



A STUDY ON IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF 4TH GRADE STUDENTS OF DAYAMOYEE SCHOOL, HAILAKANDI, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Education is a weapon to improve one's life. It is probably the most important tool to change human life. It is a lifelong process that ends with death. Education certainly determines the quality of an individual. Education improves one's knowledge, skills and develops the personality and attitude. But the whole process of education is meaningless if a person do not have good reading comprehension skills. Improving reading skills at primary level is a top priority for all educators. The area of focus for this research is improving reading comprehension through the use of different comprehension strategies and comprehension skills.

INTRODUCTION: -

Good reading comprehension skills are necessary for understanding textbooks, lectures, and other class materials in school. Without a solid foundation of reading skills children will struggle throughout their life. The ability to read and understand texts is essential for success in school. Reading proficiency is the most fundamental skill in academic learning and success in school

This action research was conducted to improve reading comprehension of 4th grade students of Doyamoyee LP School, Hailakandi, Assam. This action research discusses the causes and reasons of difficulties in reading comprehension.

To improve the reading comprehension of 4th grade students, the strategies used during the research were previewing, schema building (involve clarifying a concept and building background knowledge), activating prior knowledge, inferring, highlighting/identifying, retelling, visualizing, questioning, comparing/contrasting and summarizing. Through this process all the students were involved in the class. This was followed by students using these strategies through whole class & independent practice.

The status of reading comprehension of students was recorded prior to implementing the reading strategy interventions. Through Metacomprehension (Metacomprehension is the ability to monitor understanding of texts) Strategy, it was found that students lacks the knowledge of strategies to use throughout the process of reading (before, during, and after reading). The post intervention scores of the Metacomprehension Strategy Index (To discover students' awareness of a variety of strategic reading processes that are appropriate for before, during, and after reading a text) showed a significant increase in students' knowledge of the reading comprehension strategies.

Keywords- Comprehension, Metacomprehension, Strategy, Reading.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In this study the target groups were class four students. During research it was seen that a portion of children of the class, experience difficulty in reading comprehension. From class observation & students' textbook reading, it was found that students struggled to derive meaning from the text they have read. Students were not aware about the use of strategies of reading comprehension. Teachers are also not much aware about strategies to improve reading comprehension. They typically spent teaching students how to do the worksheets, instead of teaching reading strategies to improve their reading comprehension skills.

NATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM:

Reading comprehension has been a major issue for more than 20 years. Researchers have found that teaching reading strategies is important to developing increased student comprehension. At the same time, they have found many teachers lack a solid foundation for teaching these reading comprehension strategies (National Reading Panel, 2005). Therefore, teachers need to be prepared, through professional development, on how to design effective comprehension strategies and how to use these strategies to teach their students. Improving reading skills is a top priority for all educators. The area of

focus for this research is improving reading comprehension through the use of different comprehension strategies and comprehension skills. Without a solid foundation of reading skills children will struggle throughout their life.

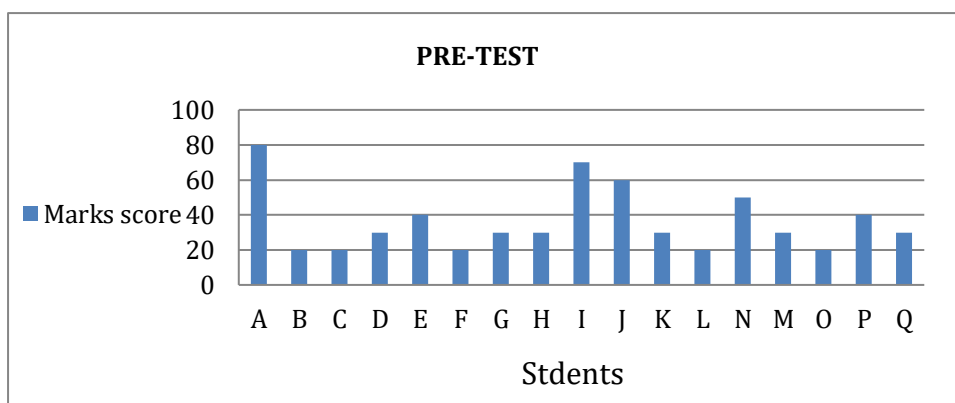
PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

RESEARCH PROBLEM : - this study aims to make an action plan for the poor reading comprehension skills of grade four students in Dayamoyee LP School, Hailakandi

EVIDENCE OF THE PROBLEM: - Reading proficiency is the most fundamental skill in academic learning and success in school. But in Assam, unfortunately **27.4% students in grade 3 cannot read small texts with comprehension, 39.6% students in grade 5 cannot read small texts with comprehension** (Assam's learning levels as per NAS 2017). The NEP 2020 has recognized Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as an urgent and necessary requirement to learning. Giving top priority to the foundational learning the "National Mission on Foundational Literacy & Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)" has been launched which calls for achieving universal FLN in grade 3 by 2026-27.

INVESTIGATION

To know the comprehend ability of the students; a reading test was conducted from class 4 English textbook on the first day. After the reading of the chapter, some questions were prepared and one test was conducted. The result of the test is shown in fig 1.



The correct rates of the ten answers are shown in appendix I. The answer of question no 1 is twenty. Out of 17 students 100% students has given the correct answer. Correct answer of question no 2 is School. Out of 17 students (12 students) 70% students has given the correct answer.

The test results showed scores ranging from the lowest percentile to the highest percentile (see the above table no 2). Out of the 17 students tested, 3 students got 40-50 percentile. Out of 17 students, 17 students 11 students scored 30 or less than 30%. Which indicated 11 students were at risk for reading comprehension failure.

FINDINGS OR CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

Out of 17 students in the class, 11 students were not able to read the sentence properly. This implies that almost all of the respondents were having problems in reading and reading comprehension or experiencing difficulty in learning to read. Students cannot read a sentence properly, so they cannot comprehend the text. Reading difficulty is one of the major problem for which students cannot comprehend the text.

CAUSES OF READING DIFFICULTY

1. Reading Difficulty in Terms of Phonological and Phonemic Awareness.

Respondents have difficulty in reading and learning how to read in terms of Phonological and Phonemic Awareness. Respondents have difficulty in recognizing and producing sounds and syllabication.

2. Reading Difficulty in Terms of Phonological and Phonemic Awareness as Pupil's Perspective

Word decoding and phonics was one of the reasons for reading difficulty. This implies that the respondents have difficulty in applying his/her knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words. This also means that the respondents have difficulty in letter-sound relationships, and how to sound out words.

3. Reading Difficulty in Terms of Vocabulary

Reading difficulty in terms of vocabulary is one of the reasons for reading difficulty experience by the respondents. Students have very less word stock. This denotes that the respondents have difficulty in understanding words to communicate effectively. This also implies that a reader cannot understand a text without knowing what most of the words mean.

4. Reading Difficulty in Terms of Fluency

Fluency is one of the reading difficulties that the respondents experience in learning how to read. The pupil's perspective also relates with that of the teacher's perspective. This implies that pupil respondents have difficulty to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. They were not confident in reading aloud.

5. Other Sources of Reading Disability

Other sources of reading disability particularly auditory processing, memory and attention were some of the problems. They often find it difficult to pay attention, listen to, and remember information presented orally. They may need more time to process information. This also means that they often do not recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even though the sounds themselves are loud and clear.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Smith and Johnson (1980) states that reading. Comprehension means the understanding, evaluating, utilizing of information gained through the interaction between reader and author. Reading comprehension means understanding what has or have been read.

Reading comprehension is an activity aimed to understand the messages of a particular text (Cahyono: 2011:49).

Comprehension is a special kind of readers comprehends by actively constructing meaning internally from interacting with the material that is read (Alexander, 1977: 160).

In 1997, Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmermann, partners at the Denver-based Public Education and Business Coalition, published "Mosaic of Thought," which explained how good readers use thinking strategies to build comprehension. Zimmermann followed with "Seven Keys to Comprehension," a work designed to give parents and teachers practical advice on teaching children to read strategically. She explains how readers use their background knowledge and imagination to visualize what they read. Zimmermann also reveals how children can learn to ask themselves questions to help them find important details and make key inferences. Finally, she shows how readers can put ideas together to form a complete understanding of what they've been trying to comprehend.

Reading comprehension is the act of combining information in a passage with prior knowledge in order to construct meaning. In addition, reading comprehension can be defined as a thinking process through which readers become aware of an idea, understand it in terms of their experiential background, and interpret it in relation to their own needs and purposes (Khoiriyah:2010:1).

Burhanuddin (1997: 49) stated that the low achievement of standing in reading caused by insufficient of basic knowledge had more effect on understanding of implied that an explicit information.

Adams and Bruce (1980 cited in Johnson D.D, 1984) argue, that "Without Prior knowledge, a complex object, such as a text, is not just difficult to interpret.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) have rightly stated that the schema in order to be functional in the process of comprehension, needs to be activated. Moreillon (2007) has thus rightly included

Activating Background Knowledge

Langer (1981) developed a Pre-Reading Plan (PRP) to help students activate prior knowledge before reading. The plan also helped the teacher in getting an awareness of the level of knowledge students possessed about a topic before reading. The plan includes:

- Eliciting free associations to a word or phrase from the reading material and writing it on the board,
- Asking students to reflect on the initial association, telling why they thought of the associations they had made.
- Asking them to talk about any new ideas that have resulted from the activity.

Strictly speaking, it is meaningless.

Previewing refers to the activity in which a written and oral preview is presented to students before they read a reading selection (Graves, Prens, & Cooke, 1985). According to Graves, Cooke, and La Berge (1983), previews are "introductory materials presented to students before they read specific selections" (p. 264).

Over the past few decades, several researchers have investigated the effects of previewing short stories on the reading comprehension of L1 learners with varying ages (Graves & Cooke, 1980; Graves, Cooke, & La Berge, 1983; Graves & Palmer, 1981). These studies demonstrated that the previewing did avail to the comprehension of the students at elementary and high school levels. Neuman (1988) also confirmed the facilitative effects of previewing on the comprehension of fourth graders.

"Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. If a student read the text quickly and accurately, he will be able to understand the text what he read. It is important because it frees students to understand what they read" (Adler, 2001, p.31). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1995), 44% of fourth graders were not fluently reading grade level stories even though the stories were read twice silently before reading the material aloud for testing. Teachers can help develop reading fluency by modeling fluent reading for their students. Having students practice repeated oral reading is another way to improve fluency (Adler, 2001). As students improve their reading fluency, they also start creating mental images of what they read, which helps in the understanding of the text (Block & Israel, 2005).

The National Reading Panel identified the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, teacher education, and met cognition as important components to improving reading scores across the nation (NRP, 2000).

SOLUTION STRATEGY

METHODOLOGY@Descriptive method) -The study is based on mainly primary data. The secondary data also collected from different sources like official publications of governments, websites, journals both at the centre and states. The primary data are collected from the selected school the school where the action research was conducted.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES- The study is based on students of 4th grade standard of Doyamoyee School, Hailakandi District. Schools have been selected from the view of convenience.

After conducting reading assessment test to know their level of reading performance and reading comprehension status, following strategies were adopted with a four week action plan and found successful.

1. Providing Background Knowledge- Familiarity with concept of a reading material being read, both through experience of knowledge can make a reader easy to comprehend.

2. Previewing /Context cues -To give prediction of the story, picture of whole story was drawn on the blackboard & students were asked to tell what was drawn on the blackboard. So students were getting prior knowledge of the story. Through this process students were able to predict about the general content of the text. Strategies used were

KWL+

K stands for “what I Know”

W stands for “what I Want to know”

L stands for “what I Learned”

+ stands for “what I still want to know”

This technique involves creating a table with the four elements of the KWL+ acronym as columns. While previewing and after the process is done, the things were written down which was supposed to manage to obtain from the session. What did the students want to know, what did they already know, what did they learn, and what do they still need to learn? The KWL+ previewing strategy has extremely helped the students to comprehend the text.

The four “P”s

Purpose setting for the session-Determine the goal for the previewing and reading session. Before the class it was determine what to give to the students in the session.Preview. Illustrations from the title, and other information that is easily available throughout the text. (First and last paragraphs, headings and subheadings, italics, bold print, first and last sentences of body paragraphs)

Prior Knowledge -Discussion regarding the prior knowledge of the topic in order to determine the level of depth which is needed to go while reading the text

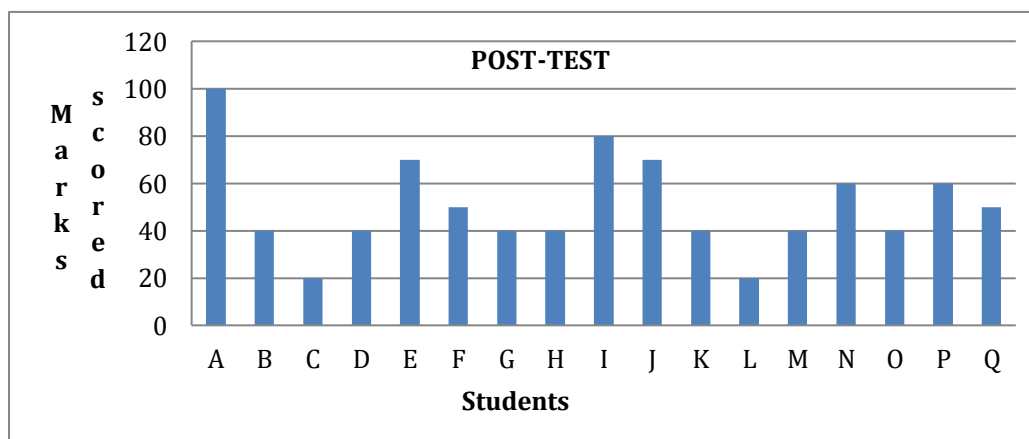
Predict- To predict what the author is going to present in the chapter, in order to better understand the topic or concepts that students are looking to comprehend.

2. Questioning and response generation- During reading practice, students were asked questions regarding factual or contextual knowledge from the text. So students were very alert during practice reading. This process also helps the students to comprehend the text more easily.

3. Increasing vocabulary stock-From every new chapter 10 new word meaning were given to students as home task. In the next class students were asked to tell the meaning of the words.

4 .Comprehension monitoring- This is identifying areas of difficulty while reading, using think-aloud procedures to pinpoint difficulties, looking back in the text, restating or rephrasing text, or looking forward to solve a problem. Steps or strategies used during comprehension monitoring were Stopping after reading a paragraph and asking question from this paragraph, to the students, to know whether the students understood the paragraph or not. Students were asked to write the story in their own words. Pointing out words, in which students were facing difficulties. Students were also given prior knowledge of the story by drawing pictures on the blackboard.

Results after the four-Week Program -After the four-week program, there was a reading test again. The reading materials were the similar text. The results showed progress after the four weeks, compared with the first test, as shown in fig. 2



Comparison of 1st test (pre- intervention) and Final test (post intervention)

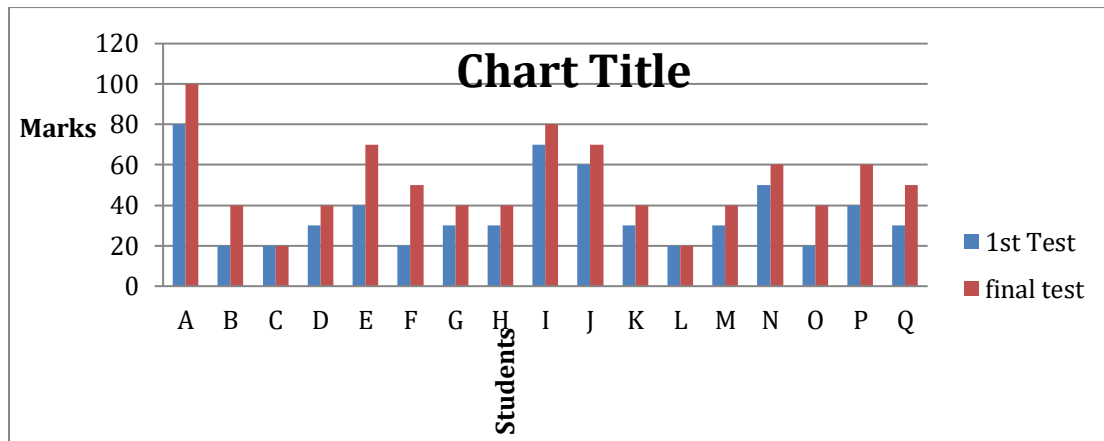


Fig 3

As seen in Figure, 2(C, L) of the 17 students maintained the same scores from the pre-test to the post-test assessment. Fifteen of the 17 students showed an increase in their post-test assessment score. One student out of the 17 students scored 100% or better on their post-test assessment.

Evaluation is an important step in action research, in which it does not simple mean to tell right from wrong for things done. Running a workshop for discussion or consulting experts for advice can help, but doing a deep analysis from fields like cognitive linguistics, sociology, pedagogic psychology, and even cultural difference is also much significant to both classroom teachers and researchers, for the deep analysis is necessary for their new ongoing cycle of action, which is called ‘action research spiral’ (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988).

By using different strategies of reading comprehension throughout four week action plan, almost 90% students have increased their reading performance. We can see the clear picture of the performance from fig No 3.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION:

Reading is an important skill that needed to be successful and productive in student’s life. Therefore, it is important for educators to provide the appropriate support instruction to help today’s students to become a skillful reader. In this study we can see that student practice of the reading comprehension strategies which included **Providing Background Knowledge**, **Previewing /Context cues**, predicting, **Increasing vocabulary stock** making connections, visualizing, questioning, and summarizing had a great positive impact on student comprehension. The results of the post intervention test showed an increase in student knowledge of reading strategies. I feel the majority of my students are now able to use the predicting, making connections, and visualizing strategies in small groups and independently. But students still need guided practice of these reading strategies. it was apparent to me that the fourth grade students had the cognitive ability to understand and use the comprehension strategies on independent level. A teacher should always give priority on the use of reading strategies rather than simply teaching the text.

APPENDIX I

Pre-intervention test result

| Name of the student | Marks score % | Name of the student | Marks score % |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| A | 80 | J | 60 |
| B | 20 | K | 30 |
| C | 20 | L | 20 |
| D | 30 | M | 30 |
| E | 40 | N | 50 |
| F | 20 | O | 20 |
| G | 30 | P | 40 |
| H | 30 | Q | 30 |
| I | 70 | | |

APPENDIX II**Post –intervention test result**

| Name of the student | Marks score % | Name of the student | Marks score % |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| A | 100 | J | 70 |
| B | 40 | K | 40 |
| C | 20 | L | 20 |
| D | 40 | M | 40 |
| E | 70 | N | 60 |
| F | 50 | O | 40 |
| G | 40 | P | 60 |
| H | 40 | Q | 50 |
| I | 80 | | |

APPENDIX III**Comparison of pre-intervention and post-intervention test result**

| Name of the student | Marks score % 1 st test | Marks score % Final test | Name of the student | Marks score % 1 st test | Marks score % final test |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | 80 | 100 | J | 60 | 70 |
| B | 20 | 40 | K | 30 | 40 |
| C | 20 | 20 | L | 20 | 20 |
| D | 30 | 40 | M | 30 | 40 |
| E | 40 | 70 | N | 50 | 60 |
| F | 20 | 50 | O | 20 | 40 |
| G | 30 | 40 | P | 40 | 60 |
| H | 30 | 40 | Q | 30 | 50 |
| I | 70 | 80 | | | |

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