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## INVESTIGATING CONDITION OF ENGLISH TEACHING READING SKILL AT SECONDARY LEVEL

Prof. M. SAFDAR.BHATTI<sup>1</sup>, M.ASIF NADEEM<sup>2</sup>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur



### ABSTRACT

Present study investigates condition of English teaching reading skill among public schools. Major objectives of the study were to identify situation of English teaching reading skill at secondary school and to examine problems of students and teachers relating to reading skill. Four hundred students of secondary school level and three hundred English language teachers were the sample this study. Triangulation of the tool was used to collect data. Observation scale and two questionnaires were used to get opinions from the respondents. The hypothesis of the study was that teachers did not use easy and useful techniques when they teach text books of English which was proved correct. At the end, some suggestions were also given for the betterment of reading skill among students.

**Key Words:** Reading skill, text books, Teaching Reading comprehension, GTM, SQ3R

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### INTRODUCTION

In South Asian countries, the teachers use Grammar Translation Method for teaching second language. It results incompetency of language skills such as: reading, speaking, listening and writing. Learners at all grades remained unable to read text or comprehend text in proper way. Their understanding level after reading text remained low and results in less communication. This receptive skill weakens speaking and communication competency. Hence it results in failure at secondary level. Reading skill involved recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. When we look at present situation of English reading skill in Pakistani schools, we easily find out that reading is not an easy task. Although reading is a passive skill yet it demands a very conscious effort on the part of the reader. At the same time, it cannot be separated from other aspects of language. It is equally important as the other aspects of language learning are. Language experts like, (Lamy and Klarskov, Bangs, Bax, 2011) are of the view that reading had been one of the most important skills for the secondary school learners and in Public schools of Pakistan where had been dearth of improving reading skill. Cause of prescribed practice had been identified both in the teacher and the taught. Teachers teach reading without understanding and the taught shows no real interest in learning. (Sanchez, Robin, Little, 2007).

In Pakistani schools, the teachers do not tell their students about the importance of reading skill. Students mispronounce and misunderstand the meanings of the words while reading their text books in English. As their reading skill is not developed, so they are unable to pronounce the words correctly. Even the teachers are unable to pronounce correct words while doing reading. One reason behind it is some teachers are also lazy in government schools. They do not like modern or latest pronunciation. They just rely on RP. New words, new abbreviations and new spellings which are included in English language are deliberately neglected by them. Most of the Public school teachers are unaware of these new forms of reading. They use old methods of teaching. They use old pronunciation method and so on. They read the text and

translate it into Urdu. They do not involve the students in reading process. As a result, the reading skill of the students remains weak.

So, researchers took the same problem and tried to throw light on the current situation of students while reading English text books. Researchers had given some suggestion at the end so that the students and the teachers of government sector may overcome this weakness and become good readers.

### **Background of the Study**

It is said that reading is a gateway to the knowledge because it is the skill which ranges from recognizing alphabetical symbols to comprehension at figurative level. As English is not the native language of Pakistan so less importance is given towards its reading and understanding. Through reading skill, one gets information about the language, society, culture and subject. But in Pakistani situation, the focus is on 100 % result rather than on the language skill acquisition and understanding. When students are asked to read text in English, they felt shy or confused. Moreover our students face many family crises and financial crisis also. They do not give real attention to their studies. Many of the students learn and earn at the same time. So they are not ready to develop their reading skill. It is seen, in the past that reading has treated casually in Pakistani Government schools. Even teachers do not pay attention towards it. They themselves have been taught by old teachers and though old methodology. So they are also not competent enough to read. They use guide books for translation of the English text and avoid pronouncing difficult words.

### **Hypothesis**

Teachers do not use easy and useful techniques when they teach text books of English.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To identify situation of English teaching reading skill at secondary school.
2. To examine problems of students and teachers relating to reading skill.
3. To give possible solutions of problems relating to reading skill.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reading process is a very important process especially at secondary level because after secondary level, students were supposed to have compatible reading skill. They must have read to enhance their knowledge to compete with the world. It is seen that in public schools, most of the students (in Urdu medium classes) cannot read English at secondary level.

### **Related Literature**

Talking about importance of reading skill and its competence among students, Paul (1998) says that developing competence and achieving outcomes in English is a process that depends on a child doing, experiencing and sharing. It means perfection of reading is based on its practice and sharing. At the same time one cannot deny the importance of contextualized practices in the book offers the opportunity for much further practices, using the exercises as models or springboards for speaking, reading and writing practices of a freer nature. (Naylor. H 1996)

Dale Gordon (2002, p.4) asserts that even though we have only twenty six letters in our alphabet, there are forty four phonemes or sounds in the English language. Text books have many common words. These words can develop a taste of knowing phonemes among the students. If words are taught properly and their meanings and pronunciation are taught in a good way, the students will take interest to read English news, novels, and stories and so on. Phonic system is very helpful to know about words. At the same time Krishna Mohn (2000, P. 23) asserts that the structure of word has two elements: stem and affix. A stem has meaning by itself whereas an affix does not have any meaning as such by itself but gives or adds some meaning to the word it is attached to. This method enables the students to solve confusing words and other problems. The students who are taught by this method can combine sound units of words. They can recognize words with complete understanding. A syllable approach to teaching reading is also a variation of this method.

When students read text books and other written materials, they look a lot of words printed on pages. These words play a vital role to comprehend the whole paragraph. A paragraph is a short scale composition. It is based on a topic or thesis sentence which is present either in the beginning or at the end. If the students know the words i.e. their meanings, pronunciation and usage, they will collect basic thought in a very small time. So knowledge of words is very important. Words which are used in rimes give a lot of knowledge about words usage.

Virginia Ferguson (2003, p.4) asserts that modern researches indicate that a most effective means of assisting children to identify new words is through the teaching of rhyme. In text books of Punjab, there are poems which have good words. These words can also play a good role to enhance the word knowledge of the students. Words tell the students whether the book is readable or not. Looking at the words, the students can adjust their speed of reading accordingly and can save their time. Words are very important and they give basic thought.

Bernard Comrie (1987, P. 81) asserts that English also boasts a distinctively cosmopolitan vocabulary, having borrowed extensively from other Germanic tongues and especially from the roman languages. Latin and French, but absorbing tens of thousands of words from scores of language over the centuries.

Text books are a source to develop reading skill. The words in the text books create a sense among the students to understand written materials other than their text books. So students practice and this practice develops their reading skill gradually and the words of text books are helpful to develop reading. Stephen Gramley and Kurt – Michael Patzold (2004, P. 91) assert that only the choice of vocabulary and use of syntax remain as elements of style which may contain hints as to region, class, sex or age. It is a fact that foreign learners do not have enough number of words through which they can express their meanings.

Reading of text books is effective. If text books are taught in a good way, the students will master most of initial rules so that they may be able to deal with problems relating to their future progress in reading by themselves. It means reading of text books is significant to get a good command on comprehension. If text books are taught properly and their reading is practiced, the students will naturally be equipped to read more books. Otherwise they see texts as contexts for global or overall comprehension. But most of the foreign readers, as they are generally taught through grammar, get programmed to focus on individual words. They see the texts as exercises for detailed vocabulary work and translation. This is a very harmful position. It hinders comprehension. This problem can be solved by teaching, practicing and developing text books and knowing the overall meanings of the words.

### **Research Methodology**

Current research is mix method research design where blend of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms were intermingled to develop a blend of two research designs. Researchers had used triangulation method where, triangulation technique had been used to infer data. Two questionnaires and one observation scale was developed to attain results. Population of the study was the learners and the teachers of public schools at secondary schools. The study was delimited to only English language teachers at secondary schools and learners learning in public schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify samples from the population. Samples are used as representatives of the population so keeping limitations of the researchers and time bounds 300 teachers and 400 learners were taken as a sample for the study. The researchers visited personally to the identified samples and schools for the questionnaire and classroom observation. Data taken from the respondents was fed into SPSS and tabulated in the form of tables. Mean scores were taken to support the results. In order to facilitate general tabulated data was analyzed and explained in written form by the researcher. In the light of data taken from the respondents findings and recommendations were made.

### **Research tool**

Researchers have adopted observation and questionnaire as a tool. Description of the tool had been given as follows:

#### **1: Observation**

Observation means to observe things, happenings or phenomena to know facts. Sometimes our observation does not give us good results due to some factors i.e. weakness of our five senses or situational difficulties. In this research, the observation was repeated three times and average results were sought. Observation was done on 9<sup>th</sup> class teachers. A full period was spent on observation; a period consists of 45 minutes. Observation was repeated three times.

#### **Points of observation**

In the present research, following points were observed:

1. Good starting point of teacher.
2. Involving the students in reading.
3. Giving deep meanings to every important word.
4. Explanation of sentence structure.

5. Giving the knowledge of grammar during reading.
6. Teaching correct pronunciation to the students.
7. The use of A.V. aids.
8. Group work.
9. Maintaining discipline during teaching of reading skill.
10. Body language of the teacher.
11. Questioning during reading.
12. Giving good suggestions to the students about developing reading skill.
13. Telling the students the importance of text book of English prescribed by Punjab Text Book Board Lahore.

## 2: Questionnaire for Students

This present questionnaire consisted of five questions. This was a closed ended questionnaire. These are yes/no questions. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to ask students about the use of new techniques and A/V aids in their classes. 400 copies of this questionnaire were divided among 400 students. After one hour, questionnaire was taken back. The analysis of data with percentage and graph is given below.

### Procedure

For this present study mixed method research style is chosen. Teacher's observation result is elaborated in qualitative manner. While students interview is analyzed in quantitative style.

### Data Analysis

#### Analysis of teachers' observation

In all the three observations, there were forty students in each class. If this strength becomes 25 or 30, the teacher can involve each student in reading skill. Our government teachers have to control more than forty students at a time. As a result of it, they cannot involve all the students in reading skill. Involvement of the students must be made sure if their strength becomes less.

In case of A.V. aids our government class rooms are poor. Only white boards and board markers are there. Tape – recorder is not a costly device because tape – recorders of China are available in the market even then these are not used in classroom.

Reading skill of students in government sectors is weak. Some teachers say that other teachers do not give them helping hand. Some say that mother tongue occupies students' minds.

There is lack of training of teachers in our government schools. Mostly the teachers are taught by old teachers whose pronunciation was not good. So they cannot speak in correct pronunciation. Moreover they do not know about the latest techniques of enhancing reading skill. These two problems can be solved by giving them training.

To develop reading skill, the knowledge of grammar is important. Our teachers in government schools do not explain grammatical items during reading. All this happens due to a large strength of students. The teacher can explain grammatical items and can answer the questions of the students relating to grammar.

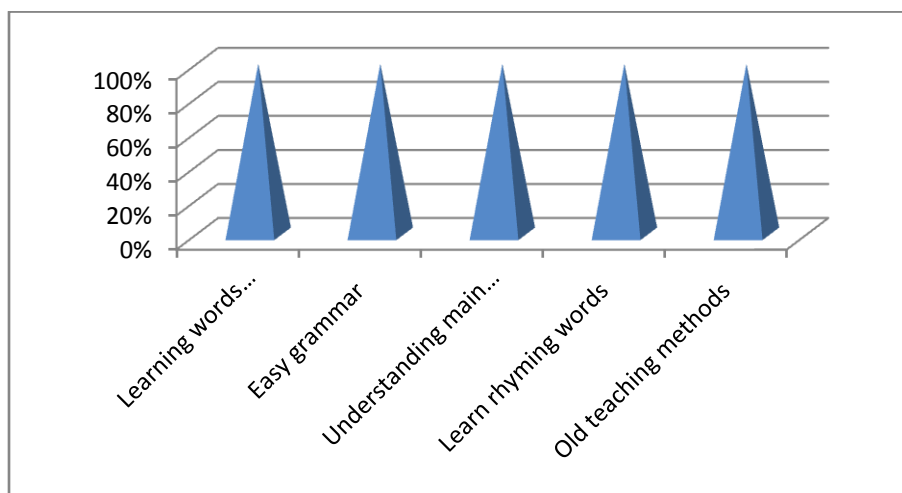
The teachers do not tell them the importance of text book due to shortage of time. So the reading skill of the students remains weak. Shortage of time is also a problem in this regard. Minimum strength, use of A.V. aids and training of English teachers are the solution of all such problems.

#### Analysis of Students' questionnaire

From the analysis of students' questionnaire, we come to know that 82 % students show interest in learning meanings of words if text books are taught by using good techniques. About 90% students find learning of grammar easy full of activities. About 87 % can learn main theme of the lesson when they are taught in clear voice. Approximately 95% students can learn rhyming words of the words when teachers pronounce the poetry with correct intonation. 100% students said that there is discrepancy between letters and sounds and their teachers did not support them. We can say that good techniques are useful to enhance reading skill. At the 80% students said only old traditional teaching methods are used in their classrooms.

Factors	Students
Learning words meanings	82%
Easy grammar	90%

Understanding main theme	87%
Learn rhyming words	95%
Old teaching methods	100



### Recommendations and suggestions

For the present research researcher suggests these recommendation for further study. A proper time must be fixed for improving reading skill. New techniques and innovative ideas must be used in our classes to improve reading. A proper attention must be paid on the improvement of present issue. Training workshops must be organized for the betterment of teachers using methods.

### Conclusion

Reading is a problem especially in Government school. Most of the students cannot read the whole text book at Secondary level. Some students read spellings of words and then make the sounds of the words. Present study shows that students can be taught effectively and more than 80% result can be obtained if number of students is decreased. Use of A.V. aids, group work and other simple techniques can enhance the students reading skill.

Our observation shows that there are some drawbacks in teachers. If they are removed, further good results can be obtained. Proper training of teachers is necessary every year. As these trainings link the teacher with modern methods of teaching, their knowledge modifies also. Reading skill of the students remains weak because of not using A.V. aids and not adopting techniques. Text book of Punjab Board is a good source of developing reading skill of the students at secondary level. So our hypothesis is proved correct.

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### Appendix 1

#### Questionnaire for Students

NO	Item	Yes	No
1	Are you satisfied with the reading of text of taught by your teacher?		
2	Are you satisfied with the pronunciation of your teacher?		
3	Does your English teacher involve maximum student in reading of text?		

4	Does your teacher give surface meanings of the words of your text book?		
5	Does your teacher explain grammatical points during reading?		
6	Does your teacher use A.V aids (tape-recorder, mobile, projector) to develop your Reading skill?		
7	Do you think that this reading taught by your teacher will help you in other classes?		
8	Poems provide a good practice of vocabulary. Does your teacher explain poems included in your text book?		
9	Your text book is a good source to develop reading skill. Do you recognize every word of your text book with complete understanding?		
10	Do you think that your English teachers need training and latest techniques about teaching reading skill so that they may teach you in the best way?		

**Appendixes 2**

**Post-test**

**Total Marks: 05**

**Marks Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Class: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Encircle the correct answer.**

No.	Item
1	What is the meaning of mighty? a) Kind                      b) Power full                      c) Generous
2	According to grammar, the word kind is. a) A noun                      b) A verb                      c) An adjective
3	The main theme of this poem is about. a) Importance of little things b) Importance of time c) Importance of morality
4	The rhythm word of sand is. a) Fan                      b) Land                      c) Man
5	Synonym of ocean is. a) Sand                      b) Sea                      c) Canal

**Appendixes 3**

**Pre-test**

**Total Marks: 05**

**Marks Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Class: \_\_\_\_\_**

No.	Item
1	What is the meaning of mighty? b) Kind                      b) Power full                      c) Generous
2	According to grammar, the word kind is. b) A noun                      b) A verb                      c) An adjective
3	The main theme of this poem is about. d) Importance of little things e) Importance of time f) Importance of morality
4	The rhythm word of sand is. b) Fan                      b) Land                      c) Man
5	Synonym of ocean is. b) Sand                      b) Sea                      c) Canal

#### Appendix 4

##### Questionnaire for teachers

No.	Item	Agreed	Disagreed
1	Reading opens the world of knowledge for learner and teachers. Most of our teachers stress on reading skill.		
2	Our government teachers need proper training of language skill.		
3	Your students can read more than half of the lessons taught by you with complete understanding.		
4	Language laboratories create an atmosphere to learn a language. If government schools have English laboratories, language skill of students will be good.		
5	Most of our teachers do not use A.V aids when they teach reading skill.		
6	When our teachers read and teach textbooks, they explain deep meanings of words.		
7	Poetry creates a habit of thinking among students. Our teacher does not teach poems at secondary level and tell the students to learn the summaries of the poems by heart.		
8	Knowledge of grammar is necessary to get command on reading skill. Our teachers try to teach grammar during the reading of text books.		
9	Our teachers try to know pronunciation of some important words present in every, lesson of text book with the help of computers and other sources so that they may teach in a good way.		
10	At secondary level, students should be able to read text book with complete understanding. If we teach the text in good way, the reading skill of the students can be improved.		