

Understanding the Challenges Behind Poor English Reading Comprehension in Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

This research identifies the causes of secondary school pupils' low reading comprehension scores in English. The goal of this research is to identify these elements and provide solutions that will help students improve their reading comprehension skills in English. According to Kachru (1996), English is ranked outside the inner circle as the second language of Pakistani students. The data is gathered via the use of tests and interviews. Many things contribute to students' inability to understand what they read in English, including a lack of vocabulary knowledge, a tendency to cram, and a lack of motivation to develop their reading skills for purposes other than passing exams. Encouraging pupils to read may help them improve their reading comprehension skills.

Reading, Comprehension, and Methods of Teaching Languages in English

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify the causes of secondary school students' low levels of English reading comprehension and to provide strategies for improving classroom instruction. Cunningham and Allington (2006) and Fountas and Pinnell (2001) both agree that "the reading is thinking" when it comes to literacy teaching. Reading fluently is a crucial talent. It is a foundational piece on the path to enlightenment. Since English is the language of instruction and study in Pakistan, the government has made reading comprehension a priority in its language strategy. Research and higher education are very challenging without improving one's reading comprehension skills in English. Reading is the process of understanding and making sense of concepts represented by words on a page. A lack of this skill would obviously lead readers to encounter bizarre symbols that they would be unable to decipher. The capacity to distinguish between non-linguistic markings and the letters of a given language is a very low-level reading skill. In this

article, we will try to identify the obstacles that prevent students from improving their English reading comprehension and then come up with a workable solution to those challenges. Conventional approaches to reading instruction have become irrelevant due to the lightning-fast evolution of the educational landscape. There have been new approaches to reading instruction that focus on

improving students' ability to read and understand written English. The focus of this study is on strategies that may be used in the classroom to enhance students' reading comprehension and proficiency.

Everyone involved in secondary education may benefit from reading this material. Future studies may use this data to guide their efforts to enhance reading comprehension. Additionally, we will think at how reading helps with other language skills and how reading is incorporated into our school systems.

1.1. Study Aims _ To identify reading comprehension issues and problems _ To get a grasp of the many reading comprehension approaches _ To help students become better readers _ To provide solutions to these challenges.

1.2. Study Questions _ What are the most important elements that influence the ability to understand what people read in English?

_ How much do other language abilities benefit from reading proficiency?

1.3. Proposed Theory

"If the elements impacting English reading comprehension are identified, the proposed pedagogical fixes can enhance students' reading comprehension."

1.4. Why This Study Is Important

This research is very important in many ways. It will provide valuable information on reading abilities.

The study's suggestions and recommendations should prove to be very beneficial in enhancing reading comprehension and reading instruction approaches. Secondary school students' ability to read English will greatly benefit from the study. Reading comprehension might be improved with the use of

this research, which will assist syllabus setters in include appropriate reading elements in the books. The higher-ups at Examinations Boards may use this research report as a guide to include reading comprehension questions on tests, which should encourage students pay greater attention to this area of study. The relevant authorities will also be able to use this research to better understand the challenges, issues, and variables that impede reading comprehension.

1.5. Study Restrictions

Given the constraints of time and resources, this study will only include the following schools: _ Dinga's Govt. High School for Boys _ Channan's Millet High School _ Noor Jamal's Unique Science Academy _ Dinga's Dar-e-Arqam High School for Girls

Dinga and its environs are the only focus of this investigation. Some of the schools are chosen from inside Dinga city, while others are chosen from the surrounding villages.

2. Literature Review

Reading is like playing a game of guessing where the goal is for readers to decipher the encoded information (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Being able to read and understand what you read is a crucial ability for expanding your knowledge. Since more and more individuals became able to read and write thanks to the creation of the writing script, humanity has advanced. Reading well allows one to make use of previously written content for future advancement, while writing well records one's prior knowledge and study. If you want to know more, reading is a good first step. Even the first revelation in the Quran, "IQRA," meaning "READ," makes its significance plain. Reading and study are also highly valued in many other Islamic texts. Reading for understanding is one of the primary goals of reading. The goals distinguish between various forms of readings. According to Carrell and Grabe (2010), there are many ways in which people read: scanning, skimming, learning, critical assessment, integrating information, and overall idea/understanding.

According to Carver (1992), scanning is a kind of reading that requires the identification of a visual form, such as a number, word, or phrase. In order to read with comprehension, one must engage in visual and semantic processing as well as mentally create a summary of the text (ibid). For the purpose of learning, reading necessitates not just summaries of texts but also other informational chunks that are further developed in other sets of knowledge (ibid). When a reader takes in new information, processes it,

and then applies what they've learned to previously learned material, they are engaging in reading comprehension (Koda, 2007). According to the model proposed by Kachru (1996), English is positioned in the second circle, the outer circle, in Pakistan when it comes to second language acquisition and use. English is the *de jure* language of Pakistan's government, military, and universities.

According to Coleman (2012), the English language is often connected with power and is spoken by the privileged class. Text comprehension in a second language (in this case, English) is more involved than in a first language. Variations in second language reading may be seen at the individual level as well as across demographics such as age, education, socioeconomic status, and training (Carrell & Grabe, 2010). Readers of second language texts must have a sophisticated cognitive capacity distinct from that required for reading first language texts (ibid).

A wide variety of abilities are required for successful reading comprehension (Cain et al., 2004). Text, context, task, and reader are only a few of the many aspects that influence reading comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Samuels, 1983; Snow, 2002). As mentioned in Bauman's 2009 analysis, one of the primary elements influencing reading comprehension is vocabulary (Nagy, 1998).

One of the many important factors that influence reading comprehension is vocabulary. For second language (L2) reading comprehension, many scholars have proposed varying amounts of vocabulary. To determine how much vocabulary is required for reading comprehension, Laufer (1989) conducted research. She comes to the conclusion that in order for the reader to understand the whole text, 95% of the tokens should be known. The required level of understanding, according to Nation (2001), should be about 98%. According to these studies, knowing the right words is crucial for understanding what you read. Students will struggle to grasp complex ideas presented in written materials if their vocabulary is inadequate. According to research (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Rupley & Nichols, 2005), students with reading comprehension issues often have a small or lacking vocabulary.

The ability to read and understand texts is influenced by reading speed and rate.

In research conducted by Carver (1992), it was shown that proficient readers of a first language can read 200 to 300 words per minute. Reading fluency develops at varying rates for children of different ages and in different grades.

Speed reading in a second language is aided by word recognition and comprehension. When it comes to understanding literature, background knowledge is equally crucial. According to research by Floyd and

Carrell (1987), students who are not already well-versed in the target language's culture may improve their reading comprehension skills by direct instruction in that culture. Students whose interest in and understanding of the subject matter is strong tend to do better academically than those whose interest is low in either (Carrell & Wise, 1998).

The ability to comprehend written material is heavily dependent on the reader's prior knowledge and interest in the subject matter.

Students' capacity to read is impacted by meta-cognition as well (Brown et al., 1986). Two distinct facets of meta-cognition are one's own knowledge and the ability to regulate one's own behavior while reading. When compared to less proficient or inexperienced readers, those who are able to read fluently and with ease have a higher degree of action control during reading, as well as awareness of meta-cognition (Baker & Beall, 2009).

According to Pressley (2006), proficient readers use many ways to fully understand what they read. According to Anderson (1991), readers who use a variety of tactics tend to do better on reading comprehension tests. Just because you're familiar with many tactics doesn't imply you'll automatically be a good reader; what matters is that you know how to put those strategies to use (ibid).

3. Research Methodology

The character of this study is mostly descriptive. The research for this project will be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Following these steps will make up the survey approach used in this study.

3.1. Tools for the Study

a. Documentation

Students' reading comprehension faults and weak spots may be checked using the worksheet. The purpose of this test is to investigate the types of errors.

c. Conversations on the spot

The instructors and students will be interviewed.

Through student interviews, we may learn about the challenges kids have while trying to understand what they read and what they can do to improve their reading comprehension. Teachers' perspectives on students' errors and the causes of their low English reading comprehension may be gleaned via conversations with these individuals.

When it comes to fixing these issues and circumstances, their advice will be invaluable.

3.2. Demographics

From each school, fifteen tenth graders will be chosen to take the exam and five will be interviewed;

also, five instructors with a Master of Arts in English (Literature or Linguistics) degree will be chosen to participate in the interviews.

3.3. Experiment

For this study, we will randomly choose 60 students from each school's 10th grade. This research will interview 20 students. In all, twenty educators will be chosen for the study and interview processes.

For every kind of selection, a systematic random approach will be employed.

section 3.4: test

The purpose of having pupils read aloud from a text is to test their reading comprehension and speed. In order to assess the students' multilingual competence, we have them define a few challenging terms in both English and Urdu. Students are requested to provide responses to certain queries in order to assess the grammar and organization of their writing. When evaluating students' reading comprehension, it is useful to look at their sentence structure. This will show how much of an impact students' syntax has on their understanding of the text, and whether or not students with strong syntax also understand the material. If the students' responses are pertinent to the questions, it will be possible to gauge their level of understanding from their work. Predicting how well kids will do on critical writing assignments is another benefit. Students will have exceptional reading comprehension if they write critically, which aids in making reading comprehension judgments. Integrating reading with other abilities may be achieved by reading aloud and writing.

4. Results & Findings

4.1. Test

The sample size for this exam is 60 kids from 4 separate schools.

The fact that pupils cannot provide the English definitions of the challenging terms asked for is the first thing that this exam reveals. Not a single one of the students has a clue what any of the terms imply. The investigation uncovered the cause for this finding, which is that pupils are not taught the definitions of words from English to English. They don't have any opportunities to learn the meanings of English words or memorize them. The outcomes differ among students when they are asked to write the Urdu definitions of challenging English terms. Few students can explain the meaning of more than 70% of the words, a few can explain the meaning of more than 50% of the words, and many can't explain the meaning of more than 40% of the terms. Because pupils are trained to remember the English word meanings in Urdu, the consequences of delivering meaning in Urdu vary from providing meaning in

English. Learning new words and their meanings in both languages is made much easier by this kind of instruction. Different outcomes are seen when students are requested to read aloud the chapter in order to assess their reading speed and word recognition abilities. The number of pupils who can read and pronounce the text with ease is rather low. A significant portion of the student body struggles with reading fluency, with many others unable to even decipher individual words. Because they must decipher an alien alphabet, these words seem foreign to them.

Many pupils struggle to form even the most basic sentences when asked to respond to the questions that are presented at the conclusion of the reading. It seems like the subject verb agreement is rather poor. Even the location of the verb, assisting verb, adjective, or adverb is a mystery to them. Very poor usage of preposition. Not all pupils correctly utilize the preposition, and others don't even use it when it's required.

To answer the questions, some students simply highlight relevant passages and put them in front of the questions. They appear to have trouble understanding the subject at hand since they are offering a different answer—one that pertains to a different question entirely—instead of the original. Quite a few pupils struggle with the broken language questions.

4.2. Dialogues

Interviews with students follow the conclusion of the exam. Issues and elements that make the text difficult to understand are the focus of the students' questions. A variety of viewpoints are made known. A small number of pupils feel that their vocabulary is severely lacking in English. Unfortunately, they only learn English vocabulary in Urdu class, thus they struggle to understand the chapter because of the unfamiliar terms and complex sentences. The curriculum is not well-designed to teach pupils a fairly good quantity of vocabulary that is helpful in everyday speech, according to some students. There is a significant lexical gap between textbooks and other forms of popular media, such as newspapers, novels, radio, television, etc. A small number of pupils have voiced their belief that the current approach of teaching vocabulary is insufficient.

Someone in the class thinks that because public speaking isn't a priority in the classroom, students end up forgetting the vocabulary they've studied and are unable to apply what they've learned in real life. Some of our classmates think that because we don't often read the news, we have a limited vocabulary and can't pick up new terms easily. A small number of students have expressed frustration with their English language skills, claiming that they struggle to

comprehend books, passages, tales, essays, etc. because of their poor grammar, inconsistent tenses, and ignorance of sentence construction norms. Some students have voiced their disapproval of the English curriculum, claiming that they are uninterested in the subject and that it serves no useful function other than to ensure that kids would do poorly on standardized tests. Some pupils have said that learning the tenses would help them become better readers. This is because knowing the tenses will allow them to better comprehend what is written. Building sentences is the best way to teach new words. Teachers are asked to provide their thoughts on the main causes and factors contributing to students' low English reading comprehension after the students have completed the exam and interviews. With a small exception, every single instructor here is quite welcoming; the others see us as nothing more than a government surveillance crew. They consent to the interview if they are satisfied.

5. Discussion

We have a wealth of information from student and teacher interviews and test scores that points to key causes of low English reading comprehension. A student's lack of vocabulary competence is the primary element that hinders their reading comprehension in English. The pupils' vocabulary is severely lacking, and according to Nation (2001), in order for students to understand the book, they should be familiar with 98% of the language used in it. Making sense of it all is next to impossible if you haven't mastered a large vocabulary. Reading quickly has little bearing on how well you understand what you read. Assuming no issues with vocabulary, context, previous knowledge, etc., a pupil may read at a regular pace and understand any book. Reading comprehension also relies on pupils' ability to infer meaning from context, which is something they do not get enough instruction in. Instead of attempting to infer the meaning from context, students seek for the word's true definition. Reading comprehension in English may be improved by practice using context-based meaning-guessing.

It seems like some students are having trouble reading certain words at times. We can notice that children are not used to reading English literature since their word recognition is inadequate. Nothing in English literature, newspapers, tales, novels, essays, etc. piques their curiosity. For the sole purpose of doing well on tests, they study their English textbooks. Improving their reading comprehension may be achieved by fostering an interest in reading various forms of written English. Students' critical

thinking skills are being eroded by rote learning. This destructive pattern is the joint fault of the classroom community. Cramming the night before an exam and hoping for the best becomes second nature to students, and professors often promote this practice as well. Teachers take pride in their pupils' ability to cram rather than discourage it. By carrying out their duties as educators, teachers may foster a culture of creativity in the classroom. In order to improve their reading comprehension of English content, students should be allowed opportunities for free writing. This will help them build skills in vocabulary, sentence construction, critical thinking, and inventiveness. Additionally, the students' knowledge of sentence structure and the various components of speech is lacking. Words used in various contexts as separate parts of speech are not well recognized by students. When you change the case of a word from noun to verb, adjective, or adverb, it takes on a whole new connotation and meaning. Improved reading comprehension is a direct result of pupils' mastery of the many components of speech. Many reading methods go unnoticed by students. Successful learners employ a variety of ways to comprehend what they read, according to Pressley (2006). Skimming, scanning, previewing, forecasting, anticipating, reading in chunks, and other reading methods may be taught to children by teachers to help them become better readers.

6. Conclusion

It is now very clear that there are several critical elements that influence reading comprehension, thanks to the whole conversation. There are a number of important factors that contribute to poor writing, such as a lack of vocabulary knowledge, a tendency to cram instead of learning and understanding, weak sentence structure and tenses, an inability to infer meaning from context, a lack of interest in improving writing skills on the part of both teachers and students, and so on. In order to help students better understand what they read, teachers do not instruct them in various reading strategies such as quiet reading, intense reading, extended reading, and loud reading. Some reading tactics that kids may not be familiar with include scanning, skimming, previewing, anticipating, and reading in chunks. Other language abilities are enhanced by reading proficiency as well. Students are able to write and speak sentences with structure and meaning if their reading skills are excellent. It equips children with a rich vocabulary, a framework for writing, and an understanding of many cultures and communities,

enabling them to express themselves with more sophistication in both written and spoken forms.

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