



EFFECIVENESS OF WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH ON READING SKILL IN ENGLISH OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

We make sense of the world and make ourselves available to the world on the wings of the linguistic medium and once the wings are broken, we are extinct. Seated at a remote corner of this Twenty first century global village, we no longer feel the distancing thanks to our say in the Lingua Franca in terms of our capacity to listen, speak, read and write. Latest researches on reading as a language skill, explains the meaning making process as a platform for higher order skills. But in spite of the curricular components and co-curricular programmes to nourish Reading in foreign language, the secondary level teachers complain the low levels of interest in reading followed by low level of reading comprehension among English as Second Language Learners. Among the probable reasons, the approach of teaching English Language has been pointed out by the teachers. The present article is the report of an experimental research study on the effect of Whole Language Approach on reading skill of secondary school students in Kerala.

Key word: Effectiveness of Language, Reading Skills, Communication Skills, Teaching Skills.

A Prologue

The dream of great leaders -the dream world in which all are under one umbrella- has turned literally meaningful in the communicative network of a world wide web. Everyone irrespective of age, qualifications, socio-economic status can become an interactive nod. We recognize the instrumental value of language-the foreign language- in stamping in our say in the world. With the backbone of three cuing systems: graphic, syntactic and semantic, we make sense of the world and make ourselves



available to the world. Being either at the receiving end or at the productive platform, we create meaning; not simply “bark at letters”.

Acquisition of a language is ensured by genre based tasks which provide the learner with real-time problem solving contexts for communicative performance. Language demanding situations will result in forced open ended responses and great language retention. It is just one perspective on learning any one language. When it comes to a foreign language, a second language, a “literary rich environment” is a pre-requisite. This invites the reading war of phonics and whole language: the war between a bottom up approach and a top down approach; the war between a behaviourist approach and a whole language approach.

Reading is an interactive process of creating, instilling life to symbols inscribed. Thus the process of reading superimposes the reader. Latest researches on Reading as a skill explain this “meaning making procedure” as a platform for higher order skills especially critical thinking skills. The reader comes up the ladder through literal, interpretive, critical and creative levels. Naturally in the Indian classroom context of English as Second language the level of Reading is being decided by the grade level of the learner.

Reading in its true sense bifurcates into internalizing what is being read and literally understanding what is being read. When mere comprehension of the text is the goal, classroom teaching will help a lot. But when the nurturant effects are also looked into, the degree of exposure counts much.

Significance of the study

In spite of the curricular components, introduction of supplementary readers, lessons for extensive reading, learning of literature and the co-curricular programmes like class library, literary club, literary competition and all, researches prove that the secondary level students exhibit reduced levels of reading comprehension. In the age of globalization, being competent in communicating through a global language is a sure indicator of success in life both in the personal and professional fields. Therefore teachers of English have to take it mandatory for the successful programmes in schools that the students excel in communication through English. Since communication is a skill, students



themselves have to master the language and therefore they must be exposed to language especially through reading. The approach, the methods, the strategy, the technique-all should be in tune with such a goal.

Researches abroad have brought in the Whole Language Approach a remedy to the problem. The most significant aspect of this approach is that the learner as a reader constructs personal meaning during the reading process. Thus reading becomes an interactive process in which cognitive abilities of the student are involved.

Statement of the problem

The study was titled, "Effectiveness of whole language approach on Reading Skill in English of Secondary School Students". The experimental study compared the effectiveness of Conventional Approach and Whole Language Approach by finding the gain scores of Std. IX students in Test in Reading skill.

Variables in the Problem

In the study, the independent variable is the instructional approach in English:the Conventional approach and the Whole Language approach. The dependent variable is the Reading skill in English.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were:

- (i) to find out the effect of Conventional approach on Reading skill in English among Std IX students
- (ii) to find out the effect of Whole language approach on Reading skill in English among std IX students
- (iii) to compare the effectiveness of conventional approach and whole language approach on Reading Skill among Std IX students



Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the hypotheses formulated were

- (i) There will be no significant difference in the pre test and post test scores of Reading skill for the students taught through Conventional approach
- (ii) There will be no significant difference in the pre test and post test scores of Reading skill for the students taught through Whole language approach
- (iii) There will be no significant difference in the pre test and post test scores of Reading skill for the students taught through Conventional approach and Whole Language approach.

Design of the study

The study followed the design of randomized group-pre test- treatment-post test for the experiment. In this design, samples are assigned to the control and experimental groups by random procedure and a pre test administered. The control group experienced instruction through Conventional approach and the experimental group through Whole Language approach. At the end of the treatment a post test was administered as the measure of dependent variable. The significance of difference between the different measures of the two groups is calculated.

Sample

Two classroom groups of forty two students of Std. IX from an urban secondary school in Kannur District of Kerala were identified as the sample. Systematic sampling technique was followed. The mean scores of an achievement test in English were almost equal. One group of twenty one students was randomly assigned to be the control group and the other the experimental group.

Tools and documents for data collection

For conducting the experiment and to collect data on the dependent variable, appropriate tools and documents were used.



(i) Result of achievement test in English for randomization and grouping procedure

(ii) Lesson transcripts in English following Conventional approach

(ii) Lesson transcripts in English following Whole Language Approach

(iii) Test in Reading for Std. IX

Data collection procedure

To follow the experimental design, marks in the achievement test of Std. IX students were analyzed and groups were formed whose mean scores were almost equal. Lesson transcripts were developed following conventional approach and whole language approach. A test in Reading skill was developed, administered and scored as pre test for both the groups. After the treatment the same test was administered in both the groups. The pre test and post tests were recorded to see if significant difference exists between the groups.

Statistical Techniques Applied

Descriptive and inferential techniques were adopted for analysis of data.

(i) Preliminary analysis of mean, median, mode and measures of dispersion

(ii) Test of significance of difference between means

Analysis and interpretation of Data

Preliminary analysis was carried out with the scores obtained for the pre test in Reading skill of control and experimental groups

Table 1



Details of preliminary analysis of pre and post tests in Reading of control and experimental groups

Measure	Pre test(control group)	Pre test (Experimental group)
Mean	4.60	4.62
Median	5.00	4.00
Mode	2.00	5.00
S.D.	2.49	1.99
Variance	6.22	3.95
Kurtosis	-0.14	-0.66
Skewness	0.15	0.46

The values in Table 1 indicate a normal distribution.

The hypothesis that there will be no significant different in the pre and post tests of control group on reading skill of the students taught through conventional approach was put to test by computing the statistics of t test. Details are given in table 2

Table 2

t test scores for pre and post tests of control group

Test	Mean	SD	SE	t	Significance level
Pre test	4.5952	2.4931	0.5440	3.45	>0.01
Post test	8.00	3.7683	0.8223		



The obtained t value (3.45) is greater than the tabled value for significance at 0.01 level. The null hypothesis (ii) is rejected and it is interpreted that there is significant difference in the pre and post test scores of control group.

The second hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the pre and post tests of experimental group was tested applying t test and the details are given in Table 3

Table 3

Details of pre and post tests of experimental group

Test	Mean	SD	SE	t value	Significance level
Pre test	4.6190	1.9869	0.4336	8.21	>0.01
Post test	10.9524	2.9236	0.6380		

The t value 8.21 is greater than the tabled value for significance at 0.01 level. It is interpreted that the scores for reading skill test differ significantly and thus the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis (iii) that there will be no significant difference in the mean gain scores of the control and experimental group was tested by applying the technique of t test and the details are given in Table 4

t test in post test scores of control and experimental groups

Test	Mean	SD	SE	t value	Significance level
Experimental	10.9524	2.9236	0.6380	2.84	>0.01
Control	8.00	3.7683	0.82230		



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The t value 2.84 is greater than the tabled value at 0.01 level. Thus the hypothesis is rejected and interpreted that the treatment through Whole language approach was significantly more effective than the conventional approach.

Findings and Conclusions

The three objectives were analyzed through the testing of hypotheses and interpretation of data. The findings were:

- (i) The significant gain score in the pre and post tests of the control group indicated that the Conventional approach was effective in improving Reading skill.
- (ii) The significant gain score of the experimental group in the pre and post tests indicated the effectiveness of Whole language approach in improving Reading skill.
- (iii) The t test score of the control and experimental group indicated the significant difference in the mean suggesting that Whole language approach is more effective in improving Reading skill when compared to Conventional approach.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of the study have thrown advantage of whole language approach over conventional approach to teach English in the case of Reading skill. Teachers of English have to operate in ways that will enable students define and refine their own language skill. The approach the teacher follows while providing learning experiences should be interesting, motivating with variety. The Whole language approach promotes the use of teacher made authentic materials based on students' need and experiences focusing on the process and product of Reading.

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Research Inspiration

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(Peer Reviewed & Opened Access Indexed)

www.researchinspiration.com

Email: researchinspiration.com@gmail.com, publish1257@gmail.com

ISSN: 2455-443X

Vol. 1, Issue-II

March 2016

Impact Factor: 2.07 (IJIF)

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