

**The Importance of Reading Comprehension in the
Development of Vernacular Student's Competence in
English: A Case Study of Students in North Nagpur**

**A Report on Minor Research Project
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OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT :

The researcher proposed the following Aims and objective for the research:

- (i) To find out different problems faced by the L2 learners (Vernacular) to learn English in the classroom.
- (ii) To find out the importance of reading habit in the mother tongue helps in developing reading comprehension in the target language.
- (iii) Analyzing different socio-economic issues affecting student competence, proficiency and confidence in target language.
- (iv) To study and analyses teachers problems in developing L2 learners reading comprehension and remedies.
- (v) To study and analyze prescribed curriculum in the light of reading comprehension.
- (vi) To make reading comprehension as an effective device in the classroom to learn spoken English and raise student's confidence level.
- (vii) To conduct some experiments (pilot) based on the reading comprehension and to introduce different teaching modules with the help of experienced teachers for classroom activities.

WHETHER OBJECTIVES WERE ACHIEVED (GIVE DETAILS):

All the objectives proposed for this project have been achieved and detailed have been discussed in the chapter of analysis and the conclusion. On the basis of these findings following evaluation and recommendation is proposed by the researcher:

1. These learners basically are the product of the situation and family background. Therefore at the entry level of B.A. they found not at home in case of English skills were concerned. Since the learners were introduced to learn English from the fifth grade, and in case of new government policies from the standard one, English was initiated. English should not be made to make them pass the examination merely. They should be given enough opportunities at all levels of learning to take up the language. Till the entry of B.A. level they should possess the necessary skills. At this juncture, at the B.A. one level they should be given counseling for annihilating their complexes and remedial coaching to repair their loss till date.

2. The environment at B.A. level should be conducive to take up the English even out of the class context. The infrastructure and audio visual aids should accompany the teaching-learning module for the class.
3. Enough space should be provided to learners to develop skills in their mother tongue. Students should be encouraged to take up reading short stories, novels, newspapers and magazines in ones native language. So this reading habit and interest in language learning will help them learn English.
4. In colleges students should be provided common rooms to discuss various topics and may be given space to interact in English with their peers. Reading room facilities serves a great purpose in the life of students. The very space could be used to develop ones understanding and comprehension of the target language through reading.
5. Developing reading comprehension especially in case of Low SES could be worked as an effective teaching strategy in the development of learners; four skills in English in particular. In the classroom teaching the following strategies could be effective in case of reading comprehension activity:
 - i. Learners' familiarity with the vocabulary in the context of the current extract could be developed prior
 - ii. Ease to bring-in the classroom teaching by reading interesting native language material
 - iii. Reading at the beginning to start with LCD screen or green board
 - iv. Simultaneously laying emphasis should be put on the recognition of the word and understanding its meaning
 - v. Loud reading to be conducted to develop correct pronunciation, accent, tone and rhythm
 - vi. Slow reading to be recommended to develop comprehension
 - vii. A group reading to be introduced as a reading comprehension module on regular basis
 - viii. They should be taught to use the living structure of English in day to day interaction
6. Learners' problems concerning their SES and relative complexes to be solved with proper guidance, counseling and encouragement. In case of learners from Low SES in a large number; a part time counselor in senior college won't be a bad choice.

7. Course text book should be provided with enough activities and practice material based on Communicative English. Through the text book, learners should be facilitated with enough living structure to be used in daily interaction in English. Instead of asking them to go through the grammar book or Communicative English book to learn structure, it should be provided in natural and favorable circumstances. Therefore, selection of modern prose with scope of communicative structures is deeply felt.
8. An additional interesting book to develop reading comprehension is strongly recommended here. A popular novella having enough day-to-day interactive dialogue (for living structure to speak in particular) to develop learners interest in English and communicative skills would certainly serve the purpose. The book might not be the part of theory examination, it might be utilized to evaluate learners through objective type of questions or through assignments.
9. In case of Low SES learners in campuses on a large scale, on one hand, and demands of skilled employee especially with spoken English aspect on the other, a strong recommendation is made here, that, parallel short term courses in grammar learning, communicative English, soft skills, remedial coaching and inspirational talk by the experts be organized in college for the beginner on an affordable low cost basis.
10. A Talk Show, Movie Club, Novel Club, and Creative Writers (of students) Club could serve the purpose to develop reading and listening of learners to stimulate spoken English. In school and colleges it is easily adopted by the department of English. Teacher's enthusiasm and interest for innovative learning and improvising the structured syllabus to teach would certainly matter a lot in this connection.

ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE PROJECT:

As discussed earlier, the learners in North Nagpur come from Soci-Economically backward communities, the level of confidence of English was found relatively low. But at the same time these learners showed a tremendous zeal to learn English. Being the follower of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar they were inspired to do something high in their career. Motivation level amongst these learners was high and their families also aspired that their ward progress. The parents were also

convinced about the importance of English in the globalised job market. The participant consented to be a part of the Present Project Work on the thought that they would learn something concrete. To learn spoken English in private institutes for three months is a costly affair which they cannot afford. So when they realized that they were going to learn English through the extra attention towards them, they sincerely attended the activities. During the project work through, the initial stages of Pre-Tests, Questionnaire Sessions and Interviews they felt inferior resulting to less interactive approach in the sessions. But bilingual method of interaction appealed them. Within a month they showed a bent of mind towards spoken English. They took interest in reading activities through Twinkle Star and novels. The learners were highly cooperative and were in constant touch with the researcher regarding their difficulties through cell phone messages and telephonic calls. The parents also sometimes contacted the researcher informing positive change they realized amongst their children during Reading Comprehension drilling sessions. From the time they were introduced to a new kind of Reading Comprehension they started taking interest in the regular English. The frequency to visit library was increased, they spent time in reading newspaper and magazines. Participant 9 and 10 consistently scored low amongst all perhaps due to extreme poverty. In spite of that they showed enthusiasm in attending all activities. During the project time these participants were seen interacting with each other and with teachers in English.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

A majority of learners from the First Year B.A. and B.Com. come from the Low Socio-Economic Status sections of society. Most of them were working to support their families financially as a part time or full time employee in private firms on a very meager payment. Most of the time was spent in job places so less time they could spend for their college and personal reading. Many of the students studying in colleges in North Nagpur have no conducive environment in home to learn. The Emotional Intelligence due to Socio-Economic conditions is not developed. These learners were not confident in case of spoken English. Due to failure in previous examination especially in English, they developed phobia about English. Every participant in the project study had shown enthusiasm to learn English when teaching-learning was made interesting. The previous learning of English at school level did not help develop skills in language comprehension. The pattern

of study in previous school was merely passing the examination by rote. Therefore, understanding in English, pronunciation, accent, rhythms and fluency in English were not developed up to the mark.

The Pre-Tests on Vocabulary Range, Vocabulary Speed and Reading Comprehension revealed that 16 participants scored below average. This shows that the learning of English at Higher Education would be difficult for them. The Post-Test after the lapse of one session through various teaching modules and practices developed understanding in English. Also an improvement in the department of fluency, accent and pronunciation was seen significantly.

The Questionnaire Session with learners reveals the Socio-Economic environment of the home. The learners whose parents were laborers shows less competence as mentioned in the previous researches. The learners whose financial condition was sound and the parents were in service though class IV employees show relatively more understanding than others. The Cognitive Development of the students in the mother tongue was good in case of some students, but few students showed that they were not at home in case of their mother tongue. They were unable to write in their mother tongue; also reading was not up to the mark. Since lack of favorable environment, the use of English out of the class context was not possible for them. Teachers Questionnaire had revealed that due to more attempt in passing qualifying examination for B.A., these learners were not having even basic knowledge of English. They had problems in all the four basic skills of English language.

In colleges due to inadequate infrastructure and facilities, advance level of English learning was not possible. Therefore, these learners lacked the real development of English communication. They generally don't get opportunity even in the classroom to deliberate due to syllabus and constraint of time. They don't get opportunity either outside the classroom to drill the English lesson they had learnt. But the environment in new Reading Comprehension Module and innovative teaching interest among these learners for English increased. Out of the class context and away from the fear of examination Reading Comprehension Module became popular amongst these participants. They participated in the module sincerely once they were exposed to the four skills of language development and showed a remarkable improvement in the four skills through

reading comprehension. Loud reading and practice on accent and pronunciation brought significant growth in fluency.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIETY (GIVE DETAILS):

The present research was possible owing to the participant's enthusiasm and their regular attendance in their respective Compulsory English classes. The learners cooperation with the various Pre-Tests, Posts-Tests, Questionnaire Sessions and informal Interviews is highly appreciated by the researcher. Sincere participation by them in various activities on Reading Comprehension given to them only could help in bringing about significant improvements in their English learning by the end of the session. On the basis of the findings of the current research project, it is clear enough that the regular participation by learners in classroom activity and its usage out of the classroom context positively helps learners gain some confidence and skills in English language. This project initially worked to find out the learners problems and various barriers in the learning of English. The learners who participated in the project work were given proper counseling and encouragement from the beginning that helped them in keeping their patience in learning of English. The Reading Comprehension module introduced to them through reading Twinkle Star magazine, story reading, and novel reading brought about a great transformation in the learners' attitude towards learning the English language. The learners' cognitive development in mother tongue was greatly used in this project. The learners learnt many living structures from this Reading Comprehension teaching module which they were encouraged also to use out of the classroom settings. These learners as they revealed got enough confidence to interact with others in English. These learners not only scored good marks in the Post-Tests of the Present Project, but also they cleared their first year annual examination with remarkable performance. The project work concluded with a satisfactory note that the Reading Comprehension module could be highly effective in teaching skills in English where no English speaking environment is available. This module not only develops learners reading habit and interest, but also helps them in understanding deeper meaning from the books that are made available to them through the syllabus. Loud reading helped them getting fine pronunciation, accent, tone and rhythm in connected speech, further developing their fluency in reading so also in English speaking. This also helped them in identifying the change in the sound system of their mother tongue and English

language, the target language, similarly, the Group reading technique in classroom promotes group learning which eases the task of a teacher.

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