READING COMPREHENSION OF THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGES IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of language skills according to the Structural Approach in vogue which was also endorsed   that speech skill is the basis of the other skills of reading and writing. In the early stages, speaking skills were taught through plenty of oral work and adequate speech practice. The learner understands the vocabulary and sentence patterns of English and gets their meaning correctly if the language is presented orally. The reading skill can then be acquired easily after the preparatory stage. Comprehension of reading material and its use at higher stages involves speed reading. The present study consists of 260 undergraduate students of arts and science colleges. The stratified random sampling technique is used and descriptive analyses done in the present study. The finding of the study is undergraduate students have low level of reading comprehension.

KEY WORDS

Language Skills, Teaching, Reading comprehension, Learners reading ability

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. There are a number of approaches to improve reading comprehension, including improving one's vocabulary and reading strategies. Reading Comprehension questions are designed to test a wide range of abilities that are required in order to read and understand the kinds of prose commonly encountered in schools and colleges. reading and understanding a piece of text requires far more than a passive understanding of the words and sentences it contains; it requires active engagement

with the text, asking questions, formulating and evaluating hypotheses and reflecting on the relationship of the particular text to other texts and information.

READING SKILLS

The word 'Reading' implies reading with comprehension. Reading comprehension involves understanding the meaning of the content, vocabulary, structures, concepts and relationships of ideas.

The aims of teaching reading to their pupils in the classroom are as follows:

- ➢ to enable the pupils to recognize words,

- ➢ to make the pupils comprehend the meaning of words, phrases and sentences,

- ➢ to make the pupils know the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context in which they are used,

- ➢ to enable them to react to what has been read,

- ➢ to enable them to inter the mood of the author/writer,

- ➢ to make the pupils read at a normal speed,

- ➢ to enable the pupils to use proper stress, intonation and pauses in reading suitable to the context.

TYPES OF READING

Depending on the nature and purpose, reading may be classified into various categories as detailed below;

INTENSIVE READING

Intensive reading is done while the students try to gather facts or arrive at some conclusion on the basis of facts. This is done mostly when the students prepare for the examinations. This kind of reading is done with thinking and comprehension. Hence, it is otherwise known as 'Critical Reading' or 'Reading Comprehension'.

EXTENSIVE READING

Extensive reading involves reading for pleasure. Because there is an element of enjoyment in extensive reading it is unlikely that students will undertake extensive reading of a text they do not like. It also requires a fluid decoding and assimilation of the text and content in front of you. If the text is difficult and you stop every few minutes to figure out what is being said or to look up new words in the dictionary, you are breaking your concentration and diverting your thoughts.

LOUD READING

Much of the reading to be done at the early stage will be reading aloud. It is necessary to ensure that the child associates the spoken word with the printed symbols correctly. Reading aloud or loud reading provides practice in good speech habits among the children and gives an opportunity for the teacher to find out whether the children are able to read with correct stress, intonation and pronunciation or not. Loud reading also helps in inculcating in the children the right habits of reading in word groups.

SILENT READING

Along with the ability to read aloud, the children may be encouraged to read silently. Most of the reading done at the higher stage of learning will be of this nature only. The purpose of silent reading is to encourage the students read with comprehension. The speed in silent reading is more than that of the same in reading aloud. This enables the students to read more material in relatively less time when they read anything silently. The following are some advantages of silent reading;

a) Silent reading keeps the whole class busy.
b) It helps the students work at their own pace.
c) It prepares the students for independent reading.

SCANNING TYPE OF READING

Searching quickly for a specific piece of information of a particular word, for example, when looking up a word in a dictionary and an address. Scanning involves moving our eyes quickly for seeking specific words or phrase.

SKIMMING TYPE OF READING

Skimming refers to the process of reading through a text quickly to get an overall idea of the contents, i.e., the gist of the passage. For example before buying a book are glances quickly at the reviewers comments on the back cover (also called book jacket) and at the content page to get a general idea of its contents.

WORD BY WORD TYPE READING

This type of reading is time consuming and demands a high level of concentration. Some material is not readily understood and so requires a slow and careful analytical reading. People use this type of reading for unfamiliar words and concepts, scientific formulae. It can take up to an hour just to read a few lines of text.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As English Language teaching and learning remains a challenging task for both the teacher and the students, it is very important to take a review of the teaching and learning thoroughly to identify the influential factors affecting it. It is very important for the teachers in this kind of scenario to ensure equal chance of participation in meaningful reading, in order to develop an expertise and foster depth of understanding in learning the Second Language. Hence, the present study attempts to find out the Reading Comprehension of the Undergraduate Students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Language learning is a meaningful process which involves the development of core four skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Reading Comprehension and Study Skills have inter-relationship students of higher education have to know the importance of Reading and learning activities. When the investigator reviewed the related literature, it was found that the students' Reading Comprehension is poor so as to make the investigator attempt the present study and the same is entitled as "Reading Comprehension among Undergraduate Students of Arts and Science Colleges in Dindigul district".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

➢ To assess the Reading Comprehension of the Undergraduate students of Arts and Science Colleges of Dindigul District

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

➢ The Reading Comprehension of the Undergraduate students of Arts and Science Colleges of Dindigul District is poor.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The selection of the methodology of the study depends upon the aims and objectives of the study. The present study is a descriptive one, involving normative survey technique. In this study stratified random sampling technique is used to select the sample where the defined population has an equal and independent chance of being selected as a member of the sample. The tools used for data collection are Reading Comprehension Test the collected data were subjected to descriptive analysis.

DISRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

The following table presents the distribution of the Arts and Science College students who formed the sample in terms of their Gender, Locality, Residence, Father's Educational Qualification, Mother's Educational Qualification, Father's Occupation, Mother's Occupation, Board of study, Newspaper Reading, General Reading, Online Reading.

Table 1.1 Distribution of the Sample

S. No	Variables	Sub-Categories	Sample	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	128	49.2
		Female	132	50.8
2.	Locality	Rural	219	84.2
		Urban	41	15.8
3.	Residence	Hosteller	176	67.7
		Day scholar	84	32.3
4.	Father's Educational Qualification	Schooling	45	17.3
		Graduate	193	74.2
		Post Graduate	22	8.5
5.	Mother's Educational Qualification	Schooling	144	55.4
		Graduate	108	41.5
		Post Graduate	8	3.1
6.	Father's Occupation	Unemployed	31	11.9
		Daily Wages	43	16.5
		Private	170	65.4
		Government	16	6.2
		Unemployed	67	25.8

7.	Mother's Occupation	Daily Wages	85	32.7
		Private	88	33.8
		Government	20	7.7
8.	Board of study	Matriculation	180	69.2
		State Board	66	25.4
		CBSE	14	5.4
9.	Newspaper Reading	Daily	215	82.7
		Once in a week	35	13.5
		Never	10	3.8
10.	General Reading	Yes	145	55.8
		No	115	44.2
11.	Online Reading	Yes	10	3.8
		No	250	96.2

The above table (1.1) presents the distribution of the sample in terms of their Gender, Locality, Residence, Father's Educational Qualification, Mother's Educational Qualification, Father's Occupation, Mother's Occupation, Board of Study, Newspaper Reading, General Reading and Online Reading. From the table, it can be understood that, out of total sample, 49.2% of the undergraduate students are male and remaining 50.8% are female; 84.2% of students are from rural and only 15.8% of students are from urban. 67.7% are hostellers and 32.3% are as day scholar. The table further reveals that schooling, graduate and post graduate for both father and mother educational qualification as 17.3%, 74.2% and 8.5% then 55.4%, 41.5% and 3.1% respectively.

From the table it can be understood that, 11.9% of the sample's fathers are unemployed, 16.5% work as a daily wages; 65.4% of them are works in private companies and 6.2% of them are government employees. 25.8% of the sample's mothers are unemployed, 32.7% work as a daily wages; 33.8% of them are works in private companies and 7.7% of them are government employees. As many as 69.2% of students have studied in the matriculation Board, 25.4% of them studied in state board and 5.4% of them studied in CBSE. Of the total sample, as many as 215 students i.e., 82.7 read newspaper every day; 13.5% of them read the newspaper once in a week and a small selection 5.4% do not read newspaper at all. Further analysis reveals that 55.8% of the samples are in the habit of General Reading while the remaining are not. It is interesting to note that a vast majority of the sample (i.e., 96.2%) do not read Online Reading.

Table 1.2

Analysis of the Sample (Whole Group) in terms of their Reading Comprehension Scores

No. of Students	Mean Reading Comprehension Score	Level
260	3	Low

        As seen from the above table, the mean Reading Comprehension score of the sample (whole group) is 3. This reveals that the Undergraduate Arts and Science College students who formed the sample have a low level of Reading Comprehension. For a better understanding the Reading Comprehension Scores of the sample are analysied further below in the table 1.2 (a).

Table 1.2 (a)

Analysis of the sample in the terms of their Reading Comprehension Scores

Reading Comprehension Level	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage
Poor	0-3	180	69.23
Average	4-7	56	21.54
High	8-10	24	9.23

        The above table 1.2 presents the Reading Comprehension Scores of the undergraduate level students of arts and science colleges in of three categories. As many as 180 students 69.23% have only scored only 0 to 3 in the Reading Comprehension Test, indicating their poor Reading Comprehension. Only 21.54% of the sample i.e., 56 students have an average level of Reading Comprehension and a very small number of them i.e., only 9.23% have a high level of Reading Comprehension, out of 260 students.

Figure 1.2

Bar Chart showing the Analysis of the Sample in terms of their Reading Comprehension

READING COMPREHENSION LEVEL
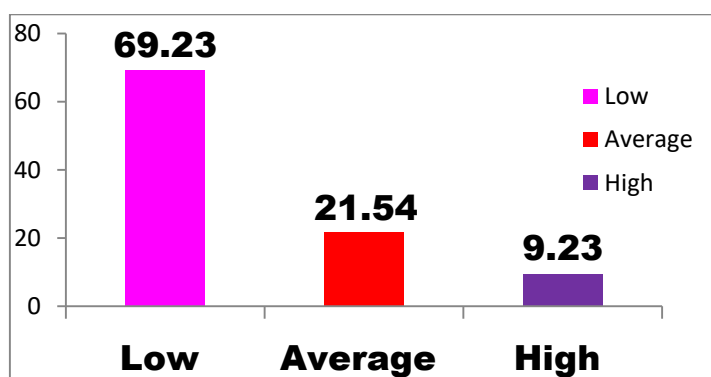
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

➢ The Undergraduate students of Arts and Science Colleges in Dindigul District have low level of Reading Comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The present study has been done with a clear focus on the Reading Comprehension of Undergraduate students of Arts and Science Colleges. But the finding denotes that the students have low level of reading comprehension.

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