
**ROLE OF READING IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF
ADDITIONAL READING GUIDANCE IN CURRICULA OF STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT:

Reading is prima facie the essential requirement to step in for developing a language. The skill is losing its shine in the generation today. If so, why? What just at should be done to retain its shine? How can it be done? Despite knowing the questions, probably knowing the answers, results are not cent percent achieved. This article throws light on the loopholes and how one can overcome the hurdles and bring about a positive change at the same time. It also proposes possible solutions to the existing reading problems. Additional Reading Classes were held for forty students in the age group of 5 to 12 years wherein drastic improvements were notices in areas of Reading, Confidence, and Conversational skills and also sentence framing had improved to a large extent.

Keywords: Reading, Comprehending skills, Phonetics, Language Development, Confidence.

INTRODUCTION:

Reading is the key to success for developing a language. The skill is slowly withering in the generation today. The sooner everyone realizes this; it is better. Children and parents and teachers need to realize the importance of reading. Reading with understanding is more critical than merely reading.

Michael West (1888-1973) in the new Method Readers brought forth the first language teaching material from an experimental project. He directed the project when he was an officer in the Indian Education Service (IES). English is taught as a second language as a significant part of the world today. Highlighting on the importance as to what a second language must enable a child to do, West says, 'it must enable him to read.'^[11]

The Bengal project report focuses on the teaching of reading that has become of great importance. Reading is an essential literary skill that must be imbibed by every child. Imparting the gift of reading must be seen as practical learning at each stage of school. According to West, the teaching of reading must have first priority. He continued his research along with his work as an educationist in Bengal over a significant period. He was an Honorary Reader in Education at Dacca University and has published many articles regarding this. Once he experimented on a group of eight-year-old children. All were given texts for comprehending. Results were disappointing at first.

The children could read but could not understand what they were reading. This was when West realized the need for simplifying the vocabulary by replacing problematic words with simpler ones. Reading simpler terms made it easier for the children to read and understand because the words were of common usage. Thus, unfamiliar words like plight, mode, isle, nought, ere and groom were replaced by familiar terms such as state, way, island, nothing, before and servant. Secondly, West came out with an essential principle of readability called as a 'lexical distribution' principle. As per his calculation, he decreased the number of words in a sentence. So, the children found it easy to read and understand the text easily. He got results of two and a half years in just ten weeks. Thus, West proved that children improved their reading skills, where the texts did not introduce too many new words too quickly.

One cannot ignore West's scheme for developing reading skills on a full-fledged basis. He came out with a reading development program, which envisages the training of three different types of

reading strategy. The first stage was a vocabulary stage in which each new word was introduced taking care not to exceed more than 1500 words. The second stage was to focus on the development of skills keeping the vocabulary level almost steady, neither raising it nor lowering it. The third stage was of strategic reading through scanning and skimming techniques. Though West's philosophy could not achieve the shape he had dreamt, because of un-favourable conditions then, it does not and should not lose its shine. The theory has its strength even today. It was forgotten, but many a time is seen in parts utilizing new ways to bring an improvement in the reading scenario in today's world. People- parents, teachers, and children themselves are realizing the importance of reading and its benefits after that. This theory needs to be revived and put into practical use and implementation through the maximum possible means. Now the question arises, is reading alone enough? No, reading must be reading in real sense. Reading in true meaning means reading with proper understanding, reading to raise the vocabulary power and visualize a staunch improvement in the writing skills of a child.

It has been observed that phonics plays a vital role in the life of a child to develop a solid base and a good foundation for reading skills. The art of phonics has been tremendously seen since 1980 in countries like US and UK. It began to develop from the 1980s in India and gradually has moved onto the remaining parts of the world. But traces of its origin can be seen in the late nineteenth century. The International Phonetic Association (IPA) was formed and new journals and periodicals namely the IPA's *Le MaitrePhonetique*, was first published under that title in 1889. The Reform Movement, which began in the late nineteenth-century, is unique in language teaching history. Herein, the specialist phoneticians and teachers took a lot of interest in the new science of phonetics. Thus, this art is not something that is developed in the late twenty-first century as wrongly believed but has originated in the late nineteenth century itself. The role of teaching pronunciation became more prominent and more comfortable with the support received from the new knowledge of phonetics. Pronunciation is of great importance in the field of communication. The Klinghardt experiment succeeded in proving this through his experiments. He began to introduce new phonetic notation in his course on introduction to English pronunciation. The class improved on their listening skills, and they were able to cope up with longer passages as well as pronunciation was given central importance. Children could read the sentences fluently after practicing well. Klinghardt slowly introduces the art of asking and answering comprehension questions too. Thus, there is a direct relation between reading and comprehending skills, as well. Practical reading skills are of utmost importance in comprehending passages. Many children seem to lack good comprehending skills, even today. So, if their reading skills are improved and worked, there would be an improvement in their comprehending skills as well.

Reading is one of the essential skills in any language learning.^[4] If teachers provide strategies that will motivate and educate the children, it gives the children great help. More so, teachers can apply such reading strategies to the students. The teachers should also encourage students to read and implement a system provided by them.^[6]

THE ROLE OF PHONETICS:

The Reform Movement offered a scientific approach to language teaching, phonetics being a considerable part of it. The art of reasoning was seen in the minds of people of the eighteenth century, whereas Science had become a part of the life of the nineteenth-century people. Phonetics is nothing but a scientific approach to developing the art of reading and pronunciation skills. Phonics ultimately improves grammatical and language skills too. The ever-popular arts of public speaking and elocution were stimulated of the actor-phoneticians like Sheridan and Walker in the eighteenth century that would attract the audiences.

The best example of how applied phonetics produces excellent ideas and exerts a considerable influence on language teaching can be seen by the Scottish family of the Bells. An elocution

teacher, Grandfather Alexander Bell adapted for classes of five hundred to one thousand pupils. His sons-David Charles Bell and Alexander Melville Bell adopted the family business as university lecturers. David Charles Bell was a Professor of Elocution at Dublin. At the same time, his younger brother, Alexander Melville Bell was a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh for twenty-two years and later in London. Melville, along with his even more famous son, Alexander Graham Bell, proceeded to Canada and then to the United States. He was a great writer on speech and elocution. Still, his most recognized piece of work was the invention of a notation system called 'Visible Speech', wherein he published 'the Science of Universal Alphabets'. Henry Sweet was profusely impressed with Bell's work that he developed his Broad Romic transcription system. This led to the birth of the final shape of the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association (IPA).

By the end of 1880, the well-known image of phonetics was a mixture of pure philosophical science and advanced technology (the telephone of grandson Alexander Graham Bell, Edison's phonograph, and so on). It was due to the hard work and zeal of the leaders of the Movement that phonetics offered them both- a scientific foundation and a practical technique for bringing about an improvement in the classroom they had been dreaming. Paul Passy, along-with Daniel Jones- a phonics teacher, devised a private phonic alphabet. He was delighted with the fact that it proved to be very useful in classroom teaching. Other like-minded language teachers too came forward, and this led to the formation of Phonetic Teachers' Association. Other teachers also joined in. The first issue of their journal, The Phonetic Teacher appeared in May and continued for another three years after which it was renamed Le Maitre Phonetique (1889). In 1897, the Association bagged its final name as The International Phonetic Association (IPA).

The phonics makes it easier for a reader to identify sounds of all letters and does enhance and help the reading process to be faster. The reader can achieve great fluency if he or she has strong reading power. The vocabulary is one of the main components of reading, the meaning of the words is the soul of the language, and the communication cannot be effective if the vocabulary is not updated and enriched. A man possessing strong knowledge of terms will have effective communication. The students can be competitive readers if they can read fluently and understand everything. They will be able to calculate, read the question, solve problems and think critically if they have powerful reading skills. They will be able to express their thoughts well, which is one of the significant skill in terms of writing essays, letters, stories or any other writing skill.

Reading not only helps to understand but also increases fluency and comprehension. Children facing reading disabilities or LD can be helped to improve their reading performance. School can make their curriculum accordingly, and children can implement reading techniques. Reading proficiency in the English language are the best indicators of reading English comprehension. In improving the general reading skills, vocabulary is the only important element for reading comprehensions, effectively understanding them and able to comprehend is the goal of every student that is proficient in reading.^[1]

When reading skills of students are not developed effectively, the students are not able to cope up with the responsibilities of the academics. Poor reading skills affect the ability of students to read, write and count, for the quality of learning as well.^[11]

Today there are various talks on how students can be motivated to learn and adapt good reading habits. Reading habits are essential and highly recommended that students need to understand. Thus, in the current scenario, if we compare the reading skills to listening, writing and speaking for any language, reading is the fundamental component in addition to listening, writing and speaking. There is a considerable demand to enhance the reading skills of students so that they can be updated with the latest news. In all modes of communication, reading is the primary skill which plays a role in the English language. Reading also plays an important role when it comes to an

understanding and comprehending written messages. A reader needs to apply various strategies to understand contextual and grammatical knowledge. In case a student has weak recognition power, it leads to him or her remaining vulnerable in understanding and comprehending. The skimming techniques are essential to understand a particular text. Skimming and Scanning are crucial techniques for reading. Reading is a strong bond between the mind of the writer and the reader. Comprehension and word recognition are the two significant components of the process of reading skills. Effective reading skills enable the reader to identify and understand words.

METHODS:

The method used in the study is a descriptive approach, and the data is obtained by both written tests and observations. Using a questionnaire for students of primary and secondary school students, parents, and teachers was also a part of this research.

RESULTS OR FINDINGS:

The children do not read efficiently. Most of the times, whenever children read, they do not understand. So, to make them understand, they should be made familiar with reading techniques. Knowledge of Phonics would help them improve their reading base with the introduction of sounds, blends, digraphs, diphthongs, sight words etc. New words can be introduced slowly and then replaced with synonyms after some weeks. Once the level of understanding increases, gradually the level of vocabulary words can be increased, taking utmost care not to lose their interest in reading. Words of encouragement and appreciation from parents, teachers are a must to encourage children to proceed and progress towards achieving higher standards of reading. In this way, a reading habit needs to be cultivated, and its importance needs to be stressed. Only when a reading habit is developed, interest will automatically creep in. The confidence level of a child is bound to increase. After all, curiosity and confidence are co-related. Each factor automatically drags the other.

The techniques of reading skills can be simplified, which help the students to do specific tasks. Reading skills can work wonders and be used effectively in classroom language.

The depth of vocabulary knowledge is significant and has an impact on improving reading skills. The experience of vocabulary plays a crucial role in enhancing reading skills. Teaching the techniques of reading skills and applying the strategies will help the students tremendously. The teachers need to raise the vocabulary knowledge of students, also creating an awareness of how important vocabulary helps in enhancing reading skills would make the students and parents realize its importance and increase their participation wholeheartedly. If the educators focus on building vocabulary improving comprehension skills of students, the reading skills of these learners will be in hands too.^[12]

DISCUSSION:

Reading with understanding is the crucial factor for comprehending. Comprehending mean understanding the vocabulary, understanding the relationship between words and concepts, understanding the readers the writer's perspective and forming or your own judgement. The readers also need to judge at times based on the reading.

Teachers play a very vital role as well. They can make a child interested in reading as well as encourage him or her to read better. They can help a child recall select the text which they are supposed to read based on their background.

Parents play an essential role in developing the reading skills of children. If children are supported in English language learning, their academic achievement and reading skills can be at a faster rate as compared to the others. Students with a more supportive environment have better results in

language learning. The facilities and attention provided by parents not only enhance their reading comprehension, fluency, but also the ability to perform better.^[9]

Promoting reading skills is considered and mainly implemented in educational institutions based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). But despite its importance, very few have their attention focused on reading skills. Innovative resources need to be fostered with having communicative activities. The reading based activities are essential because they are a necessary tool for language learning, second language learning precisely. It is difficult to draw a clear distinction between first and second language reading. The reading can uplift the quality of educations, so schools must have a reading plan in their curriculum and aim at the promotion of the reading skills. Reading activities and strategies need to be focussed and implemented in classrooms. Teachers can thus increase the reading proficiency of students which is extremely important for the English language. The reading strategies, when forced upon students, benefit the learner both in content learning and language learning process. It can be difficult for a teacher to find relevant texts related to reading, but with good team and effort if the reading plans and strategies are implemented, are fostered, they can aid thereby in developing the language of students.^[4]

English language teachers need proper training, and they need to develop themselves professionally to impart knowledge and teach students reading and vocabulary skills.^[5] Students learning English as a second language need to have enhanced reading and comprehending skills. As their language proficiency level plays a significant role in those having low literacy skills.^[8]

ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF ADDITIONAL READING GUIDANCE:

Additional reading guidance, apart from regular schooling, plays a significant role in improving reading skills.^[5] Children imbibe more with extra practice which focuses on reading apart from their standard school textbooks. They must not be burdened or pressurized for such additional reading activities. Children should be motivated and appreciated once they read additionally. Correct guidance can be provided on selection of books according to their age. Such reading must be monitored and guided too, which helps in gaining confidence. Storybooks can be selected as per their age and liking. Eventually, they develop a love for reading paving the way for understanding too. Reading helps in improving their language strongly.

CONCLUSION:

The teaching curriculums at times are not fully effective as they are not meeting the objectives appropriately. It has been recommended that the course books need to be evaluated, the faculty and educationists need to be trained so that they can adapt and adapt to the activities relating to reading skills. Reading skills are one of the essential skills in teaching or learning the English language as they focus on comprehending of the language. They also are responsible for enhancing the creativity of a child. That is why most of the English language courses today majorly need to have their curriculum amended, need to evaluate and stress upon the reading skills. Teaching reading skills at a higher level also cannot be ignored as vocabulary development is the most substantial factor in reading comprehensions as well. Understanding is the main criteria where students evaluate, conclude and interpret the content of any text. For this strong reading skills are required. The exercises regarding jumbled sentences can develop their inter-sentential and or intra-sentential skills. Such practices will be beneficial in mastering and developing language ability. More activities related to reading passages, free reading activities post-reading activities need to be included in the curriculum. Speed reading is another critical skill which cannot be ignored. Speed reading would also help students answer the multiple-choice questions, which is a crucial measurement strategy these days for testing the reading comprehending skills.

When students were provided with additional reading guidance apart from regular schooling, drastic improvements were noticed. These improvements led to their interest in reading as they could overcome the difficulties faced by them in reading gradually. Eventually, reading habits were formed, which led to an improvement in conversational skills, communicational skills, framing better sentences etc. Their reading capacity increased gradually, and eventually, this led to an increase in their confidence levels. To expect drastic improvements and get them noticed was not a day's task or a month's task, but when they were practiced, results started showing in a couple of months itself. Eventually and gradually, there was remarkable progress in the language development of these kids too. They could speak and write with great confidence.

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