

## **Checklist to Screen Children with Reading Difficulty (CSRD) for Classroom Teachers**

**Namita Amey Joshi, M.Sc. (SLP)**  
**Vanaja C.S., M.Sc. (Sp. & Hg.), Ph.D. (Sp. & Hg.)**

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### **Abstract**

Literature estimates that at least 2.19 to 2.20 % of entire population suffer from dyslexia, the most prevalent type of Learning Disability. The high prevalence rate makes it necessary to develop tools for early identification of children with reading difficulties. Children who have problems or who are at risk for reading difficulty can be screened individually or in group. A majority of the tools developed cannot be carried out by teachers. Teachers generally use informal assessment or suspect a problem only when the child fails to perform grade appropriately. Due to lack of awareness of nature and characteristics of learning problems, they often tend to associate the failure in academic activities to reading difficulties. Hence a checklist to screen children with reading difficulty (CSRD) was developed in the present study and the teacher's efficacy to screen children with reading difficulties was investigated.

A total of one hundred and thirteen children participated in the study. The study was carried out in three phases. A check list was developed in the first phase. The developed checklist was administered on typically developing children in the age range of 6 to 8 yrs. in phase II. The checklist was administered by the class teachers of the children. In the third phase, the efficacy of the checklist in identifying children at risk for reading difficulty was investigated. Early reading skills, a diagnostic test for identifying children with reading difficulty, was used to validate the results of the checklist. ROC curve was drawn; with a cut off score of 42.5, area under the curve was 0.913 with 90% of sensitivity and 81% of specificity. The results reveal that the checklist will be a useful tool for screening the children with reading difficulties.

**Key words:** Checklist, teachers, reading difficulty.

## Introduction

Learning problems are found in every primary class room; though the pattern of difficulty in every child may be different. According to Ramaa (2002), prevalence of learning disability in India ranges from 3% to 10%. There are different types of learning disabilities, the most prevalent type being dyslexia. In India, Mogasale, et al. (2012) stated that the prevalence of dyslexia is 11.2%. The high prevalence rate mandates the need for early identification and intervention based on individual performances.

Various strategies for early identification and intervention for children at risk for reading difficulties have been proposed. Recent methods of early identification focus on early preventive measures, and are more successful compared to the traditional methods, which focus on waiting for the child to fail before remedial programs are initiated. Fuchs et al. (2007) recommended identifying the “risk pool” early in kindergarten and first grade to allow participation in prevention services before the onset of substantial academic deficits. There have been studies proving that early intervention leads to maximum benefit to children at risk for reading difficulties (Invernizzi, et al., 2004, Bailet, Repper, Piasta & Murphy 2009, Vellutino, Scanlon, Small & Fanuele, 2006).

To improve the quality of education, children with disabilities need to be given special consideration. Primary school teachers play a key role to achieve this goal. The teachers need to be made sensitive for screening problems of children and take appropriate measures to overcome the problems. In Indian education system, 5 to 8 yrs of age is the critical period for acquiring the skills of reading and writing. If children pass through these stages without acquiring the skills, it is very likely that they struggle with a lot of learning problems in the higher grades. There is a need to create awareness among various educational stakeholders: teachers and parents regarding early identification and management of children with reading difficulties..

Identifying students who have problems or who are at risk is accomplished through individual or group of procedures. A majority of these procedures are carried out by teachers with informal assessment and it does not always assess the underlying areas. Most often the

teachers suspect a problem only when a child fails to perform grade appropriately. The teachers with lack of awareness regarding reading difficulties, often tend to associate the failure in academic activities to learning difficulties. This may lead to false positive errors as many students who do not really have significant problems may be identified as children with reading difficulty.

Attempts have been made to develop tools that can be used by teachers to identify children at risk for reading disability. Taylor et al (2002) examined the accuracy of teacher's ratings. They observed that kindergarten children identified by their teacher as making substandard progress toward one or more academic objectives performed significantly less well than a matched group of non-identified children on tests of word reading, spelling, math and knowledge of letter names and letter sounds. In a similar study, Tiesl et al. (2001) reported that Kindergarten teachers appear to be better predictors of students who will not develop academic difficulty. They proposed that effective academic screening measures be used to maximize specificity in identifying children who are at risk for later disability early in their academic years.

There is a dearth of screening tools which can be used by the teachers to identify children at risk for reading difficulty in Marathi. In Indian scenario, the teachers in grass root level are the ones who really need to be sensitized. The individuals working in rural areas mainly use Marathi (State Official Language of Maharashtra) as their medium of communication. Hence there is a need to develop a screening tool in Marathi to create awareness among school teachers about the various cognitive linguistic domains which are needed to be screened before labeling the child as having reading difficulty. The present study was designed to develop a screening check list for identifying reading difficulty and investigating the efficacy of teacher's assessment of reading difficulty in regular classroom. The objectives of the study were to develop a checklist in Marathi for school teachers for early identification of children with reading difficulties and also to check the efficacy of teacher's rating to early identify the children with reading difficulty.

## **Method**

The present study used non randomized experimental design. The study was done in three phases. Phase I: development of the checklist, Phase II: Collecting the normative data using the

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developed checklist, Phase III: validation of the checklist to evaluate the efficacy of checklist to identify the children with reading difficulty.

### ***Participants***

A total of hundred and thirteen children between 6-8yrs from three private schools in Maharashtra State of West India were randomly selected. The children were divided into two age groups. Group I consisted of children >6<7 yrs, and group II consisted of >7<8yrs. The children included were multilingual with mother tongue Marathi (an Indo-Aryan language spoken in state of Maharashtra, India), and exposure to English and Hindi languages through schools. All the children attended schools which followed the Central Board Secondary Certificate curriculum. The children with parental education of minimum higher secondary level only were selected. All the children had IQ (tested on draw a man test given by Phatak, 1984) above 89, hearing thresholds less than 25 dB HL and did not have any visual problems (on Snail's test) or any other sensory motor problem at the time of testing. Parental questionnaire developed by Khurana and Prema (2012) was used to assess the literacy exposure at home. The questionnaire included subsections like early literacy skills, shared reading, phonological skills, and general conversation. It also included information on percentage of the exposure in different languages in which all the above activities are carried out. Only those who got a score of greater than 75% exposure of early reading and literacy skills on this questionnaire were included for the study.

***Test material:*** The following test material was used in the present study:

- CSRD developed in the present study.
- Early Reading Skills (Ray & Potter, 1967): The test is for age range 6-14yrs. It has different subscales as alphabet recognition, phoneme grapheme correspondence, structural analysis etc. Normative data on Indian population for the same was found out by Prema (2001) as a departmental project at All India Institute of Speech & Hearing Mysore, India.

### ***Phase I: Development of the Checklist***

The checklist to screen children with reading difficulty (CSRD) was developed after reviewing the already available checklists/rating scales (Edmands, 2000; Achenbach & Ruffle, 2000; Narayan, Kutty, Haripriya, Reddy, Sen, 2003, Horowitz & Stecker, 2007, Kuppuraj &

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Shanbal 2010). The checklist (CSRSD) developed in Marathi included 52 questions to collect information on different domains such as gross and fine motor skills(8 questions), language skills(12 questions), reading skills(8 questions), writing skills(8questions), social - emotional skills(9 questions), attention skills(8 questions), other (2questions). The developed checklist (CSRSD) was given to three primary teachers whose mother tongue was Marathi for checking the ambiguity and practicality in administering the checklist. The suggestions were taken and checklist was modified accordingly. The checklist used a three point rating scale from 1(always) to 3(rarely). The CSRSD scores could range from 52-156. Higher the score poorer is the reading ability.

The teachers were asked to rate 31(12F& 19M) children who were in the age of 6 to 8 yrs using the developed checklist. Each child was rated by their respective class teacher. Item analysis was carried out on the data of 31 children. Based on the results of item analysis (discussed in detail in results section), items were reduced from 52 to 40. (Annexure 1).

### ***Phase II: Administration of CSRSD on Typically Developing Children***

A total of thirty six typically developing children (19F & 17M) in the age range of 6 to 8 yrs. participated in this phase of the study. All the participants in phase II scored age appropriately on Early Reading skills (Ray & Potter 1967). Group I consisted of 18 children with 8 males and 10 females. Group II consisted of 18 children with 9 males and 9 females. The class teachers were oriented to use the checklist (CSRSD) before rating the children.

### ***Phase III: Evaluating the Efficacy of CSRSD in Identifying Children with Reading Difficulty***

A total of forty six children in the age range of 6-8 yrs. participated in this phase. Group I consisted of 24 children with 11 females and 13 males. Group II consisted of 22 children with 9femlaes and 13 males. The children were selected randomly and teachers were asked to rate each child on CSRSD. The scores were collected and compiled. A formal test of reading Early Reading Skills (ERS- Ray & Potter in 1967) was then administered by a speech language pathologist on all the participants.

To evaluate the efficacy of CSRD in identifying children with reading difficulty, ROC curve was drawn using SPSS version16 and the area under the curve was calculated for different the coordinates.

## **Results**

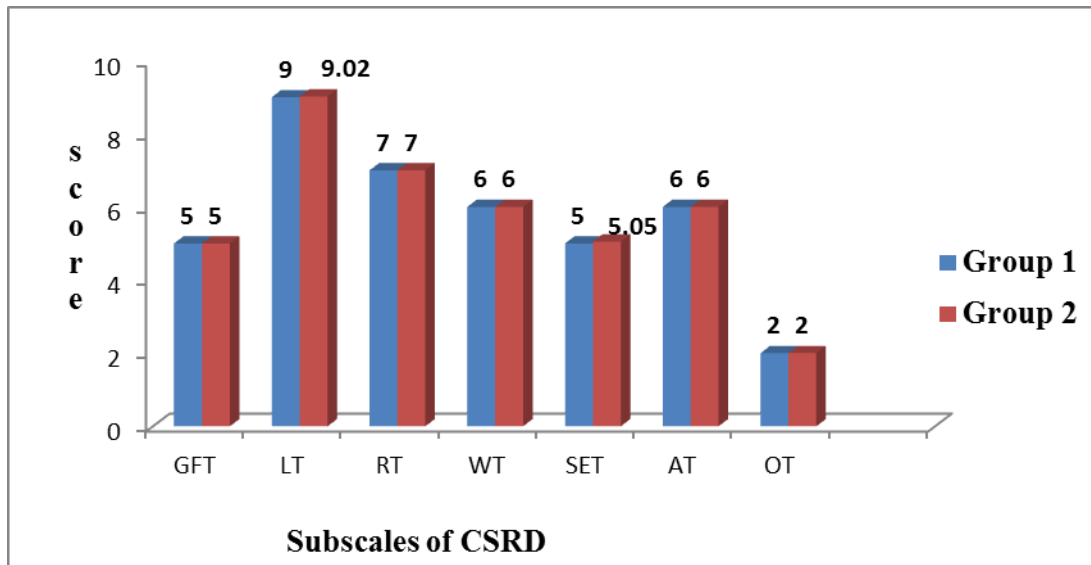
### ***Phase I***

The present study was aimed to develop a checklist to screen children with reading difficulty and investigate the efficacy of the checklist to identify the children at risk for reading failure. The developed checklist with 52 questions was administered on 31 children. The scores obtained were subjected to item analysis. Item analysis revealed a Chronbach's alpha of 0.92. Inter-item correlation ranged from  $r=0.38$  to  $r=0.77$ . Twelve items had poor correlation with that of the total score and they were deleted. The Chronbach's alpha was 0.92 even after deletion of these items. Split half reliability of the checklist was calculated. ( $r=0.81$ ; Part I,  $r=0.86$ ; Part II,  $r=0.82$ ). Maximum time taken for the rating a child was fifteen minutes. Thus, the final checklist (CSRD) developed in Marathi included 40 questions with seven domains including gross and fine motor skills (5 questions), language skills (9 questions), reading skills (7 questions), writing skills (6questions), social - emotional skills (5 questions), attention skills (6 questions), other (2questions). The developed checklist is attached as Annexure I. The scores for the checklist range from 40-120.

### ***Phase II***

The phase II aimed at developing normative data for the developed CSRD. Both the groups performed similar on the checklist and scores ranged from 40 to 41. Figure 1, shows the scores obtained by two groups for different subscales of the checklist.

Figure 1: Mean scores on CSRD across groups.



Note: GF=gross & fine motor skills (max score 15), LT=Language skills (max scores 27), RT=Reading skills Max score 21), WT=writing skills (max score 18), SET=social & emotional skills (max score 15), AT=attention skill (max score 18), OT=other skills (max score 6).

### ***Phase III***

In phase III of the study, the checklist (CSRD) and ERS were administered on forty six children. Based on teachers rating, thirty two children were identified as typically developing and fourteen children were suspected to have reading difficulty. The scores on ERS, were used to classify the children in two groups. Children, who scored two grades below their actual grade level, were considered as having reading difficulty. The children who scored age appropriately were considered as typically developing children. Normative data on Indian population obtained by Prema (2001) was used as reference for this classification.

The scores obtained on CSRD ranged from 40-82. To check the efficacy of the CSRD in identifying children with reading difficulty, ROC curve was drawn based on the scores obtained by children at risk of reading failure, using statistical software SPSS version 16. Table 2 shows the sensitivity and specificity for different coordinates. It can be observed from the table that with the cutoff of 42.5, the area under the curve was 0.913, indicating the probability of CSRD to identify children with reading disability is 91%. Figure 2 shows ROC curve and the area

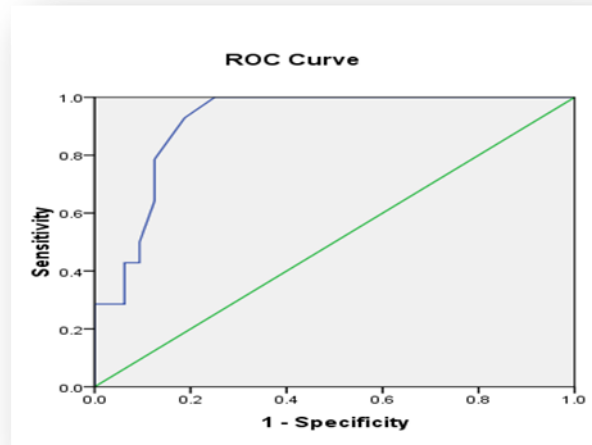
covered. Thus the results of the study recommend cutoff point of 42.5 with 92% of sensitivity and 82% of specificity.

Co-ordinates	Sensitivity	1 - Specificity
39.0000	1.000	1.000
40.5000	1.000	.375
41.5000	1.000	.250
42.5000	.929	.188
43.5000	.786	.125
44.5000	.714	.125
45.5000	.643	.125
47.0000	.500	.094
48.5000	.429	.094
49.5000	.429	.062
52.0000	.286	.062
55.0000	.286	.031
66.5000	.286	.000
78.0000	.214	.000
80.0000	.143	.000
81.5000	.071	.000
83.0000	.000	.000

Table 2: Sensitivity and specificity at different co-ordinates of the Curve



Fig 2: Shows the ROC curve



## Discussion

Indian scenario demands checklist which can be used by teachers as quick screener. This would help in early intervention of children with reading difficulty. Many studies have also shown that early intervention can significantly improve the reading difficulties (Bailet, et al. 2009, Denton & Mathes 2003, O’Conner, Fulner, Harty & Bell, 2005). India being a multilingual country, the checklist needs to be developed in different languages. There are screening tools available in some of the Indian languages such as Kannada, Malayalam. (Swaroop & Prema, 2001; Seetha, & Prema, 2002; Jayashree, & Kuppuraj, 2010; Tiwari, Krishnan, Rajashekar, & Chengappa, 2011). However, these screening tools needs participation of the children and have to be administered by professionals. Some investigators (Vaid & Gupta, 2002, Narayan, Kutty, Haripriya, Reddy, Sen, 2003) have developed a screening tools that can be administered by teachers but its time consuming when needed to be administered on large the number of children. The checklists which were developed earlier were the ones which could be administered by a professional and not by a class teacher. (Kulkarni, et al. 2001). CSRD in Marathi developed in the present study is a quick screener as it takes only 15 mins for a teacher to screen a child. Phase I results show that CSRD is a quick reliable ( $r=0.92$ ) screener and can be performed by the class teacher without any specialized training.

The normative data was collected for CSRD. The scores obtained by both groups ranged between 40 to 41. The CSRD consists of eight subscales such as gross and fine motor skills, language skills, reading skills, writing skills, social - emotional skills, attention skills, other. These have been included as assessment of reading problems in children has to be multifaceted, especially in Indian scenario. Children in both the groups obtained similar scores on different subscales of CSRD as shown in Fig.1.

Identifying students who have problems or who are at risk is accomplished through individual or group of procedures. Most of such procedures are carried out by teachers with informal assessment and it does not always assess the underlying areas. And most often teachers suspect a problem only when a child fails to perform grade appropriately. Many teachers with lack of awareness often tend to associate the failure in academic activities to learning difficulties. That is they identify many students who do not really have significant problems (false positive errors). A formal checklist like CSRD will reduce false positive errors. To study the efficacy of CSRD to efficiently screen children with reading difficulty, the ROC curve was drawn. (Shown in Fig 2) The results showed that the checklist had 92% sensitivity and 82% specificity when the cutoff score was 42.5. It means the CSRD is efficient to identify children with reading difficulty among children in regular classroom. As reading difficulty is multifaceted and each child may show different traits, the checklist needs to be standardized on larger population. Taylor et al (2002), reported that gross- fine motor skills, reading skills, math skills, spellings are the predictors of later reading failure in younger children. Studies on larger population can help in investigating the association of scores on different subscales with levels of reading difficulty. Earlier studies have highlighted the importance of early identification of reading problems at an early age which enables a child to have maximal benefit. (Bailet, Repper, Piasta, & Murphy 2009; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small & Fanuele, 2006). The checklist developed in the present study will be a useful tool to early identify children with reading difficulty. This will help in overcoming academic difficulties.

## Conclusions

Teachers being the main stakeholders in identifying the children with reading difficulties should have standardized tools in regional languages to screen children. CSRD, developed in the present study is proved to be an effective and quick screener for children with reading difficulty in regular classroom. The tool needs to be standardized on larger population. Translation of this tool to other regional languages will make it a useful tool across the country.

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Namita Amey Joshi, M.Sc. (SLP)  
Associate Professor

Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University  
School of Audiology & Speech Language Pathology  
4th floor Homeopathy Hospital Building  
Dhankawadi Campus  
Pune Satara, Road  
Pune 411043  
Maharashtra, India  
[nj21slp@gmail.com](mailto:nj21slp@gmail.com)



Vanaja, C.S., M.Sc. (Sp. & Hg.), Ph.D (Sp. & Hg.)  
Professor & Head of Department  
Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University  
School of Audiology & Speech Language Pathology  
4th floor Homeopathy Hospital Building  
Dhankawadi Campus  
Pune Satara, Road  
Pune 411043  
Maharashtra, India  
[csvanaja@gmail.com](mailto:csvanaja@gmail.com)

Checklist to screen children with Reading Difficulty (CSRD)

वाचनात अडथळे असण्या-या मुलांची शोधचाचणी

अनुक्रम	कौशल्ये	नेहमी (3)	कधीकधी (2)	क्वचित (1)
<b>अ</b>	<b>स्थूल आणि सूक्ष्म कारक कौशल्ये (Gross &amp; Fine Motor Skills)</b>			
1	स्वच्छ नसलेला, गबाळा असतो/ते.			
2	बटण हुक झिप लावणे, बुटच्या लेस बांधणे इत्यादी अवघड जाते.			
3	त्याची / तिची उठण्या बसण्याची ठेवण (पोस्चर) योग्य नाही.			
4	चक्रव्युवसारखी (मेजेस) गुंतगुंतिची कोडी सोडवणे कठीण जाते.			
5	सरळ ओळीत किंवा दोन ओळींच्यामध्ये लिहीणे जमत नाही.			
<b>ब</b>	<b>भाषा कौशल्ये (Language Skills)</b>			
1	शब्द संग्रह मर्यादित आहे.			
2	कमी, व अपूर्ण वाक्यात बोलण्याने बोललेले समजणे कठीण जाते			
3	शब्दाचा योग्य वापर करणे जमत नसल्याने, विचार व्यक्त करणे अवघड जाते.			
4	उशिरा बोलायला शिकला/ली.			
5	बोलताना व्याकरणच्या चुका करतो/ते आणि चुकीचा शब्द वापरते			
6	यमक जुळणारे शब्द सांगणे कठीण जाते.( उदा. कान पान मान इ.)			
7	एकसारखे उच्चारण असणारे शब्द व अक्षरात गोंधळ करतो/ते.			
8	सूचना समजणे जड जाते.			
9	काळाची संकल्पना समजणे जड जाते.			
<b>क</b>	<b>वाचन कौशल्ये (Reading Skills)</b>			
1	अक्षर ओळख कठीण जाते .			
2	शब्दातील अक्षरांच्या क्रमाची अदलाबदल करतो/ते.			
3	एकसारख्या दिसण्या-या शब्दांमध्ये गोंधळ करतो/ते.			
4	वाचन अवघड जाते.			
5	अति सावकाश वाचतो/ते.			
6	वाचताना शब्द गाळतो/ते.			
7	अनेकदा बघण्यात आलेले शब्द देखिल पटकन आठवत नाहीत.			
<b>ड</b>	<b>लेखन कौशल्ये (Writing Skills)</b>			
1	अतिशय सावकाश लिहीतो/ते.			



2	पेंसिल योग्य प्रकारे धरत नाही.			
3	चित्र रेखाटणे कठीण जाते.			
4	खोडाखोड करणे/ कागद फाडणे वारंवार होते.			
5	उतरवून घेतांना चुकीचे उतरवतो/ते किंवा उशीर लावतो/ते.			
6	शुद्धलेखनाच्या चुका करतो/ते.			
<b>इ</b>	<b>सामाजिक व भावनिक कौशल्ये (Social &amp; Emotional skills)</b>			
1	सामाजिक कौशल्याचा अभाव उदा. इतरांबद्दल सहनुभुती नसणे.			
2	मिळून मिसळून राहणे व सकारात्मक दृष्टीकोन राखणे अवघड जाते (उदा. कमी मार्कस मिळाल्यावर न खचणे).			
3	नेहमी चिंताग्रस्त असतो/ते.			
4	स्वतःची पाळी येई पर्यंत धीर धरू शकत नाही .			
5	अविचारी / भांडखोर आहे.			
<b>ई</b>	<b>अवधान कौशल्ये ( Attention skills)</b>			
1	तपशीलावर बारकाईने लक्ष देत नाही /निष्काळजी आहे			
2	काम करताना किंवा खेळताना एकाग्रता राखता येत नाही			
3	रोज करण्याच्या गोष्टी विसरतो/ते.			
4	लक्ष एका गोष्टी कडून दुस-या गोष्टीवर केंद्रीत करणे कठीण जाते			
5	एका जागी जास्त वेळ बसू शकत नाही			
6	एकच कामत जास्त वेळ लक्ष लागत नाही			
<b>फ</b>	<b>इतर ( Others)</b>			
1	उजवीकडे/ डावीकडे याच्यात गोंधळ होतो			
2	नकाशावरून रस्ता शोधण्यास कठीण जाते (उदा. ट्रेझर हंट सारखे खेळ)			

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