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IMPACT OF EXTENSIVE READING HABITS ON THE READING COMPREHENSION IN
ENGLISH AMONG THE FIRST YEAR PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Reading habit, an integral part of learning process is crucial for the acquisition of a language. English language is learnt in India because it's a door to communication with the entire world. Proficiency in English is an essential requisite for seeking any degree in India. English being a library language has to be comprehended properly by the reader. This ability can be improved by cultivating effective reading habits. The present study attempts to find out the extensive reading habits among the pre university students and their influence on the comprehension skills. For this study, 842 first year Pre- University students of Mangalore Taluk, from different colleges are chosen through Random sampling method. Their extensive reading habits are found out using Descriptive survey method. A validated tool is used to measure their comprehension ability. From the results it can be concluded that only 28% students with excellent reading habits are able to properly comprehend the given passages. 59.3% of the students with poor reading habits are unable to comprehend them. So the teachers and librarians should use different strategies to cultivate interest towards reading among the students so that their comprehension ability reaches to the excellent level by the end of their PU education.

Key words: Reading habit, English language, extensive reading habit, influence, comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, due to advancement in science and technology people are able to accumulate information through various modes other than reading. Yet, reading continues to provide maximum pleasure and knowledge. It is commonly observed that those who read more excel in all the areas of academic life. Reading helps us to understand the thoughts and feelings of various writers. It improves our way of expression and creativity.

Reading is about understanding the written texts. It can be either intensive or extensive. Intensive reading is a minute and detailed study of the prescribed prose-text by concentrating on language and

vocabulary. Extensive reading is to get the information, meaning and general theme of the material (Ahuja & Ahuja, 1991). Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. While 'word recognition' refers to the process of identifying how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language, 'comprehension' indicates the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected texts (Freder, 2013). Readers make use of the background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with the text and other strategies to understand the written texts. An efficient reader will understand what is relevant for him in the text that he should get at and discard the rest.

Reading – is basic in the curriculum. Well-developed reading skills are vital to success in all the fields of life (Marlow & Rao, 2000). Encouraging students to read books can help them improve their Reading skills. In support of this view the research evidence (Abeberese, Kumler, & Linden, 2011) proves that the reading comprehension plays a determining role in the scholastic achievement of the students. A study has been conducted (Chau, Wu, Chan, & Lughmani, 2011) on the impact of reading on second language learning. The result indicates that pupils who read a large number of story books written in second language progressed in reading and listening comprehension in that language at almost two times the rate of those students who do not read such books.

English is learnt because it assimilates vocabulary from other languages. This makes it a rich and a powerful tool of learning. Furthermore it shapes the political, social, economic, intellectual and cultural life of the country. Its vast literature on varied subjects like science, commerce and humanities makes it an important knowledge imparting language. It is a passport for better career and better pay. In this context the Kothari commission has rightly recommended that English is a library language (Puri, 2009). Proficiency in this language is an essential requisite for seeking degree in India. In view of this, students at high school level learn three-language formulae (Regional language, English and National Language) and at the college level they learn two language formulae (English and any other language). But in Indian context many may have to learn an additional language, as their mother tongue and regional languages are not the same. Consequently they do not end up being proficient in any of the languages.

India is a multilingual country and most of the students here use more than two languages in their classrooms. Moreover the students are permitted to answer the examination in Vernacular languages at all the levels including higher education. Hence they don't feel the need to improve their English language proficiency and read any literature in English (Shiakh & Pathan, 2012). Added to this, the schools as well as colleges have not been successful in developing reading habits and comprehension skills among the students. As a result the students are not able to use the library effectively.

Students belonging to low socio-economic status are forced to opt for vernacular medium in India. So they do not develop any interest in learning English language. But in view of pursuing professional or technical education, parents persuade them to change their medium of instruction either at the high school level or at the college level to English. So their proficiency is inadequate to acquire reading habits in English.

In the present scenario, enhancing the quality of education at all levels has become a dire necessity to keep in pace with the changing world. Hence the students at all the levels need to be motivated especially by the parents and the teachers to acquire interest in extensive reading especially in English language (R.R & Bamfore, 1998), so that they will be able to learn a foreign language and have an access for knowledge available in this language.

Referring to the National Reading Panel's report (Dole, 2002) has listed a number of comprehension strategies that have been found to be useful to readers and have been successfully taught. These strategies include procedures such as identifying existing prior knowledge, predicting, visualizing, summarizing, generating questions, monitoring comprehension, and repairing comprehension breakdowns. The value of these different strategies is that they can be useful for developing instructional procedures to teach students. With instruction and practice, students can learn to use the strategies on their own when they read. The use of these strategies will help readers become independent of the teacher.

The habit of reading begins at primary school level. It has not flourished because the nourishment comes only from a text. Therefore the reading in schools should focus on developing individuals with an appetite for knowledge, for new experience, for ideas that stretched the mind and the imagination. In the college level the teacher is a key factor in encouraging reading habits among the adolescents. A teacher who is not conversant with the recent publications in her own area of specialization is hardly likely to encourage them to read current publications. A teacher who knows little or nothing beyond the confines of her own subject area cannot guide or support the adolescent who wants to read widely in other fields. Teachers and librarians, at the elementary, secondary and college level, need to work together to see to it that the right book is chosen by the students according to their area of interest. (Grambs, Jean D, 1959) projected the summary of the conference on Lifetime Reading Habits

Objectives of the study

- To find out the Extensive Reading Habits among the Pre –University students of Mangalore Taluk in Dakshina Kannada district.
- To find out the relationship, if any, between the Extensive Reading Habits and level of Reading Comprehension among the first year Pre –University students of Mangalore Taluk in Dakshina Kannada district.

Hypothesis:

- There exists a significant relationship between the Extensive Reading Habits and comprehension skills among the first year Pre –University students of Mangalore Taluk.

Variables: Extensive reading habit is treated as the independent variable. Comprehension skill is treated as the dependent variable.

Methodology:

Sample:A sample size of 842 students from a total of 17,244 students studying in the First year Pre-University course of Mangalore Taluk is selected by random sampling technique.

Tools used in the Study:A questionnaire to measure the Extensive Reading Habits of the Pre- university students constructed and validated by Dr (Mrs.) M Padmavathi and a standardized tool on Reading Comprehension to measure the level of Reading Comprehension of the Pre- University students constructed and validated by Dr C.C.Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja was used by the investigator for this purpose.

Procedure of the study:The questionnaire to assess ‘The extensive reading habits – a tool constructed and validated by Dr. (Mrs.) M Padmavathi’ was distributed to 842 students. Among them 57.8 % were males and 42.2% were females. Their extensive reading habits such as reading the newspaper, books, journals, Magazines, Encyclopedias, Yearbooks and electronic text were assessed. It also included maintaining personal library, visiting Public Library, College Library and borrowing books from circulating library.

After collecting the information based on the above tool, a standardized tool on ‘Reading Comprehension to measure the level of Reading Comprehension of the Pre- University students prepared by C.C.Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja’ was administered. Four Silent Reading Comprehension Passages consisting of a total number of 26 questions were given to the students. After reading each passage within a given time limit, the respondents were asked to answer the Multiple Choice Questions set on it. Four options were given after each question. After collecting these test papers the investigator asked the students to read the fifth passage for 10 minutes and return it, after which they had to fill up 52 blanks with articles, prepositions, nouns, pronouns, verbs, auxiliaries and conjunctions related to the passage. Then the filled questionnaire and test sheets were collected and processed for data analysis.

Data analysis and interpretation:

The findings of the data analysis are shown in the tables below.

Table 1: Frequency of reading habits

Statement	Frequency			
	Yes	%	No	%
Enjoy reading	754	89.5%	88	10.5%
Read at least for half an hour	657	78.0	185	22.0
Don't get sleep without reading	62	7.4%	779	92.5%
Feel uneasy without reading in the morning	126	15.0%	708	84.1%
Has habit of buying books	220	26.1%	622	73.9%
Using reference books	226	26.8%	614	72.9%
Reading books other than course books is waste of time	39	4.6%	803	95.4%
Useless to invest money on books	39	4.6%	803	95.4%

From Table 1, it is very clear that 89.5% of the students enjoy reading and 26.1% of them have the habit of buying books. It is quite surprising to note that only 26.8% of the sample students use reference books. 7.9% of them don't get sleep without reading and 15% of them feel uneasy without reading. But only 4.6 % of the students feel that reading books other than their course books is a waste of time and that it is useless to invest money on books.

Table 2: Frequency of students who read the following features in the newspaper

Statement	Frequency			
	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
a) Regional news	592	70.3	244	29.0
b) National news	510	60.6	331	39.3
c) International news	432	51.3	410	48.7
d) Political news	405	48.1	437	51.9
e) Sports news	603	71.6	239	28.
f) Business news	283	33.6	557	66.2
g) Editorial column	216	25.7	626	74.3
h) Literature	615	73.0	227	27.0
i) Articles	272	32.3	570	67.7
j) Entertainment	692	82.2	150	17.8
k) Advertisement	678	80.5	161	19.1
l) Supplements	503	59.7	339	40.3

It can be noted from Table 2 that 70.3% of the students read Regional news and 71.6 % of them read sports news. 60.6% and 51.3% of them read National and International news, Political news and Business news is read by 48.1% and 33.6% students. Maximum number of 82.2% read entertainment page and 80.5% concentrate on advertisement. Least attention is given to editorial column.

Table 3: Frequency of students having the habit of reading books

Statement	Frequency			
	Yes	%	No	%
English magazines	470	55.8%	372	44.2%
Short stories in English	575	68.3%	267	31.7%
Cartoon stories	676	80.3%	161	19.1%
English novels	226	27.0%	606	72.4%
English plays	218	26.1%	611	73.3%

English poetry	152	18.1%	685	81.4%
Biographies	119	14.1%	718	85.3%
Auto- Biographies	100	11.9%	737	87.5%
Travelogues	98	11.7%	742	88.3%
Essays	252	30.1%	585	69.9%
Science fiction	154	18.3%	688	81.7%
Journals	89	10.6%	753	89.4%
Encyclopedias	176	20.9%	666	79.1%
Year books	167	19.8%	675	80.2%
Any other books	58	6.9%	777	92.8%

It has been also observed from table 3 that 80.3% students love to read cartoon stories; 68.3% read short stories and 55.8% read magazines in English.30.1% read essays and 20.9% make use of encyclopedia. English novels and English plays are read by 27 % and 26.1% of them respectively. Least number of students read biographies, autobiographies and travelogues.

Table 4: Frequency of students reading the books on the internet

Statement	Frequency			
	Yes	%	No	%
English novels	73	8.7%	764	90.7%
Short stories in English	146	17.3%	696	82.7%
English Poetry	76	9.1%	761	90.9%
English Plays	72	8.6%	770	91.4%
English magazines	94	11.3%	738	88.7%
Journals	50	5.9%	792	94.1%
Encyclopedias	82	9.7%	760	90.3%
Essays	120	14.3%	722	85.7%
Fiction	45	5.3%	797	94.7%

Table 4 clearly indicates that even in this era of addiction to modern gadgets such as mobile, laptops, tabs and so on very few students read books on internet. Maximum number of them read short stories (17.3%) and least number read fiction (5.3%)

Table 5: Frequency of factors that affect the reading comprehension

Statement	Frequency			
	Yes	%	No	%
Difficulty in understanding the words	248	29.5%	594	70.5%
Difficulty in understanding the text	248	29.5%	594	70.5%
Pressure of time	325	38.6%	517	61.4%
Choice of material	148	17.6%	694	82.4%
Availability of material	97	11.5%	745	88.5%
Economic conditions	199	23.6%	643	76.4%
Any other factors	4	0.5%	838	99.5%

From table 5 it is very clear that 38.6% of the sample students cannot pay attention on reading habit because of time constrain. 29.5% of them have difficulty in understanding the words and 23.6% cannot read books because of poor economic conditions. 11.5% and 17.6% have problem with the availability and choice of material.

Table 6: Frequency of students Reading habits based on the result

Result	Frequency	Percent
Very Poor	40	4.8
Poor	499	59.3
Moderate	261	31.0
Good	42	5.0
Total	842	100.0

By summing up all the scores of reading habits the above result is obtained. 4.8% of the sample, who scored in between 0-24 scores, were considered to be having very poor reading habits. 59.3% of them scored in between 25-48 and they had poor reading habits. 31% had moderate reading habits and scored between 49-72 and the students with good reading habits had scored between 73-96 scores.

Table 7: Frequency of students reading comprehension based on the result

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	53	6.3
Moderate	234	27.8
Good	213	25.3
Very Good	342	40.6
Total	842	100.0

The 53 students with 0-20 scores had the poor level of reading comprehension. 234 students with scores in between 21-40 had exhibited moderate level of comprehension. Those who scored between 41-60 had good level and 342 students had very good level of reading comprehension with 61-80 scores.

Table 8: Relationship between Reading Habits and Reading Comprehension

Reading Habits	Reading Comprehension				Total	χ^2 & p value
	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very Good		
Very Poor	0 0%	5 12.5%	29 72.5%	6 15.0%	40 100.0%	χ^2 value=178.625 p=0.000 H.S.
Poor	44 8.8%	188 37.3%	131 26.3%	138 27.7%	499 100%	
Moderate	9 3.4%	43 16.5%	38 14.6%	171 65.5%	261 100%	
Good	0 0%	0 0%	15 35.7%	27 64.3%	42 100%	

The chi square test shows that there is a significant association between reading habits and reading comprehension as $P= 0.000 < 0.01$. Further the extent of relationship between the reading habits and reading comprehension is 0.418. So the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the Extensive Reading Habits and level of reading comprehension in English among the first year Pre –University students of Mangalore Taluk is accepted and the objective is proved.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study suggest that the Pre- University students who have the habit of reading English newspapers and books other than the course book daily are able to comprehend the simple passages given to them and score above 80% marks. So it is evident that the teachers have to play a pivotal role in encouraging the students to read especially daily English newspapers. Instead of sticking on to one particular method of teaching, the teachers should try to adopt different methods, wherein they ask the students to read the headlines and explain the news in detail, motivate the students to narrate short stories,

inspire them to actively participate in different group activities related to language learning etc. The language should not be imposed upon the students; instead language learning should be made an enjoyable task. Along with other clubs Reading Clubs should be formed in schools and colleges where students should be encouraged to have discussions on what they have recently read. Students should be ordered to speak only English language in the colleges. Parents too have a major role in moulding the reading habits of their children. They could help them to select interesting books from the library, gift books on their birthdays and encourage them to visit libraries at least ones a week. Thus Good education, proper guidance and reader friendly conducive atmosphere both at college and home can help the present generation to develop proficiency in English language.

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