some category of needs that I am dealing, for example, during that particular period. Although I have interest in knowing about the chapter, I would tend to try to remember the specific information which is relevant to my experience during that certain period.

Q : (...) if you make an introspective analysis, what do you think guides you to choose certain information units as important in one text or in the other text? (short story/literary criticism)... Once you have underlined or taken notes you have selected some information as essential. What are the criteria that you have to determine what is essential?

R : (C316) You have something in mind that you are looking for, so I am not reading to increase my knowledge on literature. I have some questions to answer, so I underline or try to pay more attention to this sort of thing that is related to what is required.

Q : To take notes you must have a criterion of importance, right? What is the criterion that you use? How do you know that a certain information is important?

R : (D269) I think it depends on what I am looking for at that moment, in the sense that I think I could read a chapter twice and if I had something different in mind like...like if I would read it for the first time and it was my first month here, it would be more general information and I would take notes of it. But if I had to re-use the book two months later, when I am more advanced in my studies, perhaps I would look for other things and look for them more closely instead of taking a general view of it.

(7) Interview strategies

7.1 Checking the content of a response

R : (B280) In the newspaper you see what is happening(...) a set of information about a certain topic, not necessarily verified. The other one(academic material) is an information that is being built up through certain processes of verification.

Q : So, one is more true than the other, is that what you are trying to say?

7.2 Asking for expansion or further clarification

Q : When you say you don't go through, what do you mean?

Q : Would this be different from the first reading of an academic article?

7.3 Re-phrasing questions or clarifying question's aims

Q : I am not talking now, I am not interested now in the choice of texts that you make. What I am interested in is the choice of information within a text.

7.4 Introducing a topic for discussion

Q : Why do you read newspapers?

3.2 EXPLORATORY STUDY II: QUESTIONNAIRE

3.2(A) Questionnaire that guided the second exploratory study

SECTION A - WARMING UP.

I am doing a research on reading and I would like to analyse reading not just from a theoretical perspective, but also from the readers perspective. The reading perspective is better understood if I know something about your reading experience.

1. Can you tell me something about you as a reader?
 - a. Before you came to university, how good a reader do you think you were?
 - b. How about the university years? Has your reading changed during the university years?
 - c. Do you think that your reading has changed during the last year?
 - d. How do you think that your university experience has changed you as a reader?
2. Do you read a lot?
3. What type of material do you usually read?

SECTION B - COMPARISON BETWEEN DIFFERENT READING MATERIAL.

I am particularly interested in selections that people make while reading. People read different texts with different purposes, in different ways. My main interest is to know the way they approach texts and select the most important information.

I have asked you to write down a diary to keep track of your daily reading, because I think it is going to be easier for you to answer my questions bearing in mind some concrete examples of reading. From the texts that you have read this week, select three that you consider very different ones.

(Comparison between texts)

1. Why did you read text (a) ?
 - (b) ?
 - (c) ?

Now let's take two of them. You choose.

2. What are the similarities and differences between them as texts?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the way you read them?

I am particularly interested in knowing:

- a. how you approached them.
- b. if you adopted any specific strategy while reading them.
- c. what your aims were for reading these texts.
- d. what you were looking for when you read them.

Now I would like you to make similar comparisons between one of these texts and the third one you have mentioned.

(questions 3 and 4 as questions 1 and 2)

Now that you have described the three texts I would like to move on to a more detailed analysis of each one of them.

(text A)5. Can you tell me again why you read it, and how you approached reading?

Points to consider:

- a. what did you find easy or difficult?
 - b. what have you attended most and why?
 - c. what were you looking for?
 - d. what did you feel about it? Was it new to you?
6. Let's make a similar analysis of text B. (Questions as 5)
7. Considering now text C. (Questions as 5)

SECTION C READING TO STUDY

I would like to focus our discussion on reading for study. When talking to other people they (also) mentioned strategies such as underlining or note taking. Do you use any of these strategies?

8. I would like to know how you know that you should underline/take notes of certain information? What makes you choose this information?
9. Do you think that there is anything about the text itself that leads you to choose this information?
10. Did you think about the authors when you were reading this text? Why?
11. How do you identify the authors intention in the text?
12. Thinking about the specific reading situation that we are discussing, When you read this text and underlined/took notes what affected most your selection of information:
 - (a) was it the text itself?
 - (b) your purpose for reading it?
 - (c) your perception of the author's intention?
 - (d) your personal interest?
13. Grading the four criteria you would consider that ___(x)___affected most your process of underlining/ note taking. Which would you consider the second?
14. And between __ (y) __ and __ (z) __ which would be the least important criteria to consider while you were underlining/note taking?
15. Do you think that the selection that you have made of certain information can be affected by the knowledge that you have in your specific area of study?
16. Do you consider yourself a critical reader?

17. How would you define a critical reader, i. e. what is important to be a critical reader?

3.2(B) Second version of the same questionnaire (re-tested with subject H)

In this second version the order of the initial questions in section B was altered to: (5), (6), (7), followed by questions (2), (3), (4). Question 1 was included in questions (2), (3), (4). After section C another set of questions was added:

In this particular study situation your main criterion was __ (x) __ and your least important criterion was __ (y) __. Now think about other possible situations

18. When would you keep in mind the author's intention to select the information from a text?

19. When would the way the text is organized affect your selection of information?

20. Could you give me an example of a situation in which your selection is guided by your personal interest?

21. Do you think that the selection that you make of certain information in texts can be affected by the knowledge that you have in the specific area of study? In what way?

APPENDIX 4

MAIN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE AND INSTRUCTIONS

4 (A) QUESTIONNAIRE THAT GUIDED THE FINAL DATA COLLECTION

SECTION I

1 What made you choose the information you have selected in the text? Take your time to answer this question as fully as possible. You may have different reasons for your choices, and your personal reasons will be respected. The research is exploratory, not critical.

Now, I would like to explore different factors which may or may not have affected your selection of information in the text. Answer "yes" or "no" as applicable. Do not feel that these factors should have affected your selection in this specific reading situation.

2 (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to text structure then

Q : In the previous question You said "xxx". This has to do with the structure of the text. Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which the text structure led you to choose any of the information. If so, please describe it.

(B) If answer to question (1) does not make reference to text structure then

Q : When you were reading this text, did you pay attention to the way the content was organized in the text?

If answer is "yes" then

Q : (B') To which aspects did you pay the greatest attention?

(B'') Do you think the way the text was organized lead you to choose the information? If so, how?

2' There are many possible ways in which the content of the text may be organized. For instance:

a. you may have a hierarchy of information, that is, some is central and other information is developed from the central.

b. or you may have certain information within the text to which the rest of the content of text refers and relates.

c. or text may be organized in sections with a specific type of topic being discussed in each section.

Q : Were you aware of any of these aspects of text organization when you read this text?

If answer is "yes" then

Q: Do you think that this has affected the way you have selected information from this text? If so, how?

2'' In your area of study, is this the typical way of structuring text?

(A) If the answer is "yes" then

Q : Are there other ways of organising the content of the text in a different fashion to this one?

(A') How do these other types of text structure influence your selection of information?

(B) If the answer is "no" then

Q: What would be a typical text structure in your area?

(B') Did the fact that this is an atypical structure affect your selection in any way? If so how?

(b) And how is this different from your usual selection practices with a typical text?

3 (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to the purpose for the study of the text then

Q: In the previous question you said xxx. This has to do with your purpose for the study of the text. Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which your purpose led you to choose any of the information? If so, please describe it.

(B) if answer to question (1) does not make reference to the purpose for the study of the text then

Q: Can you recall your purpose for the study of this text - for example: for an exam, class assignment, research paper ...?

B' Did your purpose affect the way in which you have selected information from this text?

if "yes":

How?

b' You have studied this text for xxx. If you were to study this text to fulfill any other purpose (exam, class assignment, research, etc) would this have affected the way you selected information from this text?

If "yes";

How?

3' (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to knowledge about the author's stand point or his area of interest then

Q: In the previous question you said "xxx". This has to do with the knowledge you had about the author's stand point/area of interest. Is anything else you would like to say about the way in which your knowledge about the author's point of view led you to choose any of the information? If so please describe it.

(B) If answer to question (1) does not make reference to knowledge about the author's stand point or area of interest then

Q: Is this text written by one single author or several authors?

Was it possible for you to associate the author(s) with a certain area of knowledge or school of thought?

(B') If the answer is **"yes"** then

Q : Do you think that your knowledge about the author's area of interest/stand point has influenced your selection of information?

If **"yes"**:

How?

b' If you were not able to associate the author with a certain stand point, would this have affected the way in which you selected information from the text?

If **"yes"**:

How?

(B'') If the answer is **"no"** then

Q : Do you think that your lack of knowlege about the author's stand point affected your selection of information in any way?

If **"yes"**:

How?

b'' If you were able to associate the author with a certain stand point, would this have affected the way in which you selected information from this text?

If **"yes"**:

How?

3" (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to approach to reading associated with a certain category of text then:

Q: In the previous question you said xxx. This has to do with the way you approach xxx texts. Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which your approach to xxx texts led you to choose any of the information? If so, please describe it.

(B) If answer to question (1) does not make reference to approach to reading associated with a certain category of text then:

Q: When you read this text did you associate it with a certain category of text (for example, text book material, academic journal, academic report, press material, fiction, etc...)?

If "yes" then:

(B') Was the way you read this text similar to the way you normally read xxx texts?

If "yes" then:

(B'') How did the way in which you read this text affect your selection of information from the text ?

If "no" then:

(b') Which is the way you normally approach this type of text ?

(b'') Did the fact that you approached this text in a different way than you normally do affect your selection of information in any way?

4 (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to background knowledge then:

Q: In the previous question you said xxx. This has to do with the background that you had on the content of the text. Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which your previous knowledge of the content of the text led you to choose any of the information? If so, please describe it.

(B) If answer to question (1) does not make reference to background knowledge then

Q: Did you have some knowledge of the issues dealt with in this text before or were they relatively new to you?

If "yes", i. e. the subject had previous knowledge, then:

B' Did the previous knowledge or background that you had on the content of the text affect the way in which you have selected information from this text?

b' In situations where you have little information about the background to the content of the text, how does this affect the way in which you select information from the text?

If "no", i. e. the subject had little knowledge, then:

B" Did the fact that you had little information about the background to the content of the text affect the way in which you selected information from this text?

b" In situations where you know a lot about the background to the content of the text, how does this affect the way in which you select information from this text?

4' (A) If answer to question (1) makes reference to personal interest then:

Q: In the previous question you said xxx. This has to do with your personal interest in the content of the text. Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which your personal interest led you to choose any of the information? If so, please describe it.

(B) If answer to question (1) does not make reference to personal interest then

Q: Did you find this text of personal interest to you or not?

if "yes" then:

B' Did your personal interest in the text affect your selection of information from this text?

b' In situations where you find the text of little personal interest, how does this affect the way in which you select information from the text?

if "no" then:

B" Did your lack of personal interest affect the way in which you selected information from the text?

b" In situations where you find the text of personal interest, how does this affect the way in which you select information from the text?

5 In the initial question you said that your selection was affected by xxx. I would like to go back to this issue to be sure that we completely covered it. (Back to initial question, item (B))

6 (A) You read this text with the purpose of a(n) xxx in mind. Can you tell me what type of information you expected to select?

(A') Why did you expect to select this type of information when reading this text with this reading purpose in mind?

(B) The text you read was an xxx type of text and the area of interest of the author was xxx. Can you tell me what type of information you expected to select in a(n) xxx type of text written within the xxx area of interest?

(B') Why did you expect to select this type of information when reading this specific type of text?

7 When you read this text and you selected the information, consider the factors that affected your selection the most. Please scale them according to order of importance :

- (a) The way the text was structured?
- (b) Your purpose for reading this text?
- (c) Your knowledge of the author's stand point?
- (d) Your personal interest in the subject matter of the text?
- (e) The previous knowledge or background that you had on the content of the text?

SECTION II

We have explored your reading in this specific study situation. Now I would like to go on and explore your reading in other study situations in which you might have behaved differently. I would like you to give me examples of these situations. The written record that you have brought may help you to think about other possible study situations.

In the previous situation your main criterion for selection of information was "xxx" and your least important criterion was "yyy".

8 Could you give me an example of a reading situation in which your knowledge of an author's school of thought, or stand point

(1) has affected your selection of information from a text.

If a situation is given then:

(a) Why do you think that in this situation your knowledge of the author 's stand point is relevant to your selection of information from the text?

(b) How do you think it would affect your section of information?

(2) has not affected your selection of information from a text.

If a situation is give then

Q: Why do you think the author's stand point is irrelevant to your selection of information from the text in this situation?

8' Could you give me an example of a reading situation in which the way the text is structured

(1) affects your selection of information from a text.

If a situation is given then:

(a) Why do you think that in this situation the way the text is structured affects your selection of information from the text?

(b) How do you think it would affect it?

(2) is not important in your selection of information from a text.

If a situation is given then:

Q: Why do you think that text structure is irrelevant to your selection of information in this specific situation?

8" Could you give me an example of a reading situation in which

(1) your selection is affected mainly by your personal interest in the subject matter of the text?

If a situation is given then:

(a) Why do you think that in this situation your personal interest affects your selection of information from the text?

(b) How do you think it would affect it?

(2) your personal interest is of a secondary nature, i. e. situations in which your personal interest is not the main criterion for selection of information from the text?

If a situation is given then:

Why do you think that your personal interest is not so essential for the selection of information from text in this specific situation?

4 (B) CHART OF THE QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

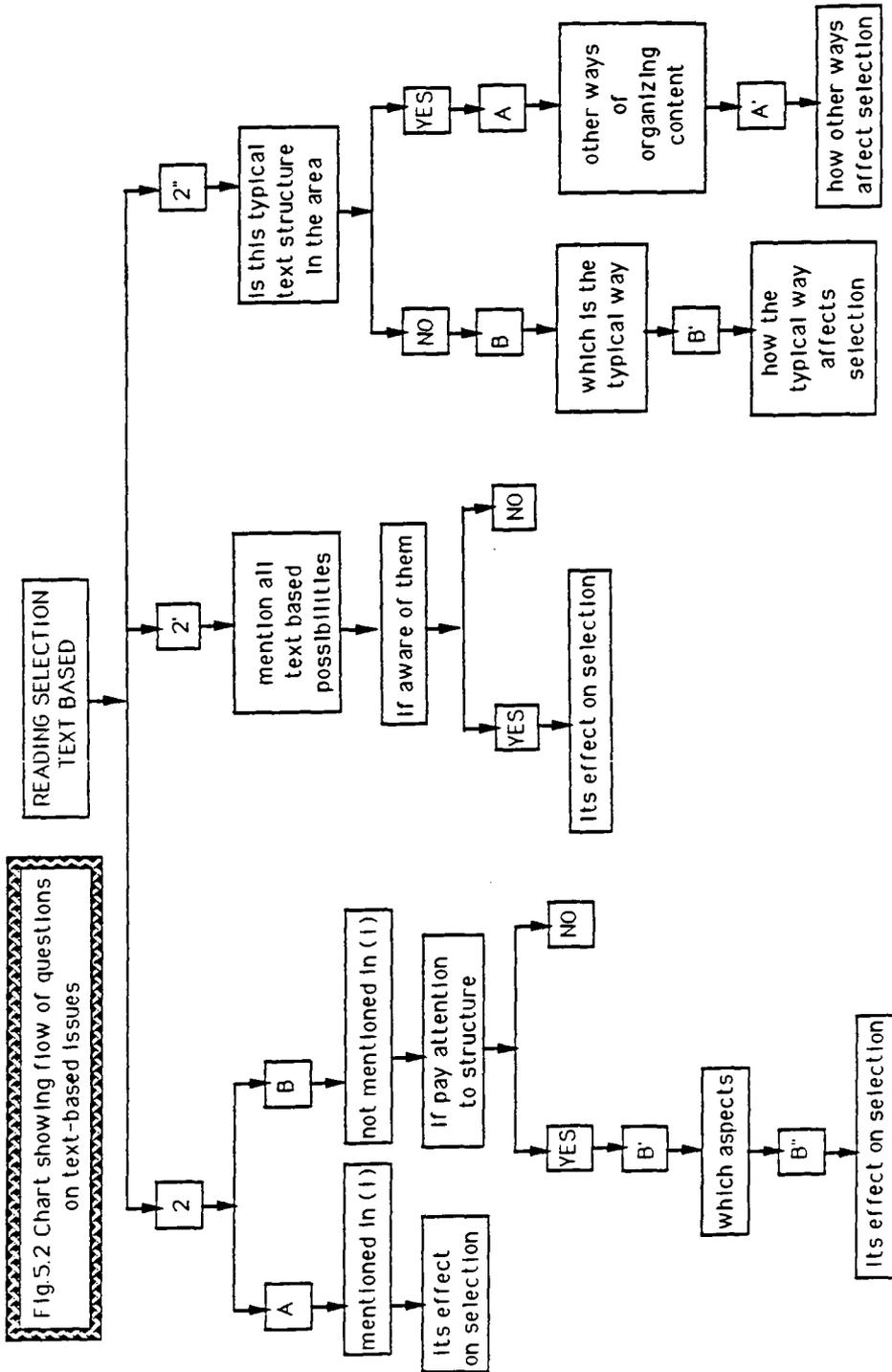


Fig 5.3 Chart showing flow of questions on social-based issues

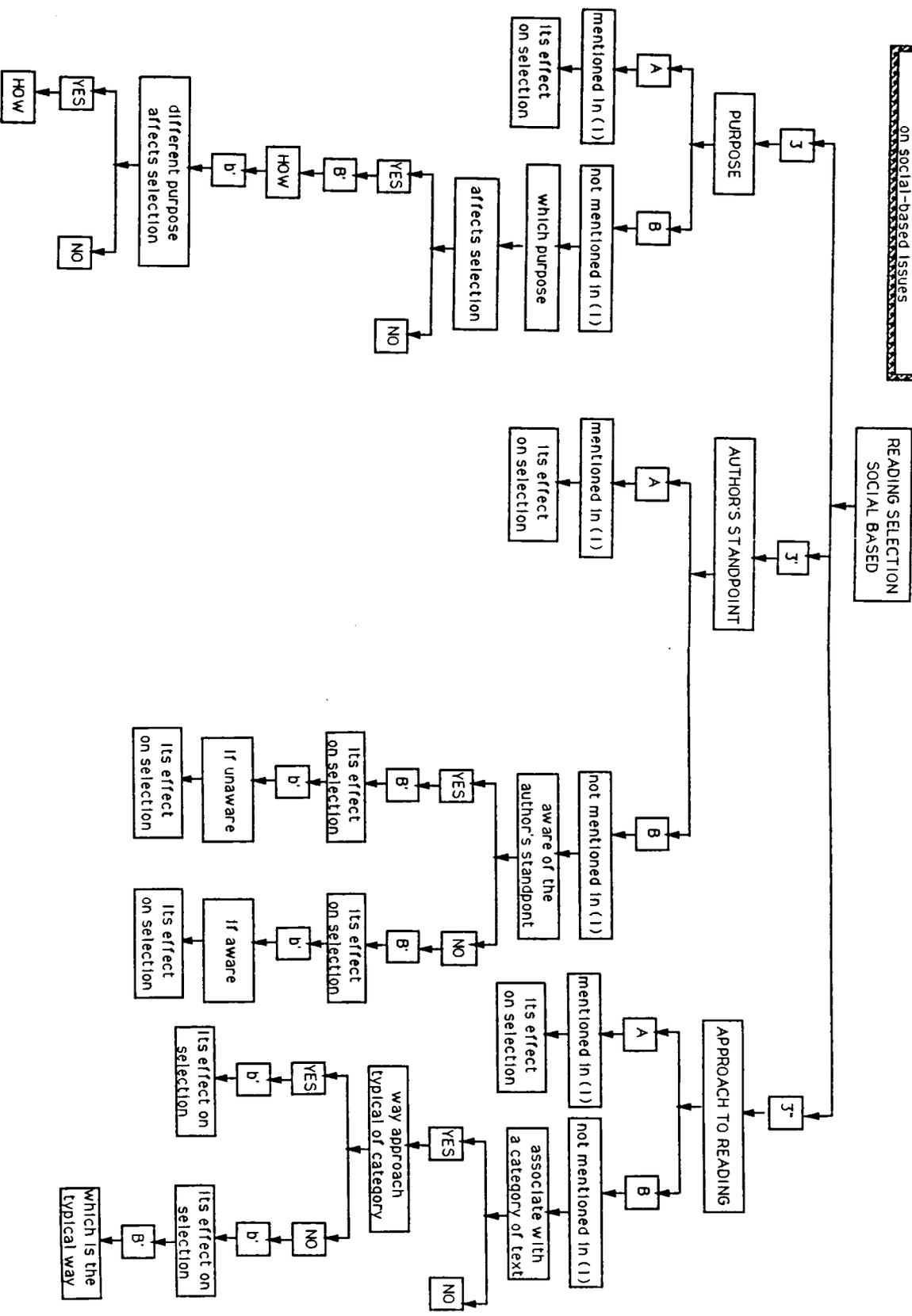


Fig. 5.4 Chart showing flow of questions on reader-based issues

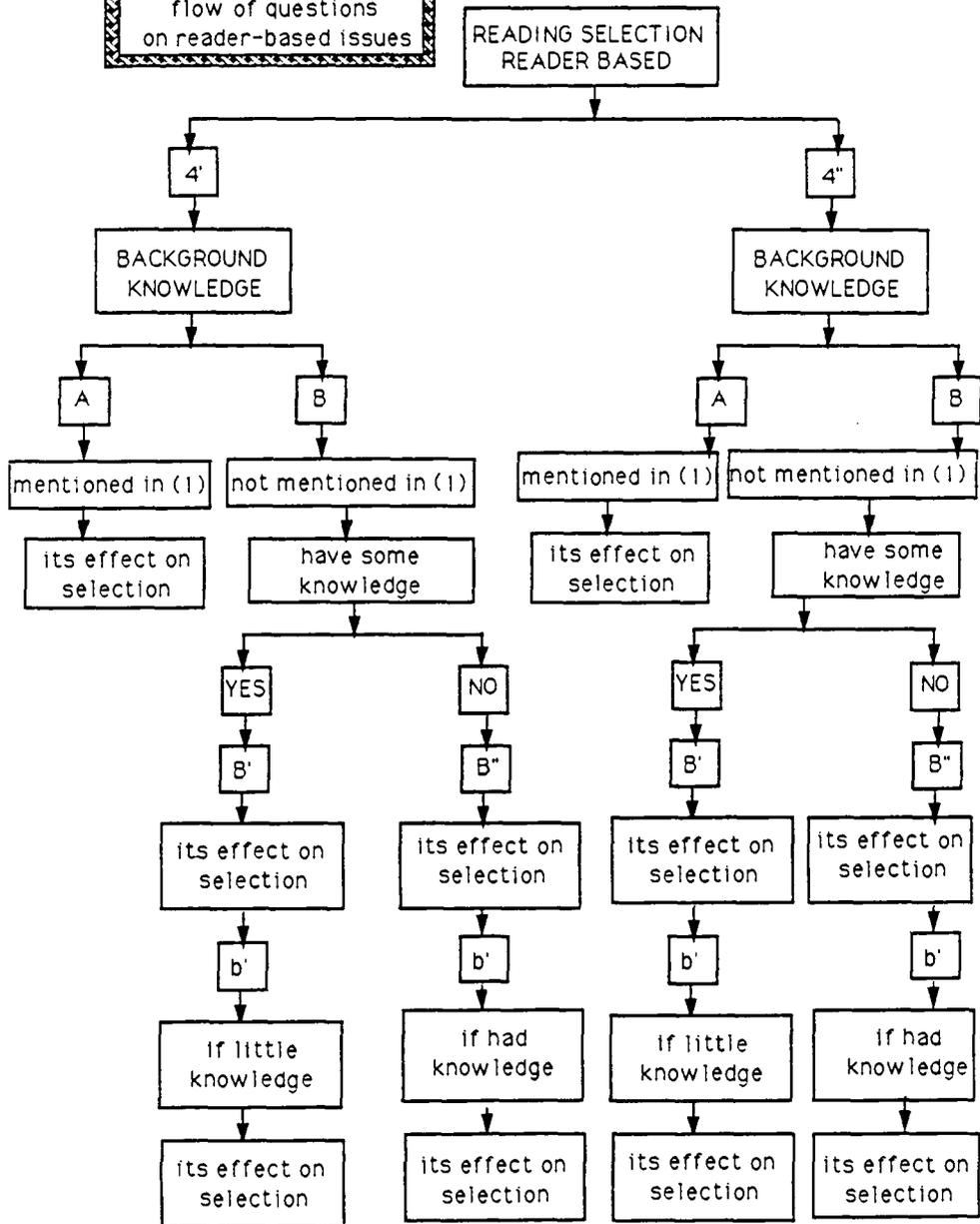


Fig. 5.5 Chart showing flow of questions on discursive history

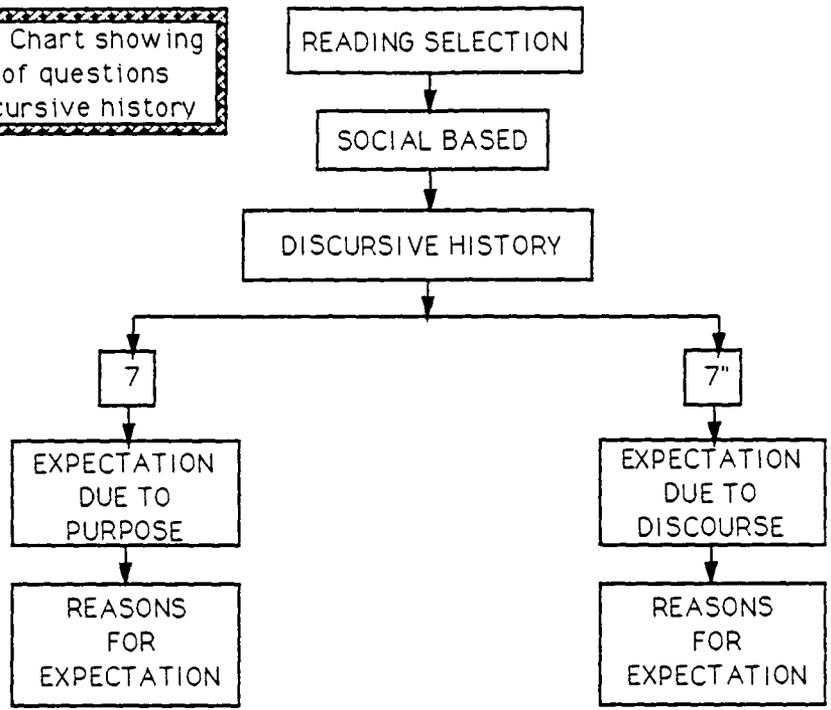
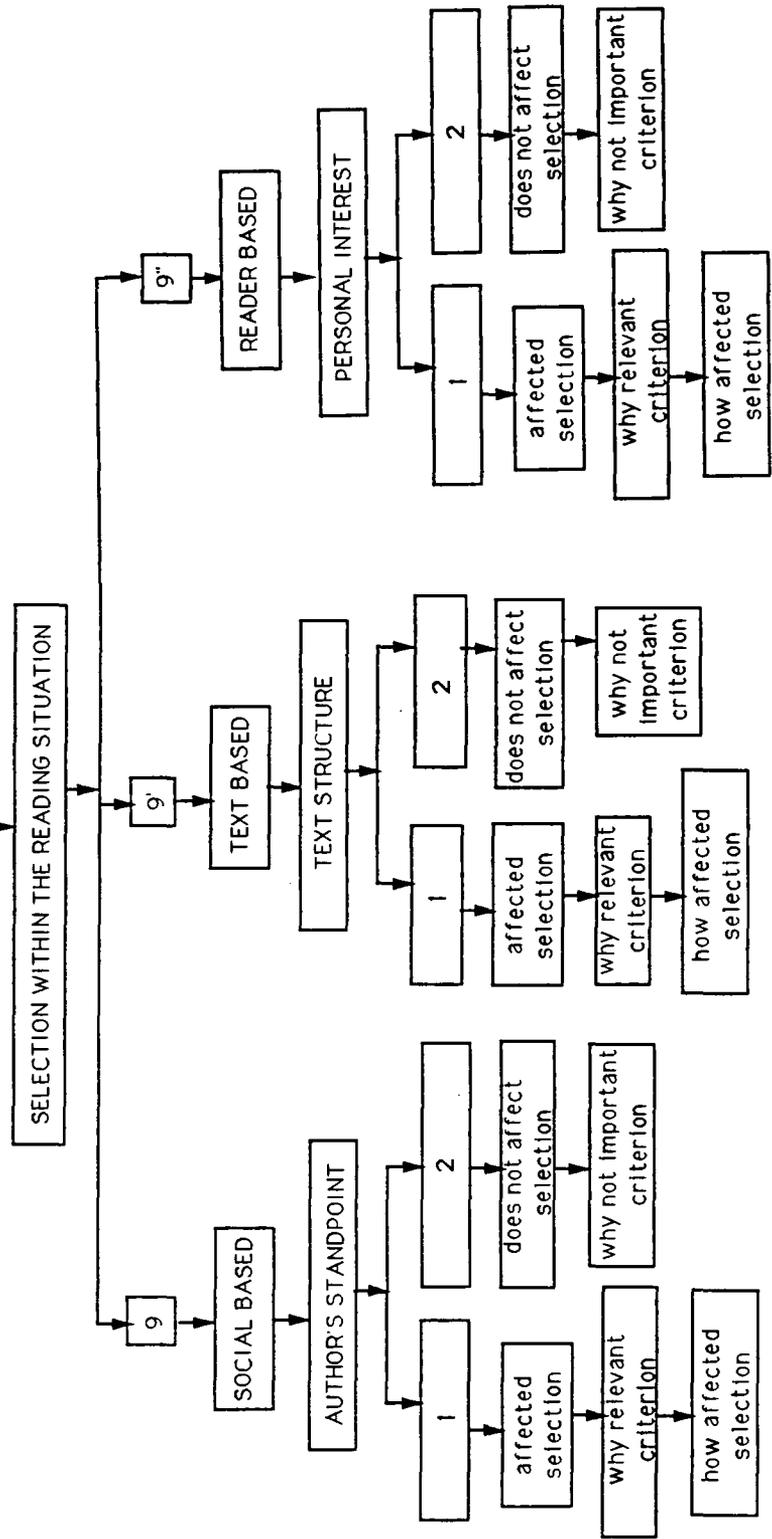


Fig. 5.6 Chart showing flow of questions on situations of reading



4 (C) INITIAL INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO THE READERS

GENERAL INSTRUCTION.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview, which forms a part of a research conducted to study reading. The aim of this research is to investigate how readers select relevant information from a text. Let me give you some background as to why this empirical investigation is being conducted. In the present research, selection of informations from texts has already been discussed from a theoretical point of view, which presents the scholars' interpretations of readers performance on experimental reading tasks. It was found relevant to include in such a discussion the reader's interpretation of their regular reading practices. Two set of interviews have already been conducted and these interviews focussed on the selection of information in reading in general. This specific interview is aimed at investigating reading in situations of study.

In order to participate in the interview the reader is asked to keep a written record of the study material that she/he has read over the period of one week. This record should contain the title and type of text/book, and purpose for reading the text/book. For example:

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>TYPE OF TEXT</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>
. Study of Optics	book	exam
. Frequency dependent loss in semi-conductors	journal article	research
Micro waves assignement	chapter of a book	class

To the interview please bring this written record and also any one text (of your choice from your written record) with information selected within the text, highlighted either by underlining, by

taking notes, etc.... It is essential that you bring this text along with the selected information underlined or with notes, as the questions of the interview are based on them. If possible, it would also be very helpful if you could bring along some of the texts mentioned in your written record.

The interview will last about one hour and it will be tape-recorded.

4 (D) INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO READERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW INSTRUCTION

You have the general idea of exactly what I intend to investigate in this interview. I have chosen for this study readers who already have a university degree, mainly because they are proficient readers and have had enough study experience to be able to talk about their own reading practices.

To refresh your memory, I am interested in knowing how and why readers select information from a text for study purposes.

I have asked you to bring a specific text with information selected either by underlining or taking notes, mainly because it is easier to answer the questions of the interview if you have a specific example to refer to constantly. In the second section of the interview - which is much more general - your written diary may fulfill the same purpose.

APPENDIX 5

CRITERIA FOR DATA ANALYSIS

To classify the answers the following criteria were considered :

(1) text-based - an answer should be considered text-based if it makes reference to the way the information is organized in the text. One of the following ideas must be mentioned in a text-based answer:

- . logical organization of the text, i. e. organization of the text marked by syntactic and semantic rules.
- . information that reappears in the text, i. e. information to which most of the content of the text tends to relate or refer to.
- . patterned way of presenting information such as: definition/specification/examples - theorem/proof.
- . text layout - division of the text in section dealing with specific types of topic

(2) reader-based- an answer should be considered reader-based if it makes reference to subjective factors. One of the following factors must be mentioned:

- . reader's previous background knowledge related to the content of the text
- . motivational issues such as: interest, relation to personal life, like/dislike.

(3) social-based - an answer should be considered social-based if it makes reference to knowledge acquired socially. One of the following factors may be mentioned:

- . selection based upon a purpose of reading established by a specific situation that occurs in a specific social institution.
- . selection based on the values and meanings of the social institution to which the reading act relates, such as school, church, work place, etc.
- . selection based on the type of social roles expected in specific situations that occur within social institutions. For instance, within the school institution, the social roles expected in situations such as: exams, seminars, essay papers, class assignment.
- . selection based on an agreed discipline consensus about meaning and values that are relevant to specific types of texts. For example:
 - a. what is important for a text written within a specific subject matter, such as medicine, psychology, etc.

b. what is relevant for a text that is associated with a specific school of thought that exists within a subject area. For instance, within the area of psychology, texts that are associated with one of the existing theoretical approaches, such as Piagetian, Vygotskian, etc.

. selection based on types of reading approaches associated with specific types of texts related to social practices. For instance, types of reading approach associated with academic material, press material, literary material, etc.

. selection based on the reader's personal expectancy of what particular reading situation emphasizes or allows.

. selection based on the reader's personal expectancy of what a particular types of texts emphasize or allow.

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