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Importance of Reading Skill: Some Hurdles Faced By Students in Rural Area

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Language is the means of communication. In the entire creation, man alone is capable of speech. One of the greatest achievements of man is his ability to use language.

C. Rajagopalachari said that English was the gift of goddess Saraswati to India. Language plays a great part in the mental, emotional and social development of a person. The English language has exercised a great influence over the past two centuries in shaping the political, social, economic, intellectual and cultural life of India. Thus English had acquired a supreme position by the turn of the nineteenth century. English is learnt through skills of language. It is only by more and more reading that an individual acquires mastery over this skill. Therefore Reading is a skill that has to be taught systematical.

The main objectives of teaching Reading Skill are i) To make them to read with proper pronunciation, ii) To make them able to read with tone, stress and intonation, iii) To make them to read with proper speed with understanding, iv) To make them fluent to read.

We must motivate rural learners because learning of English is very sad. To accomplish the goal of achieving ability in reading, researcher try to develop learners awareness of their reading process, giving students sufficient practice in use of various reading activities with some tasks. The researcher suggests that the learners should develop fluency and vocabulary skill. The model reading of the teacher helps the learners to improve the pronunciation including stress and intonation. The researcher has drawn the following conclusion: i) Learners read with proper speed, ii) Learners read with correct pronunciation, stress and intonation and iii) learners read with understanding

Introduction:

Language is the means of communication. In the entire creation, man alone is capable of speech. He has innate capacity for speaking. It is through speech that he is able to mix himself with other fellow human beings, share his views with them and thus lead a happy and contented life. Language is based on man's ability to speak. The written form of language is derivative and secondary as it is derived from the spoken form. Language has always had a place in human activity. One of the greatest achievements of man is his ability to use language. Language, in fact, is a great tool that has made human civilization possible on this earth.

Language is a means of communication thoughts, feelings and ideas by human beings. Man alone uses language for purpose of communication. In the words of Jespersen, 'Language is a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to human thoughts and feelings, especially to impart them to others.'

Edward Sapir says: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". According to Dwight Bollinger, "Language is species-specific. It is a unique human trait, shared by the cultures so diverse and by individuals physically and mentally so unlike to one another". English is learnt through skills of language. The English language has exercised a great influence over the past two centuries in shaping the political, social, economic, intellectual and cultural life of India. It is only by more and more reading that an individual acquires mastery over this skill. Therefore Reading is a skill that has to be taught systematical.

Importance of Language:

Language plays a great part in the mental, emotional and social development of a person. The English language has exercised a great influence over the past two centuries in shaping the political, social, economic, intellectual and cultural life of India and is still serving as a dynamic instrument of social change. It provides easy access to the world's rich literature, science and technology, radio and TV and an ever-growing number of books, periodicals and newspapers. In India English was introduced two centuries ago by East India Company first for trade and commerce. Later the language shaped the political, administrative and educational life of the country in several far reaching ways unforeseen by the reformers themselves. Lord Macaulay in his famous Minute of 1835 proposed to produce through the medium of English education, a class of persons "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in millions, in morals and intellect". That thinking eminently suited the rulers of the day; looking back however, one can say that it has benefited many Indians themselves.

English language was soon introduced at all stages of education. It was taught for some time by native speakers in schools and colleges. Later many Indian professors and teachers took their place, mastered the language and taught it very effectively. Even the English education slowly but surely helped the growth of nationalism and political institutions in the country which in turn helped our Freedom Movement to a great extent.

English education was gateway for jobs for many Indians. The subject of English had acquired great prestige in college and society. English thus had acquired a supreme position by the turn of the nineteenth century. English is one of the five languages of the United Nations. It is first language in UK, USA, Canada and Australia. It is also spoken and read by millions of Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Africans and South Americans as a second or foreign language. One in ten of the world's population speaks English. English has the richest

vocabulary. More than half of the world's newspapers, and technical and scientific periodicals are in English. It is also the language of world of sport, radio and TV and telecommunication, travel and trade, fashion and glamour and computers as well. In fact, there is not one English today, but many 'Englishes', though its essential structure has remained the same.

Mahatma Gandhi advocated the development of Indian languages and advised against being imitators of the West in everything we do. He also said that a few people should learn English to represent India abroad. C. Rajagopalachari said that English was the gift of goddess Saraswati to India. With the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950 English was allowed to continue as our official language for fifteen years, during which period Hindi the national language would be developed to take its place. But there was opposition to the introduction of Hindi, from the Southern States. Consequently in 1963 Parliament by an Act decided to accord English the status of associate official language of India for an indefinite period. English serves as a link language between States and Centre. It is the medium of instruction in professional colleges and universities.

Need of the problem:

English is taught as a second language throughout our country, the methods adopted in teaching this language vary from area and teacher to teacher. Our teachers used traditional grammar translation method which result the skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing are sadly neglected.

The teacher of English believes in reading out the lesson and explaining the meaning and he dictates answer to probable questions. Where this is not done, students buy bazaars guides to seek help from.

Reading skills are not taught systematically in our colleges as much as they are in advanced countries. The situation at home is also worst. Large section of parents in our country is illiterate or semi-literate. Reading remains the most neglected skill in the present situation. Therefore this important skill has got to be taught in our colleges to develop English language of our students.

In the present situation reading does not enjoy the importance it deserves. The need for silent reading is not properly understood. Too much attention is given to examinations; teaching techniques and methodology are largely decided on by the requirement of examinations.

Our college libraries are either poorly equipped or underutilized. It is the duty of teachers to give his pupils systematic training in reading right from the beginning of their educational career. Even in educated families parents hardly find time to help their sons and daughters with their reading. Most of them are poor readers themselves and their reading is often limited to newspapers and magazines.

Reading remains the most neglected skill in the present situation. Pupils do not have the motivation to read any material other than their prescribed text books. This probably applies to English as well as other Indian languages. It is appropriate to quote from the United States Education Commission report-1964, which rightly relates most of the problems of colleges to the lack of reading ability among students.

Educational Value of Problem

Reading helps the learners in rural area to understand various things of the world. It is improved through reading newspaper, magazines, journals, textbooks, notes, graphs, charts, pictures and diagrams.

Therefore Reading is a skill that has to be taught systematically because:

- 1) Where there is little reading, there is little learning.
- 2) It is only by more and more reading that an individual acquires mastery over this skill.
- 3) An individual's knowledge depends upon his reading ability.
- 4) Further education depends upon the quality and quantity of reading done by the individual students.
- 5) The study of literature demands good reading habits.
- 6) In India English play the role of library language and this requires our students to master this skill. We can only neglect it at our own peril.

Hypothesis

1. Where there is little reading there is little learning.
2. Teacher gives ideal reading of English then student can acquires skill of reading.
3. Teacher gives some magazines, newspapers or story books to students to create interest among them, the reading skill will improve.

Objectives

1. To make them to read with proper pronunciation.
2. To make them able to read with tone, stress and intonation.
3. To make them to read with proper speed with understanding.
4. To make them fluent to read.

Scope and Limitation

The research is undertaken on 20 students of B.A 1st year Marathi medium of Degloor College, Degloor, because the students come from rural area. The research only studies the reading skill of the students.

Methods for collecting data

The researcher has collected data through Observation, Interviews and Questionnaires. The researcher has observed the natural behavior of the students group. Interviews are conducted with educational experts and language teachers. Questionnaires are prepared for Students i.e. Pre-tests and Post-tests for improving Reading Skill and Language Teachers.

Analysis of Data

Language learning is a skill. It involves the development of four-fold skills on the part of the learner. These skills of the language learning are inter-related. The first two skills, viz., listening and speaking are fundamental in language learning. These skills pave the path for learning the other two skills – reading and writing. Out of all these skills, reading is, perhaps, the most neglected skill in teaching language at college i.e. UG level.

Reading involves not just the physical recognition of words but the interpretation of the message they convey. The speed in reading depends on the eye span and the accurate return sweep to the next line. While reading out a passage, it depends upon the reader's ability to produce the sounds correctly and in proper sequence with stress and intonation. At the same the learner should read in meaningful phrases. These skills have to be systematically taught by the teacher.

After taking pre-test, it is found that the students are very poor in reading skill especially in pronunciation, stress and intonation. The result of pre- test is only 31.83%. the teacher gave guidance them and the result of achievement test(post-test) is 73.25%.

Good pronunciation required sustained practice in listening. Students need good models of pronunciation. At higher stage, reading has mainly three important purposes i.e. reading with speed, reading with comprehension and reading for pleasure. Efficiency in reading can be increased by increasing the speed of reading, varying the speed, in learning prose and poetry, encouraging the students to read outside the course book, to read between the lines and to derive pleasure from reading.

After giving information about different approaches and skills and some reading activities, the students reading ability grew gradually. It is shown by the result of pre-test and post-test. The result of pre-test for speed in reading is 31% and the result of the post-test is 65%. The result of pre-test for understanding in reading skill is 32.15% and the result of post-test is 72%.

After collecting the data and analyzing it, it is found that students do not understand what they read. They need adequate/ proper preparation, special instructions, examples and practice with four skills.

In conclusion, the research says that learners should be motivated to read widely. Reading sessions should be followed by comprehension tests. The students should be able to recognize words and phrases. Learners should develop desirable silent reading habits to acquire reasonable speed in reading and locate central idea of passages. Read aloud with correct pronunciation with stress and intonation. Finally learners should read with comprehension.

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