

Effective English Teaching by Systematic Development of Reading Skill

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ABSTRACT: Learning to read or reading skill acquisition is the acquisition and practice of the skill needed to comprehend the meaning behind printed texts. The act of reading feels simple, effortless and automatic to a skilled reader. The process of learning to read is complex and develops on cognitive, linguistic and social skills from childhood. Reading is vital to gaining a command over written language since it is one of the four core language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In this article the necessity of intensive reading, acquiring Communicative Competence & thus gaining mastery over English language & Information & Communication Technology ICT is articulated & emphasized.

KEYWORD: NCTB, Mastery, Vital, Articulated, Emphasized, Core, Phonemic awareness, Phonics, ICT, Decoding, Strategies, Implementation, Squire, Fluency, Pre requisite, Enhance.

Introduction:

Today's world requires a more skilled work force & expert English language users for almost all jobs. The learning of English involves acquiring four skills, i.e. Reading, Writing, Listening & Speaking.

This study analyzes the unique process as per requirements of Bangladeshi rural students of Secondary & Intermediate level to gain mastery over English by following National Curriculum & Textbook Board (NCTB) prescribed textbooks. In Bangladesh students of this level are taught 200 marks English 1st Paper & 2nd Paper.

The main goal of the case study was to make students experts in English Reading, develop their other three skills by using ICT in the classroom and thus develop their English language skills by removing the fear of English from their mind through empirical knowledge.

Print Awareness

Print awareness is a component of reading and writing that we hardly think much about. Instead, we focus on the alphabet, spelling, or phonemes. But print awareness concept is essential for early literacy.

Print is everywhere around us. From the text books, newspapers, magazines and cloths that we wear to road signs and billboards as we travel the streets to labels on cans in our kitchens, print is omnipresent. The students also understand the structure of print (in English, we read from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom) and that printed words have varying functions (a book tells a story, a restaurant menu tells you what you can expect at that restaurant, road signs help guide drivers, etc.).

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words — including rhymes, syllables, and phonemes. Learning to spell is built on a child's understanding that words are made up of separate speech sounds (phonemes) and that letters represent those sounds. As they get more experience with words, children begin to notice patterns in the way letters are used and recurring sequences of letters that form syllables, word endings, word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Phonics and Decoding

Students' reading skill development is dependent on their perfect understanding of the alphabetic principle — the idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, quickly and with expression. Fluency is important because it provides a connection between word recognition and comprehension. They can also make connections among the ideas in the text and their background knowledge. In other words, fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time better than anyone else.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read. It refers to the words we must understand to communicate effectively. Educators often consider four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

- A. Listening vocabulary refers to the words we need to know to understand what we hear.
- B. Speaking vocabulary consists of the words we use when we speak.
- C. Reading vocabulary refers to the words we need to know to understand what we read.
- D. Writing vocabulary consists of the words we use in writing. Research supports using a combination of both indirect and direct approaches.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the core reason for reading any textbook. Good readers are both purposeful and active, and have the skills to absorb what they read, analyze it, make sense of it and make the meaning of their own. Strong readers think actively as they read. They use their experiences and knowledge of the world, vocabulary, language structure and reading strategies to make sense of the text and know how to get the most out of it. They know when they have problems with understanding and what thinking strategies to use to resolve these problems when they pop up.

Methods:

Reading skill development requires learning the Print Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension.

In rural Bangladesh the Secondary & Intermediate level students, boys & girls, lack the expertise & skills to learn/acquire English as a Foreign Language. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has been trying hard to making expert level of workforce enriched with global English. The National Curriculum & Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible to implement the National Education Policy 2010 along with the Ministry of Education. Notwithstanding much attempt by the Bangladesh Government, it is utterly shameful that most of the rural students cannot get fair marks in the Public Examination, let alone acquire English!

With a view to implementing the abovementioned strategies to give the feel of acquiring reading skill, a total 180 number both boys & girls students of Secondary & Intermediate level were selected from Maghia Salehia Alim Madrasa, Kachua, Bagerhat, Bangladesh. They were given some tasks in this experimenting process & evaluated afterwards.

Materials:

Some first hand teaching material were used. Main item was English For Today- the NCTB (National Curriculum & Textbook Board) prescribed text book for up to class 12. Along with this, English Story books, the Oxford Learners English Dictionary, some local daily English newspapers, pdf texts, English Movies & News, Sports commentary, internet, laptops, projectors, Multimedia Classrooms were used as study materials in this case.

Strategies:

The students of class 6, class 9 & class 11 were chosen separately to experiment intense reading practice & skill development course. 30 male students & 30 female students from each class participated spontaneously. Students were selected on a random basis irrespective of their class roll, merit or results. The study continued for about 4 months.

After about 4 months the students were tested & interviewed. Hopefully, the test results were amazingly positive. All the students improved their GPA in English & Information & Communication Technology (ICT), another very important & mandatory 100 marks subject, in the Midterm Examinations.

The students were taught only English For Today, the text book supplied by NCTB and were taught only texts as per NCTB instructions. Students were taught reading aloud, pronunciation, spelling & word formation, word meaning & guessing meaning of the context, relating things & contexts to their daily life, etc. Along with this, because of ICT based teaching & exercises in the classroom greatly benefited the participants' quick improvement in ICT subject.

Procedures of implementation:

Cycle 1:

We chose a comprehension from the NCTB text to commence our study. Students of class 6 were instructed to open up Unit 1 from their English For Today.. First task was to read aloud in the class. The chosen textbook comprehension was read aloud 3 times in the class by the teacher/instructor and the students as well. In this way the students were made familiar with the English text/comprehension. Then the students were instructed to read aloud thoroughly at home. Hand writing in their respective exercise books to be brought next day to the class was their homework.

The next day the text was thoroughly read in the class, word by word, with word meaning in Bangla & with correct pronunciations and textual meaning. The remaining 3 days of the week the students were taught about different syllables, synonyms & antonyms, parts of speech, tenses along with Subject, predicate, sentence kinds & sentence constructions, etc. along with textual comprehension casually.

The next week different comprehensions from following Units were taught / discussed in the class maintaining this procedure. This process continued for about a month. By this way within 4 weeks we got 20 working days for practice. Nearly 20+ textual comprehensions and basic grammatical items were taught & practiced.

Cycle 2, 3 & 4:

Next month the students were practiced Listening skill along with Cycle 1. In the 3rd month our target was to practice Writing skill development, repeating Cycle 1 & 2 following Chart 1 & partially Chart 2. Last target of skill development was mainly focused on Speaking, repeating Cycle 1, 2 & 3 following Chart 1 & 2 fully. Reading & Speaking fluency skills have been stressed more mainly focusing on textual exercises, questions & life skill development.

Result & Discussion:

The evaluation process was of two categories- Textual Exercises & Life Skill Development. The evaluation process included questionnaire on their personal, family, social, cultural & economic life, pair work, group work, single & group presentation, role play, taking demo classes, conversations, free hand writing, small scale debating & regular class tests. Students participated in the sessions spontaneously.

By following the Cycle 1 to 4 within about 4 months all the targeted students were become very familiar with English For Today & four skills. Their language skills, grammar & vocabulary developed immensely. In reality, students acted spontaneously & their English phobia almost disappeared! Conducting this experiment was really an awesome experience in the context of Bangladeshi rural students.

Benefits of using ICT in the Classroom:

An amazing thing happened when ICT materials were used as teaching aid. During Cycle 1 implementation no ICT materials were used as teaching aid. But during Cycle 2, Multimedia Projectors, digital textbooks & internet were used for teaching. Surprisingly this kind of teaching attracted the attention of most of the students, especially the girls'. This difference is clearly evident in Graph 3 & 4. By comparing the 2 Graphs we can sort out clear difference between use and not use of ICT in the classroom (Graph 8).

Chart 1: Evaluation Process- Textual Exercises

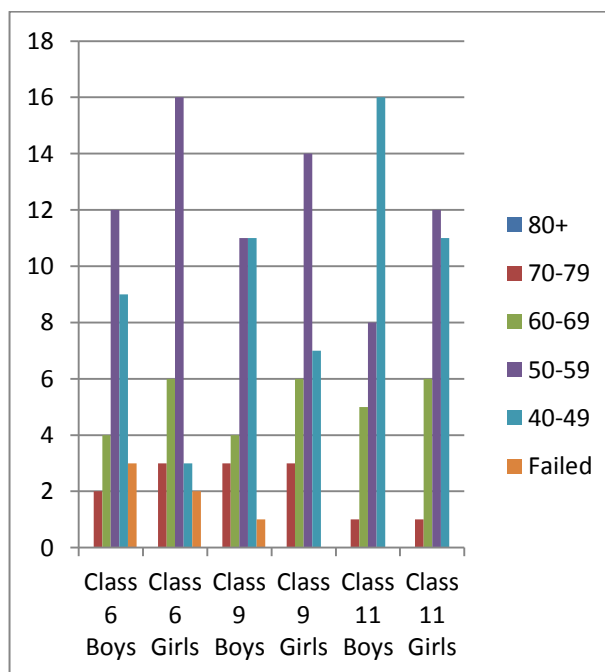
- ✓ Pair work,
- ✓ Group work,
- ✓ Vocabulary Test
- ✓ Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ)
- ✓ Question Answer on Comprehension
- ✓ Fill in the Blanks with Clues
- ✓ Fill in the Blanks without Clues
- ✓ Synonym & Antonyms
- ✓ Rearrange
- ✓ Information Transfer
- ✓ Suffixes & Prefixes
- ✓ Transformation of Sentences
- ✓ Articles
- ✓ Appropriate Prepositions
- ✓ Right Form of Verbs

- ✓ Transformation of Sentences
- ✓ Summary Writing
- ✓ Paragraph
- ✓ Short Comprehension
- ✓ Formal & Informal Letters/e-mails
- ✓ Story Writing

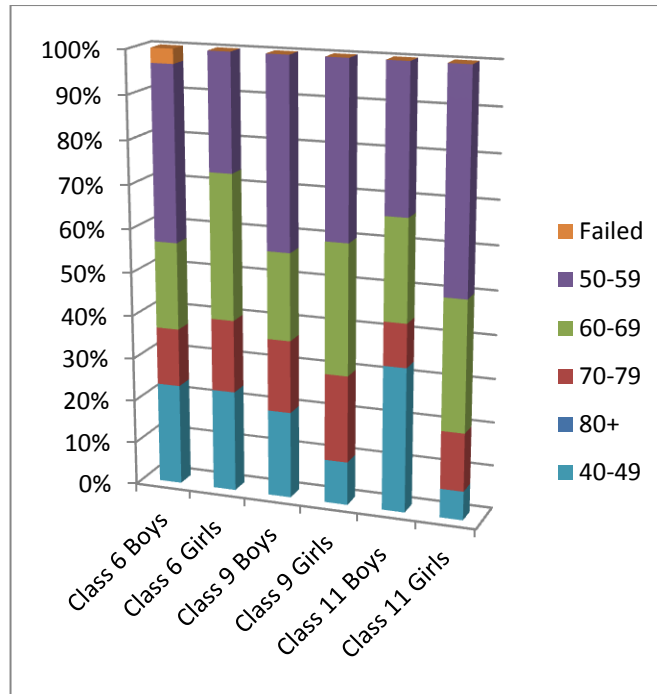
Chart 2: Evaluation Process- Life Skill Development

- Free writing on Personal, family, social, cultural & economic life
- Understanding contextual meaning
- English Newspaper Reading
- Watching English Movie, News, Concert & TV advertisements
- Sports Commentary
- Reading story books, communication signs & Journals
- Single & group presentation,
- Role play
- Taking demo classes
- Conversations
- Small scale debating

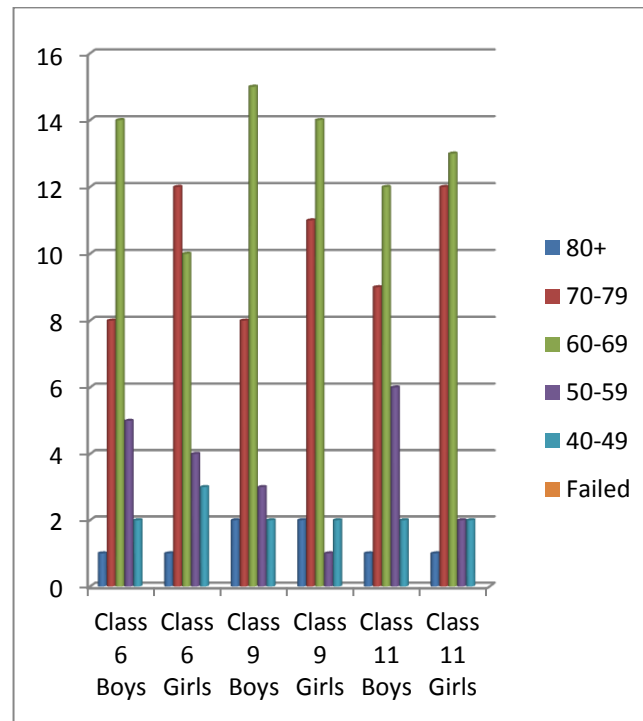
Graph 1: Class results before experiments (A total of 30 in each category)



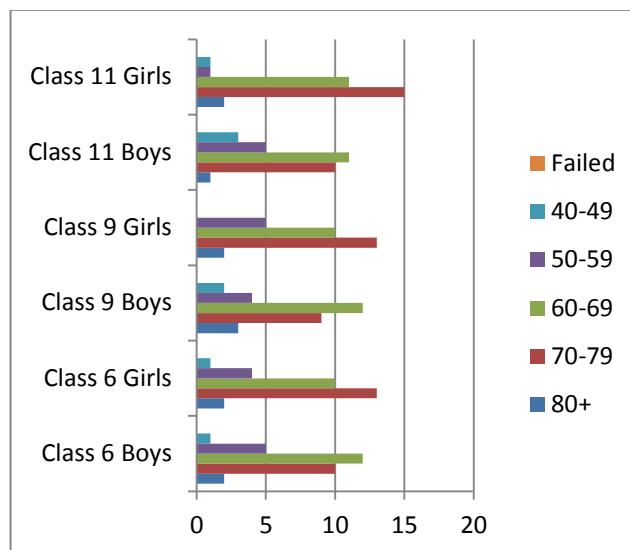
Graph 2: Class results after Cycle 1 experiments



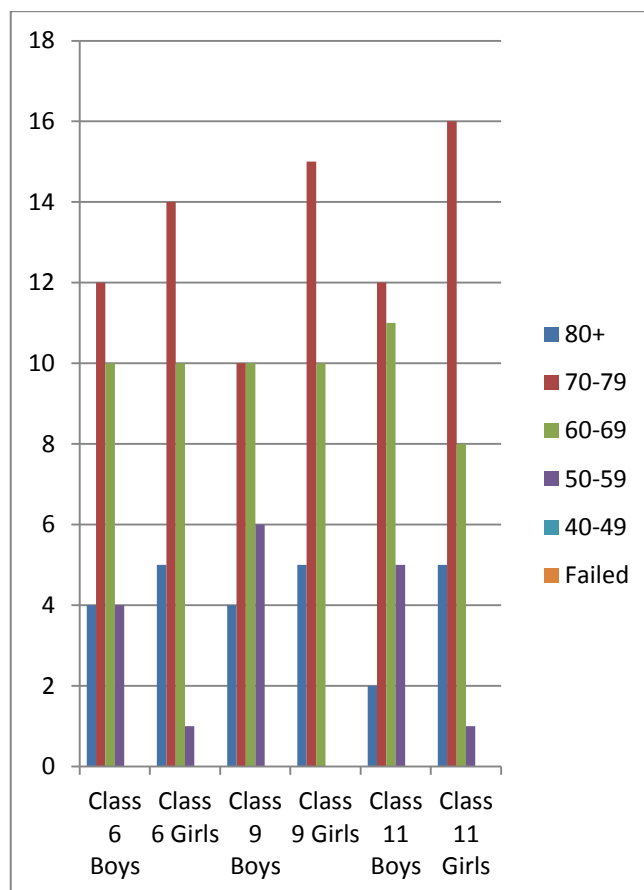
Graph 3: Class results after Cycle 2 experiments



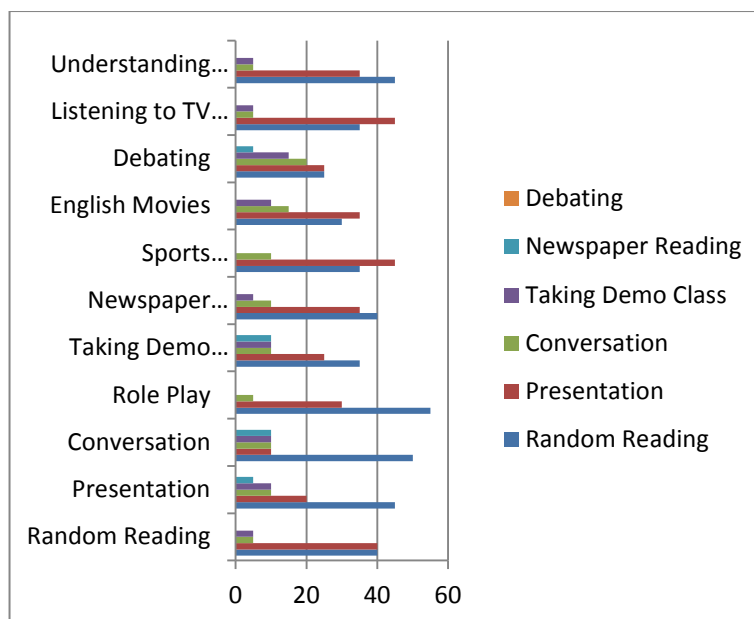
Graph 4: Class results after Cycle 3 experiments



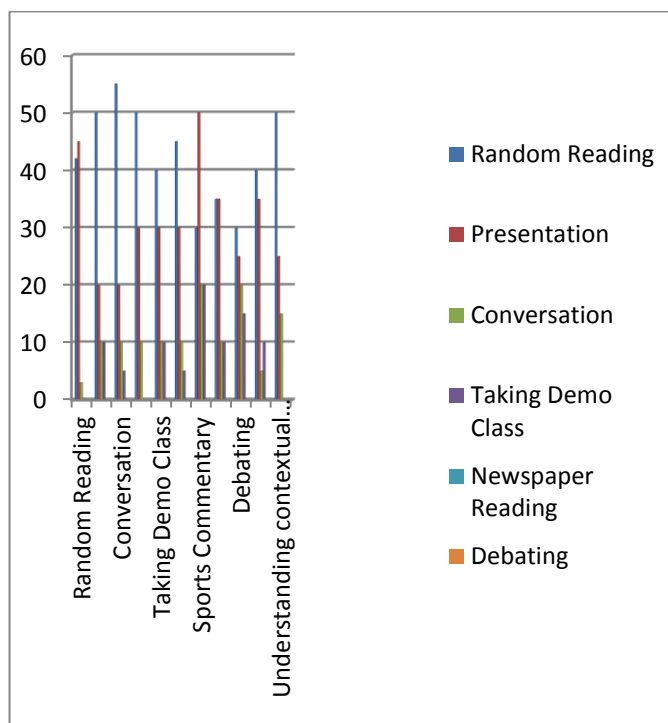
Graph 5: Class results after Cycle 4 experiments



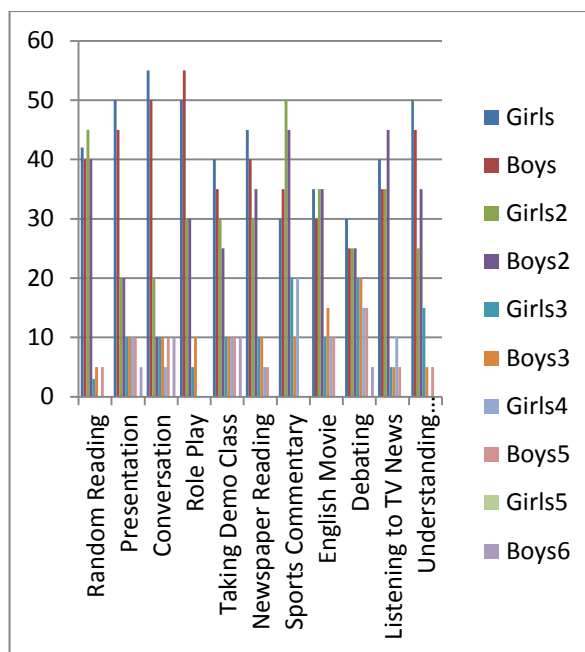
Graph 6: Final Evaluation- Boys (A total of 90 students)



Graph 7: Final Evaluation- Girls (A total of 90 students)



Graph 8: Final Evaluation- Girls vs Boys (A total of 180 students)



Conclusion:

After analyzing the evaluation outcome it is evident that students under structured experiment & strong supervision can excel in English language learning/acquisition skills. The outcome of this empirical experiment also shows that Girls are, in some point, strong enough to language learning through this process than Boys. Boys, however, lag behind perhaps because of their extrovert & showoff quality, rather than genuine interest in language learning. Rectifying that kind of attitude of the boys should be addressed within classroom or separately.

So, if we can teach our students following this methodology, certainly our young students, especially from rural areas, will be able to meet all pre requisite & required abilities & skills. So, by following this new system of teaching within the classroom environment, we can dispel the so called English phobia from the students & make them qualified to fight the modern ICT based world & become successful.

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