



Research Paper

## Effective Teaching of Reading in Primary Schools: Implications for Teachers

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines reading as one of the basic and core language skills that a child needs to acquire in order to cope with his literacy activities in the primary school. The paper presents reading as a highly complex activity which involves full concentration and thinking ability of the reader. It states the purpose of reading, some of the factors responsible for reading habits and how these could be addressed. The paper climaxes with some of the methods that teachers could explore in teaching reading in primary schools.

**KEYWORDS:** Teaching, Reading, Methods, Primary Schools

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Language has four basic skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The first skill which is acquired by a first learner is listening. A child first learns to listen to the language of his immediate environment before he learns to imitate to speak what he has listened to. Listening and speaking skills are referred to as aural-oral skills in language learning and they are both generally classified to as oral skills. The third skill which is developed in children if they are fortunate to have formal education is the reading skill which again is followed by writing-the most advanced of the four language skills. Thus, reading and writing are usually referred to as literacy skills [1].

The essence of these language skills is to effect communication among human beings. At the communication process, one would discover that there are two ends viz (spoken).

	<b>Encoder</b>	<b>message</b>	<b>text</b>	<b>receiver</b>	
	Sender	contained	when it	listener	
Left	Or	in his	comes out	or	Right
	Speaker	mind	written	reader	
	Writer				

The skills used by the encoder are the expressive skills because 'speaking' or writing expresses what is in the mind of the speaker or writer while reading and listening are receptive skills because the decoder receives the message either by listening to or reading the message. Having had the background knowledge of the four language skills, it is pertinent to define the concept 'reading' as a communication skill.

### II. READING: DEFINITION

Reading is the ability of a language user to gather information, react to ideas, and develop interest and taste [2]. It is a cerebral process that requires the brain to perceive, recognise, interpret and express orally, images, shapes and symbols. While writing may be seen as a visual representation of sounds by the use of symbols, reading is described as the meaningful interpretation of such visual symbols into ideas and concepts. Reading has also been defined as a thoughtful process requiring the reader not only to understand what the

author endeavours to communicate but also to contribute his own experiences and thought to the problem of understanding [3].

Another definition of reading says: reading is a means of extracting written or printed information which involves penetrating the mind of the author to decode his encoded meaning [4].

The reading process involves both the acquisition of meaning intended by the writer and the reader's own contribution in the form of interpretation, evaluation, and reflection of this meaning. Reading is a receptive skill which involves the transmission of information from a sender (writer) to a receiver (reader).

From all these definitions, it is clearly seen that the importance of reading cannot be overemphasised and its role in language acquisition and education worth mentioning. Language competence is directly related to reading ability. Reading is very important for anyone aspiring to acquire any kind of knowledge. Reading activities are therefore considered as tool for awareness and creativity.

### **III. PURPOSE OF READING**

In talking about reading as a communication art, there are a number of purposes for anyone engaging in reading activities. One of such important purposes is reading for information and new knowledge. This is the dominant purpose for primary school pupils. This purpose embraces other specific purposes which form components of the overall purpose. Other purposes may include:

1. Answering specific questions and locating certain facts or information.
2. Finding and understanding main ideas
3. Deriving pleasure and general knowledge as in creative writing
4. Following given direction about how to make something

One purpose of reading a printed work therefore determines the types of reading activity we undertake.

### **IV. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR READING**

Broadly speaking, reading problems are, many but a few of these problems are discussed in this paper. Namely: finger pointing, sub-vocalisation, poor eye fixation, regression, pupils' background etc.

**Finger Pointing:** several early reading habits are alleged to slow down the readers when they persist into the later stages of reading. One of these is finger pointing. That is, using finger to trace words across the line while reading. Early readers use this to fix their concentration on the word they are reading. This habit should be discouraged by their teachers.

**Sub-vocalisation:** This is the act of forming the sounds of the words they are reading and even murmuring them. When a reader sub-vocalises he tends to read word by word. This will slow down the reading and it will be difficult for such a reader to improve his reading speed. The advanced stage of sub-vocalisation is vocalisation, that is, reading aloud what is on the printed material. This habit should be discouraged at the later stage of developing skills.

**Poor Eye Fixation:** In reading act, reader must make some movement of the eyes. This movement follows a particular direction. It is usually from left to right of the printed page. This movement has been described by expert observers as a SWEEP [1]. Hence, two jerky movements across a line of printed words should be made before making a swift return (sweep) to the next line. Poor reader on the other hand reads word instead of reading across the line in two jerky movements from left to right. Reading of word makes reading to be slow and laborious.

**Regression:** Here, a poor reader moves his eyes back to check the previous words instead of sweeping steadily forward. This habit also affects the reading speed.

**Problem Associated with Learners' Background:** This problem is directly related to educational/socio-economic background of pupils. Some pupils are brought up in homes or environment where much literary activities are going on, and where many books or teaching aids are available. Such pupils have a better chance of acquiring reading competence than their counterparts that are brought up in an educationally or socio-economically disadvantaged family.

Finally, failure in reading often arises as a result of emotional maladjustment. Studies of children who are poor readers often reveal that they have problems of emotional maladjustments. Such problems they exhibit include nervousness, anxiety, fear, truancy, restlessness, nail-biting, finger sucking, concentration difficulties aggression etc.

### **V. METHODS OF TEACHING READING**

It must be emphasised that reading that does not lead to comprehension is a useless exercise. To teach children to learn to read and love to read, all the reading instructional activities must be presented in meaningful contexts. To develop reading readiness in pupils, the following methods are advocated.

1. Literary awareness programme (LAP)
2. Language Experience Approach (LEA)

3. News on the Board (NCB)

**Literary Awareness Programme (LAP):** This is language activity which involves having an adult read interesting stories aloud to children everyday. In this case a time will be set aside each day for reading aloud to the class as part of daily routine. The children favourite books may be read or teacher may select books that will interest the pupils. While reading, teacher should not be too fast, he should be responsive to pupils reactions and encourage their participation in the reading session e.g. making comments, asking questions, predicting what will happen next. After the reading exercise, teacher should allow time for a relaxed discussion on the stories read. Pupils can be encouraged to draw pictures about the stories and label them. The stories can be made into dramas and they can as well write summaries of favourite stories for English composition exercises. The advantages of this method are that, it extends both the experience and language background of children, it generates interest in reading and develops children listening skills. It makes children have interest in reading by seeing words and hearing them at the same time while they are being read to.

**Language Experience Approach (LEA):** This is a reading method which uses language and personal experiences of pupils to create material for their reading instruction. It involves teaching pupils to read words that they dictate and which the teacher writes on the board for them. The approach is that pupils who can think, talk and listen can learn to read and write. It is believed that children learn to read printed words more easily if the words are a part of their everyday familiar language and are describing their personal experience. Topics to be written on the chalkboard can be generated from class excursion i.e. visit to the zoo, museum, ancient city, holiday, special events e.g. Christmas celebration, children's day or familiar traditional folktales. Teacher should come immediately after the discussion of the story. The pupil's language should be used in recording their ideas. Teacher should write clearly as possible leaving spaces between words, joined writing should not be used. After recording each sentence, teacher should read the entire story to the pupils, then ask them to read the story with him as he points to each word. Teacher can now use the LEA story developed as the material for teaching reading. One story can be used for a week. If a new story is developed each Monday, the rest of the days of the week can be used for reading activities. If the original story was written on the chalkboard, it can be copied later on a cardboard for use during the next lesson.

**News on the Board (NOB):** Two things are unique to news on the Board.

- i. The news is a daily activity in which current information about the school or class is recorded.
- ii. The current news about the pupils themselves makes up the second part of the news on the board. This news is dictated by the pupils and do not follow any sequence or order.

For example, a pupil may have just been bought a school bag while another might have witnessed a birthday party or might want to comment on the rainy reason. The teacher may write one or two news items about anything special that will take place in school that day. All these will constitute material for reading instruction for the day. NOB helps children to see connection between speech and print. It involves having children sharing their experiences in class and teacher recording these experiences on the chalkboard in the form of news item. What is written on the board then becomes children's reading material.

## VI. CONCLUSION

To effectively teach reading to learn, it is important that teachers have a good understanding of what reading is and have clearly stated objectives of every reading comprehension lesson they undertake. Teachers should know that reading is not just the ability to recite the letters of the alphabet or to pronounce the words in a text or being able to answer literal questions on a given text but also the ability to identify main idea, evaluate. Teachers should clearly define their behaviour objectives and make sure that their instructional activities match the stated objectives.

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