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Shallu Rana
PhD Student Department of
Human Development and
Family Studies, CCSHAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

Dr. Sheela Sangwan
Professor, Department of HDFs,
I.C College of Home Science,
CCSHAU, Hisar, Haryana, India

Impact of intervention on reading writing skills of children in government schools

Shallu Rana and Dr. Sheela Sangwan

Abstract

Reading writing skills are one of the highest priority areas during the early years of schooling. Ability to read and write properly directly influences the ability to comprehend, analyse and understand the concepts better. The research was carried out in the randomly selected three government schools of rural areas in Hisar and Fatehabad district in Haryana state. The data on intended variables were collected from the sample group of 400 children aged 6 to 8 years. After the general assessment, the experimental study was carried out on 90 low performing children. The present paper explores the impact of intervention in improving the reading writing skills of children. The results of study highlight that imparting the new concepts and knowledge in children with the help of intervention material significantly improves the reading writing skills among pre primary children. The intervention includes the activities which promote the phonetic awareness among children, enhancing vocabulary through storytelling, anecdotes sharing, collaborative learning, joint reading etc.

Keywords: Reading writing skills, experimental study, pedagogical intervention

Introduction

Reading is defined as the complex cognitive activity in which a reader decodes, interpret and understand the meaning of symbols and derive the meaning of written text. It is tool of language development through which a child can acquire information independently exploring various sources. Writing is the process of expressing what the child has understood in the form of symbols.

While literacy as defined by UNESCO (United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization) is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying texts. The theory of cognitive development propounded by Jean Piaget tells us about how a child actively constructs his understanding of the surroundings. The graded development occurs in four stages spanning from the moment a child born and continues along the span of life. Child learns the surrounding with the help of two tools viz. Organization and adaptation. By organizing the concepts in respective schemas and simultaneously making necessary changes. But, contrary to this Vygotskian perspective asserts the importance of mediation led by “more knowledgeable adult” or teachers, parents, peers, elder siblings etc. Combining the best of both theories shed a light on the principle that children learn both by actively exploring their environments along with the guidance of elders.

Reading and writing abilities are the functional pre-requisites for a child to learn about his environment. Both these skills constitute the basis for learning, and their successful acquisition comprises one of the central keys to scholastic achievement. (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997) [5].

Literature review

Begeny *et al.* (2009) [1] explored the effectiveness of small group interventions to increase reading fluency among elementary school aged children. It was found that repeated reading, listening passage review is the most effective techniques to improve the reading ability among children. The prime focus of research was that small-group interventions are practical and time efficient as compared to individualized interventions aimed to address the reading problems among children in elementary school.

Corresponding Author:
Shallu Rana
PhD Student Department of
Human Development and
Family Studies, CCSHAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

Cadena (2006) ^[4] explored the role played by the use of different strategies to promote the student's reading comprehension and how acquiring the learning strategies facilitate a student's overall learning process. The researcher carried out the study on 5th grade students. It was found that academic reading is a complex process in which students could benefit of the use of the reading strategies and metacognitive awareness. The study highlights the need of incorporating the correct material, setting the time limits, adopting teaching method which benefit significantly in developing the ability in children to use the reading strategies rather than focussing only on teaching meaning of specific words, phrases or concepts. The way children comprehend meanings is different from that of adults and hence, special care should be given to teaching methods and strategy during early years.

Garg and Karush (2014) ^[6] carried out a research and highlighted the importance of use of teaching learning material by teacher in improving the reading writing abilities of pre-primary children. It was found that there exists a high and positive correlation between the visual perception, auditory discrimination and the copying abilities of respondents with the effective use of teaching learning materials by the teacher to facilitate the reading, writing abilities.

Zaveri (2002) ^[8] assessed the long term educational and behavioural effects of early childhood education in children from low income groups. The study aimed at assessment of child's psychosocial and cognitive development, comparing the benefits of preschool in both institutionalized (attending preschool) and non-institutionalized (home based) children. The research concluded that Balwadi experience positively contributes towards child's ability to socialise with mother, family, peers and other adults in community, thereby contributing towards socio-emotional development of child. Two years after leaving the balwadis the children's social behaviour strengthened further. Balwadi children performed better in aspects like listening, reading, arithmetic, writing and cognitive aspects. Study highlights that early childhood care and education programmes contribute significantly in the early development of children.

Sorrell & Brown (2018) ^[7] did a comparative study of two interventions to support reading comprehension in primary school children. The research employed the quasi-experimental studies with different age groups and participants. The participants were divided into two randomly assigned groups either informational texts (IT) or vocabulary building (VB). The findings suggest that the explicit teaching of informational texts can benefit reading comprehension among students from an early age particularly to first language English students and second language English learners. The study recommends that school reading programmes should include opportunities for students to experience informational texts (nonfiction) and fiction materials and should build their vocabulary through incidental learning and explicit teaching.

Burgoyne *et al.* (2011) ^[3] conducted research on children learning English as an additional language. When compared to the monolingual peers, children learning English as an additional language experience difficulties with reading comprehension. It was found that along with the low levels of vocabulary there are other factors like lack of appropriate background knowledge which also contribute to the low level of reading comprehension. The research suggests that relevant background information should be used to facilitate children's

text comprehension.

Methodology

The research was conducted on the children between the age group of 6 to 8 years in the randomly selected government schools of two districts i.e. Hisar and Fatehabad. The selection of government schools for study was purposive so that the results of study can be generalized for those children studying in government schools. The socio-economic status of all the children in sample study was homogenous. The total sample consisted of 90 respondents. Present study is part of the doctoral thesis in which the total sample consisted of 400 children (200 from each district). After the initial assessment of reading writing skills of children, 90 respondents were selected who had low performance in reading writing skills. The scale on reading writing skills of pre-primary school children by N. Singh (1988) was used for assessment. After the respondents were assessed on the intended variables, the planned intervention was given to the children in the experimental group.

Pedagogical intervention programme

Pedagogical intervention was imparted to improve the reading writing skills. An intervention package is the set of pre-planned activities, methods of imparting concepts using locally available, low cost material to enhance the reading writing skills and other overlapping aspects of child development. The proper framing of plan of such intervention requires the interdisciplinary approach which involves understanding the learner's psychology, child development theories and factors which engages the child during the process of teaching and learning. Several teaching aids and methods were devised and evaluated by faculty members for validation. After that the intervention was implemented for 30 school days on 54 low performing children. The post testing was done after the gap of 15 days in order to better record the retention of concepts. The total 90 low performing children selected for experimental study from the total sample. The principle of randomization was followed to assign the control or experimental group in order to minimize the bias. The experimental group comprised of 54 children (25 male and 29 female) while control group consisted of 37 children (24 male and 13 female).

The intervention consisted of various activities focusing on phonetic awareness, rules of speaking and writing a language like letter identification and discrimination, telling and recalling a story or anecdotes. The emphasis was laid on reading comprehension and decoding.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean comparison of pre and post test scores of experimental and control group of male and female respectively. The data with respect to male experimental group pertaining to the performance on four sub tests of reading writing abilities explain that there was significant mean differences in pre and post testing scores i.e. in vocabulary (M=8.76 and 9.36, t=3.92), visual perception (M=8.88 and 9.56, t=2.79), auditory discrimination (M=5.48 and 8.28, t=10.11) and copying test (M=5.12 and 6.48, t=6.83) while no statistically significant mean differences were observed in case of mal control group. Similarly, in female control group significant paired t-values highlights that in female experimental group the mean differences were observed between pre and post test scores in vocabulary (M=8.84 and 9.44, t=2.67), visual perception (M=8.52 and

9.28, $t=4.04$), auditory discrimination ($M=4.07$ and 8.93 , $t=22.64$) and copying test ($M=5.41$ and 7.14 , $t=9.67$). No

significant differences were found in pre and post testing scores of female control group.

Table 1: Pre and Post test scores of both experimental and control group regarding the reading and writing abilities of respondents presented gender wise

Aspects of Reading writing abilities	Pre-testing Mean± SD	Post-testing Mean± SD	Paired 't' value	Pre-testing Mean±S.D	Post-testing Mean±S.D	Paired 't' value
	Experimental group (Boys) (n=25)			Control group (Boys) (n=24)		
Sub aspects						
Vocabulary	8.76±0.52	9.36±0.63	3.92*	8.96±0.87	9.30±1.22	0.05
Visual perception	8.88±0.66	9.56±0.82	2.79*	8.65±0.83	8.87±1.10	0.64
Auditory discrimination	5.48±1.19	8.28±0.67	10.11*	5.43±1.61	5.74±1.83	0.72
Copying	5.12±0.33	6.48±0.18	6.83*	5.61±0.89	6.26±2.07	0.08
Experimental group (Girls) (n=29)						
Vocabulary	8.84±1.10	9.44±0.50	2.67*	8.77±0.43	9.62±1.44	2.51
Visual perception	8.52±0.73	9.28±0.70	4.04*	8.77±0.49	9.38±1.19	1.53
Auditory discrimination	4.07±0.88	8.93±0.84	22.64*	5.54±1.45	5.31±1.03	1.00
Copying	5.41±0.50	7.14±1.46	9.67*	6.00±1.22	6.62±2.14	1.26

Turning towards table 2, it underscores the pre and post test mean comparison of overall sample population in experimental and control group. The significant paired- t values clearly highlights that there was significant mean difference in the pre and post test mean scores of vocabulary

($M=8.25$ and 8.65 , $t=3.18$), visual perception ($M=8.48$ and 9.15 , $t=7.48$), auditory discrimination ($M=4.63$ and 8.94 , $t=38.57$) and copying test ($M=5.52$ and 6.85 , $t=9.52$) while non-significant mean differences were observed in case of pre and post test mean comparison of control group.

Table 2: Pre and Post test mean comparison of reading writing abilities of respondents in both experimental and control group.

Aspects of Reading writing abilities	Pre-testing Mean±S.D	Post-testing Mean±S.D	Paired 't' value	Pre-testing Mean±S.D	Post-testing Mean±S.D	Paired 't' value
	Experimental group (n=54)			Control group (n=36)		
Sub aspects						
Vocabulary	8.25±0.83	8.65±0.48	3.18*	8.96±0.87	9.30±1.22	0.05
Visual perception	8.48±0.50	9.15±0.36	7.48*	8.65±0.83	8.87±1.10	0.64
Auditory discrimination	4.63±0.48	8.94±0.69	38.57*	5.43±1.61	5.74±1.83	0.72
Copying	5.52±0.54	6.85±0.72	9.52*	5.61±0.89	6.26±2.07	0.08

Discussion and Conclusion

There are five stages of reading as suggested by model of developmental stages in reading (Chall, 1979). Researchers have found that phonics instruction plays a major role in teaching a student to read. Attainment of fluent reading among children comes later as compared to the word learning and vocabulary formation. More is the emphasis on early stimulation; vocabulary development the path to reading is easy for a child. Berninger & Abbot (2002) ^[2] in one study found that a good vocabulary is linked with reading comprehension. Both reading and writing skills are linked with each other.

Limitations: The sample was homogenous and in order to generalize the results for larger population the sample should be taken from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and cultural-regional contexts.

Suggestions: The results suggests that developmentally appropriate teaching material with the incorporation of principles of learning like scaffolding and zone of proximal development can help the children to successfully acquire the reading writing skills at pre-primary school stage. With the strong foundation the learning outcomes in further stages can be drastically improved.

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