

A Critical Analysis of Reading Comprehension Difficulties Among Children with Learning Disabilities of Telangana State in India

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Abstract - English holds a pre-eminent position in academics. More and more English schools are set up with each passing day because parents want their children to gain proficiency in the language, not only for academic enhancement but also for social elevation. The researcher feels that living without the knowledge of English is depriving oneself of the opportunities the language brings with it. Some eminent Indians, during the colonial times, realized the importance of English and appealed to the British to impart education in English. The present government has realized the importance of skilling program for the youth and English language acquisition is a vital component of the program. The article tries to focus on the difficulties faced by students in Reading Comprehension while trying to learn this language, as the local schools are dominated by the regional language in Telangana state. Though the teachers are well aware of the importance of English in their students' future, they are bound by the realities of the present. The place of English in the curriculum, time allotted for teaching it, availability of other teaching resources, the students background, the teachers' own limitations – all these play a restraining role. The present study tries to explore different teaching methodologies to make our students learn to comprehend English language and overcome the difficulties a student faces in the reading of English texts.

Index Terms – English, Reading, Comprehension etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a very important part of knowledge development. The more one reads the better his quality in the field of education becomes.

In most schools literature is taught and studied for its own sake. The study of literature enhances one's imaginative power and gives an expression to his experiences thereby increasing his knowledge. If we have to relate to something and convey it, we must have the knowledge of the content and extensive reading is a perennial source of knowledge of every kind. It gives us words to express ourselves. The vocabulary we could acquire through reading is enormous. It helps us in improving our sentence construction, our imaginative caliber and flawless expression of it

People read for varied purposes; for fun, for entertainment or for enrichment. One may also read for examination. When doing the first three, we apply the extensive reading skills while for examination we apply our intensive reading skills. But to practice either we require sufficient knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures and knowledge of punctuation rules. As students go to higher classes, reading of a text should be taught with a deeper insight. The students should be in a position to access the meaning in the context for variety of purposes. The researcher feels that as one develops in age and maturity, they ought to read materials of greater complexity and depth. Similarly, with good literary works one can visualize and interpret their thoughts on the line of English. The greatest setback among the vernacular students is the chronological arrangement of thoughts in English and of verbally expressing them.

At all stages, a range of reading on different subjects and for various purposes is available. A good school will display it in their classroom or in the library. Folios of reading are generally well maintained and

good standard of presentations are at reach. Teachers must stand as the main guide in giving the right book to read at the stage in which the student is. It has been noticed that, pupils who are regular readers, understand the background of a concept well. This aids in assimilating written work and retrieving information. It also assists the students to speak and discuss in suitable ways in variety of occasions.

The development of comprehension skill depends on certain factors. Knowledge of words can be improved through the means mentioned, if one has the interest and desire to do so. The meaning of a word can be understood from the context. A discerning reader deduces the import of the words from contextual clues and then the use of dictionary becomes optional. Secondly, the researcher feels, to enhance vocabulary, one need to play with words. From a single word, one can look up for synonyms followed by its antonyms. This could multiply one's knowledge of words. But the retention will happen when it is applied in context. So the skill of reading does not mean just to understand the printed words. It also means going beneath and beyond what is actually said; to glean meaning and information beyond what is stated and very importantly, being able to apply what is read in practical situations. Reading improves our personality, helps us to give impressive presentations, to make appropriate conversation which goes a long way in making one confident and smart.

Nowadays, Indian education system emphasizes the importance of speaking skill in English. However, the word 'communication' has a different concept amongst the teachers and textbook-writers who tend to focus primarily on writing activities. Actually, it is widely believed that the Indian students' reading, listening and speaking abilities have been declining drastically these days. It is true that acquiring writing skills are important for varied purposes. In reality, in Indian high schools, where students spend very limited time, priority should be given to developing reading skills.

2. READING: A REAL-LIFE REQUIREMENT

We are standing on the threshold of an India where enormous educational reforms are taking place every

day. We are rushing at a massive speed towards a tomorrow where English as a global language is ready to overtake all other languages. And unfortunately, no matter how good a student is in academics, if his/her competence and command over English, in all its forms of reading, writing, listening and speaking are not perfect, then he/she will be left far behind his/her friends and classmates who have perfected the language.

In our society where education is paramount, it is important to have students develop good reading skills. This can be achieved through objective teaching of the main skills needed for reading. Poor readers need to be taught these skills so that reading becomes easier and they are able to comprehend effectively. Instead of lowering our standards for these students and making them lose confidence, we need to raise the bar so that these students feel challenged in a more purposeful and directed manner.

3. READING COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension is the act of thinking and constructing meaning before, during and after reading by integrating the information presented by the author with the reader's background knowledge. Current definitions acknowledge that reading comprehension involves the construction of meaning from a text using a wide variety of skills and knowledge. Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from a text. The goal of all reading instruction is ultimately to help a reader comprehend the text. Reading comprehension involves at least two people: the reader and the writer. The process of comprehending involves decoding the writer's words and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer's message.

Comprehension involves more than 30 cognitive and metacognitive processes, including making connections to background knowledge, interpreting the text structure, questioning, clarifying meaning, comparing, contrasting, summarizing, imaging, setting purposes, using fix-up strategies, monitoring, cognizing, interpreting the authors' intentions, pausing to reflect, paraphrasing, analyzing, recognizing personal perspectives, identifying gists, changing

hypotheses, adding hypotheses, searching for meaning, creating themes, determining importance, drawing inferences, corroborating congenial and non-congenial data, contextualizing, engaging in retrospection, generating and using mnemonic devices, predicting, organizing and reorganizing a text.

Like listening, reading is a decoding process. It is a complex process involving several physical, intellectual and often emotional reactions. It involves the ability to recognize graphic symbols and their corresponding vocal sounds. It is impossible to learn to read without this ability which extends to groups of sounds called words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and chapters. There are three important components in the reading skill namely.

1. Recognition of the graphic symbols.
2. Correlation of symbols with formal linguistic elements.
3. Correlation of linguistic elements with meaning.

Reading becomes easy for a student if he is trained to comprehend the patterns of relationships between words, the semantic patterns of lexical items and the meaning of vocabulary from the context.

Good reading comprehension requires knowledge of the cultural, value of the words and expressions and the ability to identify the thematic content of what is in the text. An efficient reader must possess the ability to read fast with good comprehension.

Reading comprehension can be defined as an active thinking process by which a reader intentionally constructs meaning to form a deeper understanding of concepts and information presented in the text. To comprehend, readers must use information they already possess to filter, interpret, organize and reflect upon the incoming information from the page. Efficient interpretation of the text involves a combination of word recognition skills, linking of new information to prior knowledge and application of appropriate strategies such as locating the main idea, making connection, questioning, inferring and predicting. The comprehension process draws on many cognitive and linguistic abilities -- most notably, vocabulary, recalling background knowledge, sentence processing, verbal reasoning, knowledge of

print conventions and working memory. According to Lohitha, T.(2010) that weakness in any of these abilities can impair the reading comprehension and can cause a student to disengage from the task of interpreting the text.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Approach

Reading passages based on the ten steps for improving reading were chosen to assess the reading skills of students. Regular tests were conducted and the reading skills of students were assessed carefully by the researcher.

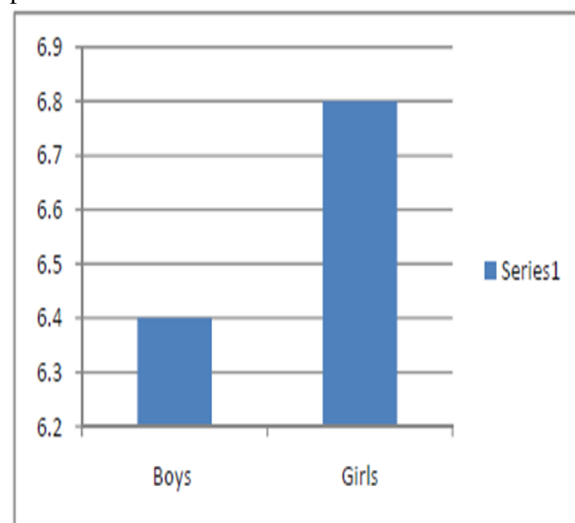
4.2 Sample for the study

A total number of around 253 students were chosen for the study. Number of girl students is 132 and boy students are 121.

5. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

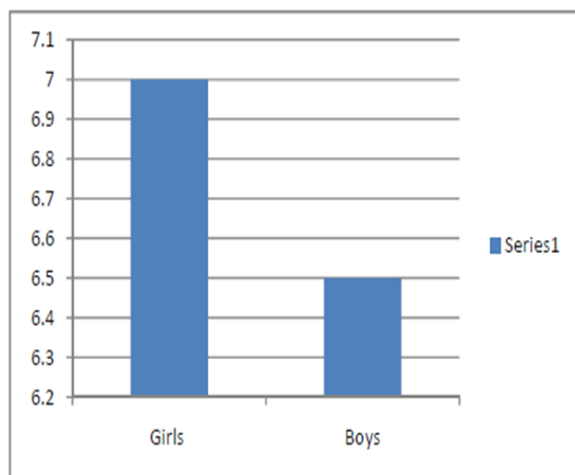
5.1 Recognizing Main Ideas

Three reading tasks were given to students to recognize the main ideas. The results of the test are provided below:



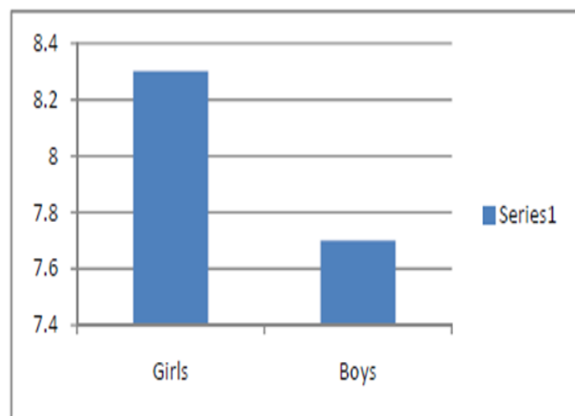
5.2 Identifying Supporting Details

The results of the tests show that girls were able to identify better the supporting ideas than boys.



5.3 Recognizing Implied Main Ideas and the Central Point

Three tasks were given to students to trace the implied main ideas in these passages and recognize the central point. The results of the tests indicated the better performance by girls.



6. CONCLUSION

Reading is something many students have taken it for granted. Students read a little effort and a little planning. It is remarkable that so much of the world's population can read – a little more than 80 per cent of the world's population can read to some extent. They can read basic forms, advertisements, news papers and use basic reading skills in their work and daily lives when needed. The study has highlighted some of the difficulties faced in Reading comprehension by students. Reading is usually an ignored skill in the

classroom. It is hoped that the present study would motivate teachers of English to pay a systematic attention to the enhancement of students' reading skill. The present study leads to the conclusion that metacognitive strategies could make a significant improvement in reading skills. Findings also show that using metacognitive strategies increased learners' interest levels in reading and helped them take a step towards reading and comprehending on their own. The primary aim of any reading program should be for the students to experience reading as pleasurable and useful, so that the learners may develop an eagerness to acquire newer skills and thus fine-tune their skills of reading. Metacognitive strategies are seemed to be a technique that could help learners become better readers.

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