

Developing Reading Competence at the Preparatory Stage

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Article Info

Received: June 8, 2023

Revised: June 25, 2023

Published: September 30, 2023

Editor: Dr. Samayveer Singh

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Email:

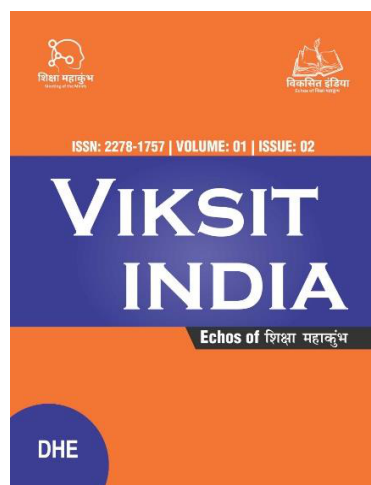
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DOI:

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ISSN: 2278-1757

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to describe the effective strategies that can be used to enhance reading skills with comprehension amongst the students at the preparatory stage. Academic success in middle school and higher school greatly depends upon reading with comprehension. "Every other initiative that a leader might undertake is less important than ensuring that the students in school learn how to read," claims Catherine Snow. One of the strongest predictors of academic success is reading. Students who suffer in reading typically continue to struggle throughout their academic careers in all areas. (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Design: The study used a Quasi-experimental pre-test & post-test research design without a control group. The study was conducted on 81 students of grade three studying in a local CBSE school. The Curriculum-Based Measure was used as a screening tool for reading. 98% of the word's students studied in their text were taken to create a paragraph. Assessor used the stopwatch to assess the number of words read correctly per minute. To assess the understanding students were asked five questions based on the paragraph. The reading tool was standardized by using the Kelley method.

Findings: Students were categorized into three groups according to their performance in reading i.e., Average, Below Average, & Above Average. Ten students were performing at below-average levels, 63 students were performing at average levels and eight students were performing at above-average levels during their pre-test. A composite benchmark was drawn, which was 50 words read per minute with 80% of understanding. The average reading score was 46 words read per minute. Students who were performing at below-average levels got special interventions. The average reading for below-average students was 28 words read per minute with 50 % of average understanding. After intervention during the post-test average reading for below-average students grew to 39 words read per minute with 75 % of understanding. Their performance in terms of marks was also evaluated. Reading with comprehension was assessed out of ten marks. The average mark of a below-average student was 4.9 during the post-test, which increased to 6.85. T-ratio was 2.878, which was acceptable at a .05 level and .01 level. The school-based reading program impacted the reading performance of students performing at a below-average level studying in grade 3.

Implications: Every student can succeed if timely early interventions are provided to the students. Learning gaps in the reading should be identified and remediation should be planned.

Keywords: Preparatory Stage, Comprehension, Quasi-experimental Design, Curriculum-Based Measure, Learning Gaps, Remediation, CBSE School, Reading Program.

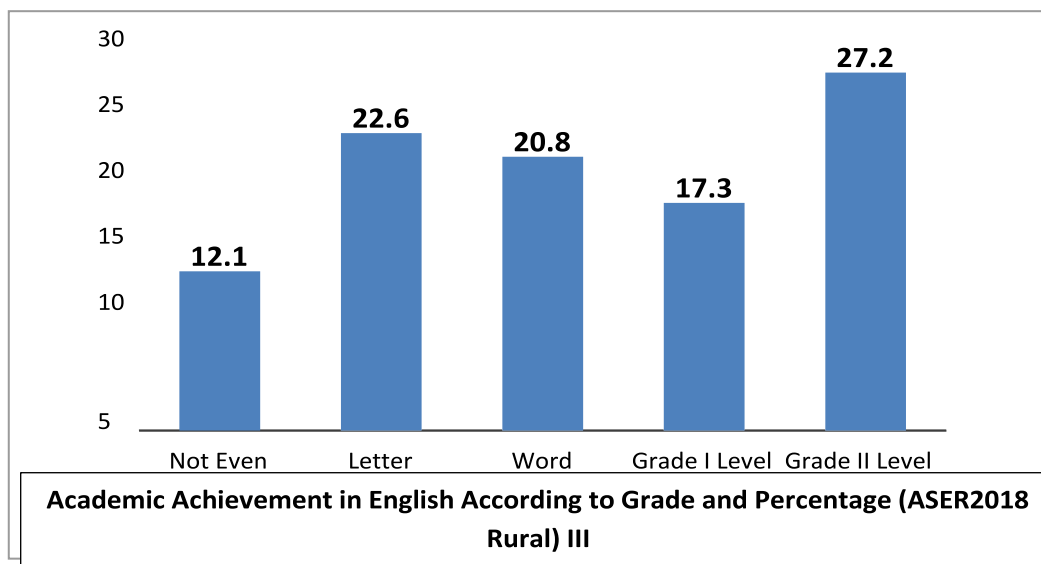
Introduction

Reading Proficiency is crucial for students as it lays the foundation for their lifelong learning and academic success. Students who suffer in reading continue to struggle through their academic career in all areas (Henderson & Berla, 1994).so every other initiative that might a leader take is less important than ensuring that the students learn how to read, "claims Catherine Snow". Therefore, it is essential for primary kids' general growth and future success that reading abilities are emphasized and fostered.

K-2 is defined as the foundational stage in India and it is expected that students should obtain the required competencies by, they reach grade 3. It means they should be ready for their preparatory stage and should be proficient in reading. However, if we see the reading profile of grade three students, it is worrisome. Let's see the reading profile of students through the eyes of ASER, NAS, and Foundation learning study.

Academic Achievement in English According to Grade and Percentage (ASER 2018 Rural)

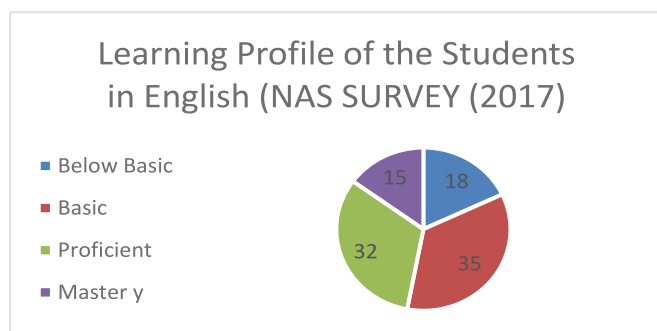
Not Even Letter	12.1
Letter	22.6
Word	20.8
Grade I Level Text	17.3
Grade II Level Text	27.2
Total	100



12.1 % of students are not able to read even letters. 22.6 % of students can recognize letters but unable to read words, whereas 20.8% of students are able to read words but not text at the grade one level. Just 17.3 % of the students in grade 3 can read grade one-level text. It means just 27.2 % of students are ready for their preparatory stage.

Learning Profile of the Students in English (NAS SURVEY (2017))

Grades	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Mastery
III	18	35	32	15



Just 47% of the students have attained the competency level in English reading, whereas a major chunk of the students that is 53% of them are not proficient in reading.

ASER (2019), revealed that the origin of the learning crisis can be seen in children even before they enter grade one. It was seen that only 10.7% of the students could match two pictures beginning with the same sound.

Students' pre-literacy and language concepts have revealed

that students are not school ready. Hence the researcher was struggling with two basic questions.

- How to design an effective reading program for grade 3?
- What are the effective strategies to enhance the English reading performances of students in grade 3?

Hypothesis

The reading program has no impact on the English reading of grade 3 students.

Methodology

To ascertain the impact of the reading program on the reading performance of third-grade kids, a quasi-experimental research design with pretest-posttest and no control group was used. The English reading screening tool was created using curriculum-based measures to identify the learning gaps of the students in reading.

English Reading Screening Tool

Students were required to read a paragraph of 65 words for Task 1. The paragraph had 98% of the words they regularly read in their textbook. Children were required to apply their decoding skills to read and understand the 2% of unfamiliar words. The paragraph was removed for assignment 2, and students were asked to answer the five questions based on understanding.

Snapshot of the Screening Toolkit for English Reading

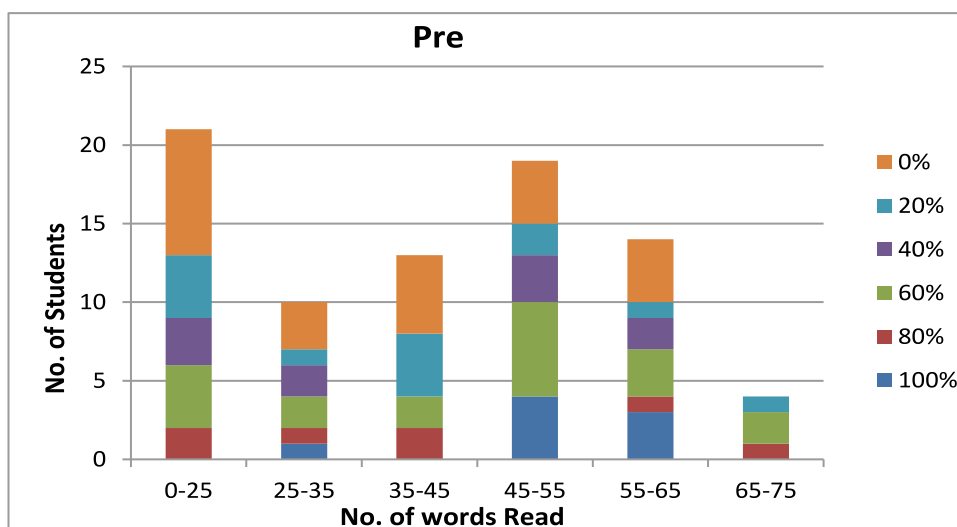
Task	Description	Time Taken	Marks	Skill Demonstrated by Students
1 Reading Fluency	Number of words read correctly	60 seconds will be provided for reading	53 -65 words read five marks	Students read with fluency.
2 Reading comprehension	The child will be asked to read the passage once again without a		40-52 words correctly-four	Students' reading comprehension
2. Reading with understanding	Five questions would be asked based on shown advertisement	1 minute for the Observation. 2 minutes for the questions	1= correct 0= incorrect X= no response	Students' understanding of reading the visual

for Class

Pre-test was conducted by using aforementioned screening toolkit for English reading on 81 students studying in grade 3 in a local CBSE school.

Reading Profile of the Students with Understanding

	0-25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65	65-75
100%	0	1	0	4	3	0
80%	2	1	2	0	1	1
60%	4	2	2	6	3	2
40%	3	2	0	3	2	0
20%	4	1	4	2	1	1
0%	8	3	5	4	4	0



This revealed that 24 students out of 81 were mere decoders as they were reading with zero understanding. Four students were found reading fluently as they were able to read 55-65 words per minute but with zero understanding. One student though was reading just 25-35 words in a minute but with 100% of understanding. Eight students were found reading with 100% understanding but their speed varied from

25 to 65 words read correctly. 19 students read with 60% understanding out of which four students were having very low reading fluency i.e., less than 25 words per minute, whereas five students having reading speed of 55+ words in a minute. Ten students were reading with 40% of understanding, and 13 students were reading with 20% of understanding out of which two students were able to read 55+ words in a minute.

Minimum global reading fluency for English was defined by Foundation Learning Study (FLS) conducted in 2022 as 35–53 words with comprehension in one minute. We were having five students who exceed the global criteria as they were reading 55+ words in a minute with 100% of understanding. 10 students reading 35-65 words with 80-100% understanding, they were placed in the Advance level. eight students who fail to decode were placed in the Intensive level and the rest of the 63 students who had a minor learning gap were placed in the Strategic and Benchmark levels.

Interventions

Eight students who were not able to decode even, their classes were replaced with remedial classes and they were named “Super Eight”. They were provided reading logs based on sounds learned in the remedial classes. 63 students who were having minor learning gaps were motivated to read daily and they were provided comprehension strategies CROWD and QAXP. Students, who were performing at the Advance level were motivated to read the books and write a book review. The following teaching strategies were used:

1. Reading Marathon**2. CROWD**

C- Completion questions

R- Recall questions

O- Open-ended question for richer conversation

W- wh questions using What, When, who, where, why

D- Distancing questions (allowing the child to make the connection between reading text and real life by asking questions.

The children were given the reading material. After reading child would be asked to complete the sentence, and answer the question based on recalling the information given in the text. The child was allowed to showcase his/her understanding by answering the open-ended question and distancing questions.

Q A X P techniques

The class was divided into groups. Each group was having four members. They were assigned the role of questioner, respondent, appendant, and paraphraser. After going through the learning material, the first student asked the question, the second student responded to the question, the appendant added to the response and the retold the question and response of both students by paraphrasing it.

Audio-assisted reading strategy

Students were provided audio of the text along with the text. Firstly, students listened to the audio by keeping the text before their eyes. Students tried to read the text along with the

audio silently twice. This provided them the opportunity to listen to the correct pronunciation and intonation. They read independently with their home partners. Home partners pointed out the mistakes and the student rectify these mistakes.

Results

To see the impact of reading program comparison between pretest (before the interventions) and posttest (after the interventions) was made by using differential quantitative analysis.

Intergroup Differences in Performance in English Reading for Grade 3

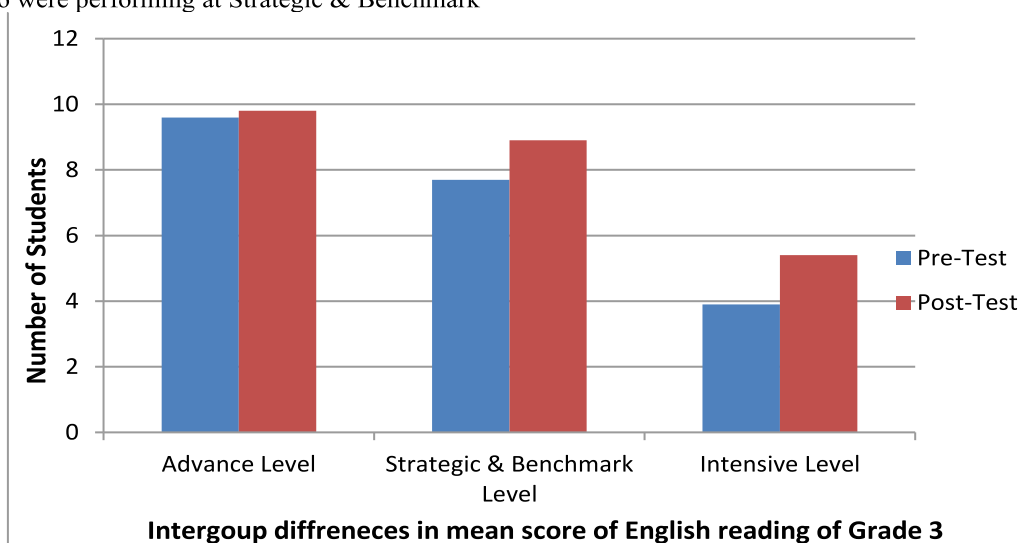
	N		Mean	Std d	t-ratio
Advance Level	8	Pre	9.6	1.3	1.26 NS
	8	Post	9.8	2.8	
& BenchmarkLevel	63	Pre	7.7	2.81	3.92**
	63	Post	8.9	3.285	
Intensive Level	10	Pre	3.9	1.5	2.03**
	10	Post	5.4	2.48	

Table shows the pretest and post test scores of reading performance of students of grade 3 at three different levels that is i.e., Advance level, Strategic and Benchmark level, and intensive level. The mean pretest and posttest scores of reading performance of the student at advance level are 9.6 and 9.8 respectively & their standard deviation is 1.3. t-ratio is 1.26 which is non-significant. Whereas the interventions could produce significant differences in the reading scores of the students who were performing at Strategic & Benchmark

Level and Intensive Level.

The mean scores of reading performance of the student at Strategic & BenchmarkLevel grew from 7.7 to 8.9. Their t-ratio is 3.92 which is significant at confidence level 0.01.

The mean scores of reading performance of the student at Intensive Level grew from 3.9 to 5.4. Their t-ratio is 2.48 which is significant at confidence level 0.01.



This graph represents the intergroup differences in the mean score of English reading of grade 3 in Pre-test and Post- test. It is evident from the figure that interventions could produce huge difference in the mean score of students performing at Intensive Level. Significant difference in the mean score of students performing at Strategic and Benchmark level. Very negligible difference in the mean score of the students performing at Advance level could be seen. Probably students who were performing at Advance level scored so well in the Pre-test that they fail to increase the score in the Post-test. Whereas the students who were performing at Intensive level their score was low in the Pre-test and there was scope of too

much performance in the Post-test.

Hence the Hypothesis the reading program has no impact on the English reading of grade 3 students stands partially accepted partially rejected.

Conclusion

The main intention of developing a reading program was to make each and every child succeed in reading with comprehension. The program was successful as intervention could produce the significant difference in the mean scores of students performing at Intensive level and Strategic and

Benchmark level. Though the program could not showcase significant difference in the mean score of students performing at Advance level as they already attained full marks or having difference of half mark or one mark. They

could develop the love for reading as they were reading the whole book and narrating in their own words. It means every student can succeed if students are made intentional and they are supported by their parents and teacher.