

DIAGNOSIS OF READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *Language is the vehicle for effective communication. Every student needs to develop the skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing then only they will be able to communicate properly in the society. Reading is one of the ways people all over the world can enhance their knowledge hub and get exposed to the experiences of other people. Writing is a productive and active process of the mind by which the writer creates meaning. This paper is an outcome of diagnosis of reading and writing skills of primary school students. The study adopted survey technique for data collection. The participants of the study were 460 fifth grade students selected through simple random sampling technique from Wayanad. Out of 460 students, 178 were from Government and 182 were from Aided and 100 were from Private schools. The results revealed that there exists significant difference between government, aided and private Primary school students in their reading and writing skills. There is no significant difference in their reading and writing skills based on gender.*

KEYWORDS: Reading and Writing Skills, Primary School Students, Second Language, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Presently English is a pivotal subject in curriculum for imparting education. In many Asian countries, to cultivate citizens with a deeper and more global perspective and competitiveness in the new era of globalization, English language is always highly valued as a prescribed course by elementary schools (Singapore's Ministry of Education, 2010). Every student needs to evolve skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing so that they will be placed in good jobs in future.

Among the four main skills, reading is treated as a basic skill, inadequacy of which can effect student's scholastic growth and achievement (Pugh, Pawan, and Antonmmarchi, 2000). Learning to read is critical to students 'scholastic achievement and has an enormous impact on their emotional and social development all through life, Lyons (2003). Ignoring the reading skill in children's early lives can have adverse effect on their, scholastic achievement especially difficulties in being motivated to read in various scholastic disciplines. Goodman

(1976) stated that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game which involves the interaction between thought and language. Smith and Meredith (1988), and Keifa (1986) cited by Acheampong&Acquaah (2015) define reading as an active process of reconstructing meaning from language represented by graphic symbols (letter). Reading difficulties are the most frequent learning problem among students and the main reason for scholastic decline, Rasinski and Hoffman (2003). Reading is considered as an important pathway to the development of personality trait as well as the development of social, economic and civic life (Holden 2004).

Krashen (2004) states that, to acquire language skills for second language learners, reading is one of the most effective ways in context. When compared to the other main skills- listening, speaking, and writing- reading skill is considered both a complex and a difficult skill, since it connects the other three main skills, Ibrahim Ahmed and Rajab (2015) and McLaughlin (1987). This is due to the fact that reading in a foreign language is concerned with decoding texts in that foreign language and deriving meaning from print (Carrel, 1995). It is important for teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at all age groups to be cognizant of the processes that are involved in reading and how reading can be taught and developed in EFL context (Weaver, 2002).

Reading is a varied process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation (Owen 1994) cited by Acheampong&Acquaah, (2015). It is recognized as an activity which involves the use of mind to translate written symbols into meaningful, that does not limit the ability to understand, articulate freely and the intrinsic support to pursue reading.

Adewole (2001) asserts that to lay a strong foundation is the aim of any reading programme that can benefit pupils throughout their lives in scholastic pursuits.

Writing is an important area of literacy that supports comprehension, critical and innovative thinking over content areas. According to UNESCO, writing skills are part of literacy skills. Students should have a conducive environment to practice the habits and processes of successful writers. Literature review has revealed that writing skills are the highest language skills paralleled to the development of brain and language involvement. Writing skill plays a vital role for the instruction of second-language learners because it is not only an effective tool for the evolvment of academic language proficiency and a vital skill for academic success, but it also allows second language learners to enhance their perception of knowledge gaps (Warchauer, 2010). Writing is an active, constructive process of the mind by which the writer establishes meaning .It also an reciprocal technique that takes place between the writer and the reader by means of the text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ediger (2001) states, children's educational progress in an EFL context has achieved increasing attention due to the growing number of Asian countries making English instruction compulsory from the budding age. In addition to second language reading, which is always considered the most important skill for second language learners in academic contexts (Grabe 1991), early writing instruction is also becoming more and more meaningful. (Holmes, 2003; Whitney et al., 2008).

Lawal (1982) conducted a diagnostic testing of reading achievement of selected secondary schools in Samaru, Zaria, and identified the reading problems in the following areas as: slow reading, mispronunciation, substitution, omission, nervousness, reversal, sight, vocabulary, not up to grade level, and lack of comprehension.

Ojo (2003) found that the major causes of students' lower achievement in English and other subjects in school is their inability to read effectively, which, is largely due to the attitude of learners toward reading.

Woo and her colleagues (2011) investigated how the 5th graders in Hong Kong used Wiki in the writing of English as a second language (ESL). They found that the students in their case study enjoyed using the Wiki in the team work and benefited from the collaborative writing activities. Hayes and Ge (2008) used a mixed research method to investigate the writing performance of American fifth graders in a Computer supported cooperative Learning (CSCL) environment. The results showed greater gains in writing performance and motivation to write from the students using the software than from the control group using paper and pencil.

Objectives

1. To find the level of reading skills of primary school students.
2. To find the level of writing skills of primary school students.
3. To find out, is there any difference between the male and female students in the reading and writing skills of primary children?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between the reading skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students.
2. There is no significant difference between the writing skills of Government, Aided and Private, primary school students.
3. There is no significant difference between the reading skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students based on gender.
4. There is no significant difference between the writing skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students based on gender.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted survey technique for data collection. A questionnaire, 'Diagnostic Test for English Language' (DTEL), was developed by the investigators to evaluate the reading and writing skills of students. Researchers collected 1 to 5th grade English reader of the Kerala State and based on that the investigator has constructed 60 questions on reading and writing skills. It was given to the experts for establishing the content validity and face validity. The participants in the study were 460 students of 5th grade selected by random sampling technique. Out of the total population the researchers selected 30 percentage of

population as a sample of the study. From the sample 178 were from Government and 182 were from Aided and 100 were from Private primary schools students in Wayanad District.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 1: Mean S.D and t-value showing the differences in the reading skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students based on Gender

| Sl.No | Type of Schools | Gender | N | Mean | SD | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------|--------|----|-------|------|---------|
| 1 | Government | Male | 92 | 4.033 | 3.5 | 0.013** |
| | | Female | 86 | 5.99 | 4.84 | |
| 2 | Aided | Male | 95 | 6.55 | 4.14 | 0.199** |
| | | Female | 87 | 6.87 | 4.73 | |
| 3 | Private | Male | 45 | 11.60 | 4.83 | 0.022** |
| | | Female | 55 | 12.51 | 3.10 | |

** Not significant at 0.05 level

It is inferred from the Table 1 that the calculated 't' value between male & female government school students as 0.013 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated 't' value between male & female Aided school students 0.199 is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and also the calculated 't' value between male & female private school students as 0.022 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference between the reading skills of government, aided and private primary school students based on gender' is accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference seen in the reading skills of government, aided and private primary school students based on gender.

Table 2: Mean S.D and t-value showing the differences in the writing skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students based on Gender

| Sl.No | Type of Schools | Gender | N | Mean | SD | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------|--------|----|-------|------|---------|
| 1 | Government | Male | 92 | 6.29 | 5.31 | 0.064** |
| | | Female | 86 | 8.48 | 6.11 | |
| 2 | Aided | Male | 95 | 10.32 | 6.72 | 0.301** |
| | | Female | 87 | 9.91 | 7.51 | |
| 3 | Private | Male | 45 | 15.13 | 5.24 | 0.367** |
| | | Female | 55 | 17.43 | 5.71 | |

** Not significant at 0.05 level

It is inferred from the Table 2 that the calculated 't' value between male & female government school students as 0.064 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. So also the calculated 't' value between male & female aided school students as 0.301 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and also the calculated 't' value between Male & Female Private school students as 0.367 which is less than the table value

1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference between the writing skills of government, aided and private primary school students based on gender cannot be accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference seen in the writing skills of government, aided and private primary school students based on gender.

Table 3: Shows the difference among the reading skills of Government, Aided and Private Primary school students

| Sources of variance | Sums | df | Mean | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|---------|-----|---------|-------|-------|
| Between Groups | 3325.08 | 2 | 1662.54 | 87.12 | 0.00* |
| Within Groups | 8720.89 | 457 | 19.08 | | |

*Significant at 0.05 level

The 'p' value for the variable 'reading skill' is 0.00 ($f=87.12$, $df=2,457$) is significant at 0.05 level. Thus the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference between the reading skills of Government, Aided and Private primary school students' cannot be accepted. It is concluded that there is a significant difference seen in the reading skills of government, aided and private primary school students.

Table 4: Shows the difference among the writing skills of Government, Aided and Private Primary school students

| Sources of variance | Sum | df | Mean | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|----------|-----|---------|-------|-------|
| Between Groups | 5235.93 | 2 | 2617.96 | 65.89 | 0.00* |
| Within Groups | 18157.06 | 457 | 39.73 | | |

* Significant at 0.05 level

From the table it is evident that the 'p' value for the variable writing skill 0.00 ($f=65.89$, $df=2,457$) is significant at 0.05 level. It indicates that there is a significance difference between the writing skills of private, government and aided primary school students. Thus the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference between the writing skills of government, aided and private primary school students' cannot be accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers should give pivotal emphasis for reading and writing skills at primary level.
2. Curriculum should be framed in such a way that it should enhance the reading and writing skills of primary school students.
3. Teachers of English at primary school need to have the expertise to engage their students with delightful experiences of studying a second language in general and reading and writing in particular.
4. Teachers should plan for an effective programme of reading and writing instruction in the classroom.

5. Teachers should help the students to improve their readiness towards reading and writing of English.
6. Parents should stimulate the reading and writing environment for their children and also encourage them to read story books daily.

CONCLUSION

The skill development needs special care and attention at primary level. Learning to read and write are the indispensable educational achievements in the primary school pupils. Reading and writing are closely related and are the gateway to learning productivity in today's digital age. Government, teachers and parents have major roles to play in the education of pupils in primary schools. With the appropriate reading and writing materials, a conducive environment, and teachers with adequate educational qualifications, good reading skills will help produce pupils who perform well in other subjects.

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